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CASE STUDY IN HOTEL MANAGEMENT

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RECOMMENDATION FOR CASE STUDIES IN HOTEL MANAGEMENT

Case Studies in Hotel Management is a timely and valuable teaching resource for courses that aim to connect hospitality theory with the real complexity of hotel operations. The volume addresses a wide range of current and practice-oriented topics, including hotel classification and quality systems, the effects of COVID-19 on Budapest hotels, staffing and labour-management questions, innovation in tourism, smart-hotel solutions, sustainability, accessibility, and multiple hotel-focused case studies grounded in the Hungarian and wider hospitality context.

One of the greatest strengths of this book is its commitment to experiential and applied learning. Rather than presenting hotel management as a purely abstract body of concepts, the text repeatedly places students in situations where managerial decisions, operational constraints, market pressures and human factors intersect. The material therefore supports a mode of teaching in which learners not only acquire knowledge, but also interpret evidence, evaluate alternatives and formulate their own professional judgments on realistic hospitality problems.

This makes the volume especially suitable for higher education in tourism and hospitality management. The chapters invite discussion on strategic and operational issues that are central to contemporary hotel leadership: service quality, categorisation, crisis response, labour shortages, technological change, guest expectations, sustainable development and the adaptation of hotels to changing social and economic conditions. Because these themes are presented through concrete examples and case-based analysis, the book can help students understand how management decisions are shaped by context, timing and available resources rather than by theory alone.

The text is also pedagogically useful because it reflects the multidimensional character of hotel management. Students are encouraged to see the hotel not only as an accommodation business, but as an integrated service system in which front office, housekeeping, food and beverage, sales, human resources, finance, maintenance, wellness and guest relations must operate in coordination. Several parts of the book clearly demonstrate that outcomes in the hotel industry depend on the alignment of people, processes, technology and service culture.

A further merit of the volume is its sensitivity to change. The discussion of the pandemic's impact on hotels in Budapest, supported by research involving hotel employees and managers, gives readers an opportunity to examine resilience, risk, adaptation and recovery through a real and still highly relevant industry challenge. In educational settings, these chapters can stimulate excellent classroom debate on crisis management, workforce retention, organisational learning and the long-term transformation of hospitality operations.

Equally important is the book's forward-looking perspective. Its treatment of innovation,

smart-hotel practices, guest data management, digital service solutions, sustainability and accessibility encourages students to think about the future of the sector in a structured and responsible way. These topics are no longer peripheral; they are central to the competitiveness and legitimacy of hotel businesses, and the book rightly presents them as essential areas of managerial attention.

From an instructional point of view, this volume can be used in several effective ways. It is appropriate as a primary course reader in a subject devoted specifically to hotel management case studies, but it can also enrich modules in operations management, service management, human-resource management, tourism strategy, innovation, sustainability and crisis management. Instructors can build seminar discussions, written analyses, group presentations and problem-solving assignments around the cases, allowing students to move from description to diagnosis and from diagnosis to recommendation.

The book is particularly valuable in classrooms where the objective is to develop professional reasoning. A good case study does not provide one single correct answer; instead, it sharpens the ability to ask the right questions, identify key variables, weigh competing interests and justify a decision. This collection creates exactly that opportunity. By working through the cases, students can strengthen analytical thinking, managerial communication and evidence-based argumentation—competences that are indispensable in the hospitality industry.

Another notable contribution of the volume lies in its regional relevance combined with broader applicability. Although many examples are rooted in Budapest and the Hungarian hotel sector, the managerial issues explored in the text—quality assurance, market positioning, digitalisation, labour challenges, sustainability, accessibility and crisis response—are recognisable far beyond a single national context. For this reason, the book can serve both as a locally meaningful and an internationally interpretable teaching material.

For lecturers, the volume offers a practical bridge between academic instruction and industry reality. For students, it offers an accessible but substantial entry into the professional logic of hotel management. For programmes in tourism and hospitality, it provides a contemporary, relevant and discussion-rich text that supports the formation of reflective, adaptable and ethically aware future professionals.

This book is therefore warmly recommended for inclusion at the beginning of the course and within the core reading list of subjects related to hotel management. It deserves attention not only because it gathers informative case material, but because it cultivates the kind of critical engagement that hospitality education increasingly requires. As a teaching resource, it has the capacity to inform, challenge and inspire—three qualities that define enduring academic value.

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1. INTRODUCTION TO HOTEL MANAGEMENT

1. Introduction

Hotels may differ in their size, equipment, profile and in the level of services they provide. The simplest way to differentiate quality would be to build an international, uniform classification system. Such a fully uniform system has not yet been developed worldwide; however, there are various systems based on which hotels can be rated in a comparable way. In Europe, the Hotelstars Union was founded in 2009 and currently has 22 European member countries. total of more than 28,000 hotels in the member countries have already been rated according to the same criteria. Participating hotels are classified into 1–5-star categories based on a 270-point questionnaire. The number of stars qualifies hotels as follows (Hotelstars, 2026).

Grouping hotels by size

Hotels can be categorized not only by their quality, but also by the number of rooms. This grouping divides hotels into four categories:

Up to 150 rooms: small hotel

151 to 299 rooms: medium hotel

300 to 600 rooms: large hotel

Over 600 rooms: giant (mega) hotel

From a statistical point of view, grouping according to size is more appropriate than using the Hotelstars Union classification, since participation in that system is voluntary, while all hotels can be categorized based on the number of rooms. In this way, the statistics will be more accurate and reliable.

Hotel activities

Before defining hotel activities, it is important to clarify the concept of hotel services. “Hotel services are the services provided in the various units of the hotel, by the hotel’s staff or equipment, using internal or external resources, free of charge or for a fee, in a mandatory or optional manner, at a high standard, in order to satisfy guests’ expectations and needs during their stay” (Bártfai, 2019). Based on this, the main purpose of hotel activities is to accommodate guests, provide for them and satisfy their other needs.

A hotel basically has to fulfill three activities: accommodation, catering and other services. However, this may vary by hotel type. Accommodation clearly appears in all hotels, but the other two are not necessarily present everywhere. There are hotels where, in addition to accommodation, guests can also use catering services, and in higher-category hotels various additional services are also available. By accommo-

modation we mean the reception and lodging of guests and the hotel room itself, which provides opportunities for sleeping, resting and basic hygiene. The accommodation service includes more than this, but the exact elements may vary by hotel type.

The most basic supply factors are the restaurant and the bar. In higher-category hotels, room service is available to guests, as well as minibars and coffee makers or kettles in the rooms. In addition, larger hotels often have a banquet department for organizing events. This department usually has its own catering options, such as coffee breaks, during which participants can enjoy coffee, tea, soft drinks, small savoury and sweet pastries and fruit in the breaks of an event.

Other services are usually available in higher-category or larger hotels. These can be divided into three large groups: own services free of charge, own services for a fee and external services for a fee. The most basic free services are carrying and storing luggage, providing safes in the rooms or at the reception, and various rental options (e.g. adapters, umbrellas, bicycles, board games, etc.). Chargeable own services may include laundry services and repairs, car storage and washing, personal transport (hotel taxi), swimming pool, sauna, medical treatments, currency exchange and other services specifically related to the hotel's profile. There are countless possibilities for chargeable external services, which are usually typical of 4- and 5-star hotels. Such services can be, for example, programmes sold at the hotel reception (sightseeing tours, guided tours, boat trips), services provided by travel agencies, commercial shops (e.g. souvenir shop, jewellery store), car rental and many other services.

Hotel activities are influenced by both external and internal factors, which can be favourable or unfavourable. External factors include social, economic, political, environmental and technological factors that affect tourism as a whole. A recent negative example is the Covid-19 coronavirus epidemic that broke out in January 2020. As a result of the pandemic, many tourists decided not to travel. Since the epidemic affected almost the entire world directly or indirectly, it had a major impact on the then current situation and future development of tourism. A favourable external influence can be the economic situation of a given country or public safety in cities as a social factor.

Internal factors include the physical condition of the hotel, the hotel staff, the business policy and the established management system. The sales department plays a very important role, since in the strong competition that has developed in the hotel industry it is important to sell not only hotel rooms, but also other hotel services in a complex manner. Successful sales also require well-developed marketing plans. Due to the high importance of internal factors, in addition to the three basic hotel activities, a fourth area must be mentioned separately. These are additional activities or additional functions, such as administration, production units, shift and maintenance work, and social care.

2. Goals and main topics of some hotel areas

Hotel management is implemented in the following areas.

Front Desk Management

Objectives:

Basics of welcoming and serving guests.

Development of communication skills.

Problem solving during interactions with guests.

Main topics:

Check-in and Check-out processes: Steps required when guests arrive and leave. During check-in, reservations are checked, guests are registered and room keys are allocated. The check-out process includes settling the bill and the departure of the guest.

Guest relations management: Application of excellent customer service techniques, handling guest complaints and questions, and ensuring guest satisfaction.

Use of reservation systems: Training in the use of various hotel reservation systems such as Opera PMS or other similar software. The accurate and efficient use of reservation systems is essential for everyday operations.

Exercises:

Situation exercises: Role plays to practice interactions with guests, for example dealing with a difficult guest or resolving a booking error.

Simulation tasks: Use of digital platforms where students can simulate the check-in/check-out process.

Housekeeping

Objectives:

Understanding the importance of maintaining cleanliness and hygiene.

Getting to know the daily operation of the housekeeping department.

Learning quality control techniques.

Main topics:

Cleaning protocols: Steps for cleaning rooms and common areas, including daily cleaning and deep cleaning, and the correct use of various cleaning agents and tools.

Inventory management: Registration and replenishment of household supplies (bedding, cleaning products, etc.).

Quality control: Checking the finished work and correcting any errors, documenting the inspection process and training the housekeeping staff.

Exercises:

Room inspection tasks: The students walk through and check cleaned rooms, assessing compliance with cleanliness regulations.

Cleaning agent knowledge test: Demonstration and testing of the correct use of different cleaning agents and tools.

Restaurant services

Objectives:

Learning the basics of restaurant services.

Understanding trends and eating habits in the hospitality industry.

Development of high-level guest service techniques.

Main topics:

Catering services: Preparing and serving meals and clearing tables. Understanding different serving styles such as American, English or French service.

Menu knowledge: Creating menus and meeting different dietary needs.

Wine and drink pairings: Harmonizing drinks and food, and learning basic wine tasting techniques.

Exercises:

Role-plays: Solving typical problems that occur during meals, such as dealing with an allergic reaction or calming a disgruntled guest.

Menu design project: Creating a creative menu that includes different foods and drinks.

Event Management

Objectives:

Organization and management of events.

Planning the logistics of events.

Managing customer relations before, during and after events.

Main topics:

Basics of event organization: Event planning processes, including scheduling, venue selection and budgeting.

Management of conferences and weddings: Understanding and managing the special needs of these types of events.

Risk management and security: Predicting and managing the risks of events, and developing security measures.

Exercises:

Event planning task: Planning and conducting a real or simulated event.

Post-event evaluation: Evaluate the event by identifying its strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement.

Human resource management**Objectives:**

Understanding the process of recruiting and selecting employees.

Recognizing the strategic role of human resource management in the operation of the hotel.

Motivating and retaining staff.

Main topics:

Recruitment and selection: The process of hiring, conducting interviews and selecting the best candidates.

Performance appraisal: Measuring and evaluating the performance of employees.

Training and development: Continuous training, skill development and career planning for employees.

Exercises:

Interview simulations: Exercises where students interview each other to develop their questioning and assessment skills.

Performance evaluation exercises: Simulations to measure and provide feedback on employee performance.

Marketing and sales**Objectives:**

Getting to know the basics of hotel marketing.

Learning the techniques of market research and competitor analysis.

Development of effective promotional strategies.

Main topics:

Market research and consumer analysis: Defining the target market, creating guest profiles and identifying market trends.

Digital marketing: Using online presence and social media to reach and engage guests.

Pricing strategies: Understanding pricing models and creating dynamic pricing and package offers.

Exercises:

Marketing campaign planning: Students prepare a complete marketing campaign, including goals, strategies and measurement methods.

Competitor analysis: Students analyze one or more competitors, identifying their strengths and weaknesses.

2. QUALITY MANAGEMENT: HOTEL RATING SYSTEMS IN EUROPE

1. Introduction

Hungary's hotel rating system follows international practice. In the case of domestic hotels, stars indicate both the quality and the classification of the properties. Currently, the Hungarian Hotel and Restaurant Association is entitled to certify domestic hotels using the Hotelstars Union's system of requirements and on the basis of government decree 239/2009/X.20./. However, hotel rating is not mandatory.

2. Hotelstars Union (HSU)

According to the UNWTO, the Hotelstars Union is currently the most comprehensive hotel classification and qualification system and trademark across the continents. The Hotelstars National Hotel Certification Trademark, which certifies the quality of accommodations, was elevated to a national trademark in Hungary on June 12, 2012, based on an agreement between the Ministry of National Economy and the Association of Hungarian Hotels and Restaurants. The system helps to increase and maintain the level of service, provide adequate information and protection to consumers, and thereby contributes to the balanced development of the tourism market. The distribution of the trademark, both domestically and internationally, is suitable for distinguishing service providers.

The Hotelstars rating system was established in December 2009 by HOTREC – “HOTREC is a confederation of hotel, restaurant and café associations of the member states of the European Union, which is a non-profit association registered under Belgian law and operating in Brussels.” It was created by following its principles as a professional association of 7 countries: Austria, Czech Republic, Netherlands, Hungary, Germany, Switzerland and Sweden. Currently, 17 member countries make up the association.

The system is based on the fulfilment of a total of 270 conditions – products and services – within which hotels must meet strict criteria in order to obtain the trademark. The conditions were developed based on surveys conducted among guests, so they reflect the needs and expectations of today's travellers. The greatest emphasis is placed on quality services, wellness, impeccable sleeping comfort, and advanced, timely communication.

Since 2010, almost 28,000 hotels have been rated according to the same principles. During this time, the quality of the certified facilities has improved significantly, because it is not enough for a hotel to receive the trademark; maintaining quality in order to keep it is a daily goal.

The main goal of Hotelstars is that hotels that follow the same principles and have the same rating offer a comparable guest experience wherever guests travel between member countries. In this way, the classification system becomes more transparent for guests, and the expected services become clearer for them. Nowadays, formal hotel classification is increasingly complemented by online guest reviews and reputation management systems, which strongly influence booking decisions and perceived service quality.

3. Points system

Hotels can receive a maximum of 940 points based on the 270 conditions of the criteria system. In each category, a minimum and maximum achievable score has been established. Within each category, a “superior” rating has also been defined, for which extra points must be earned. For example, in the case of 3*, the minimum score to be achieved is 80, the maximum score is 260, and obtaining a superior rating means an additional 140 points.

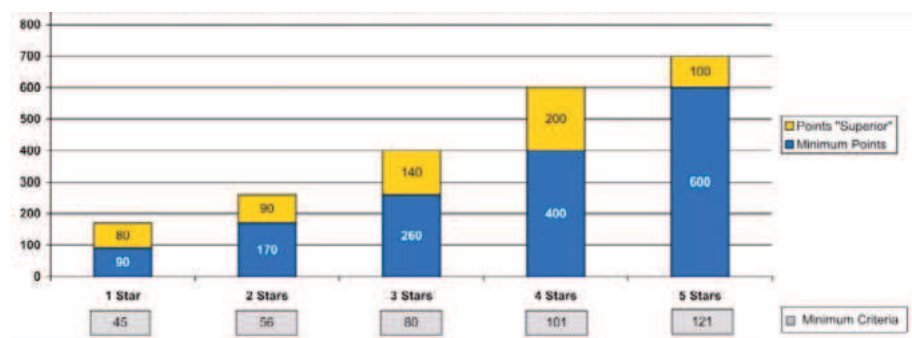


Figure 1. Hotelstars Union – Classification criteria 2015-2020.

Source: <http://www.hotelstars.hu/Default.aspx?tabid=160>

4. Rating of hotels

The quality of a hotel is determined by the “hardware” it offers – the building itself, the size and equipment of the rooms, the service locations (e.g. catering units, business centre, conference rooms, fitness centre, spa and wellness area, garage), their design, the quality of the materials used and their equipment – and by the “software”, i.e. the operation and management of the hotel, the number and preparedness of the staff, their politeness and many other small factors taken together. It is common knowledge for today’s traveller that the quality of hotels worldwide is usually indicated by stars, with 1* being the lowest and 5* being the highest category.

At the same time, there are often significant differences between hotels of the same category – the same number of stars. The reason for this is that the rating requirements of hotels and rating practices differ from country to country. In some countries, hotel rating is mandatory and is carried out by the state’s tourism organizations, while in others it is carried out by professional associations. There are countries where hotel rating is voluntary; for example, in Finland, one of the member states of the European Union, there is no official hotel rating system, and in Italy and Spain the requirements also differ by region.

Geographical, climatic and cultural differences also play a major role in the differences between hotels of the same category in each country. In Southern Europe, guests accept smaller beds in hotel rooms than in Northern Europe; in densely populated Tokyo, even in the case of a 5* hotel, the room and bathroom are smaller than in a middle-class motel in the United States. French guests expect a bidet in the bathroom, while American guests expect an ice machine on every floor. Saunas are available almost everywhere in hotels in Scandinavian countries, which is less common in the Mediterranean region. This situation is not favourable for travellers, as it is often unclear what they can expect from a 3–4* or other category hotel in the Middle East, the United States or even within the European Union.

This recognition led HOTREC, the umbrella organization of the hotel and hospitality associations of the European Union, to start working a few years ago on the convergence of the hotel rating systems established in individual member countries, which resulted in the establishment of the Hotelstars Union hotel rating system in 2009. Taking the above principles into account, the Czech, Dutch, German, Hungarian, Austrian, Swiss and Swedish hotel associations founded the Hotelstars Union in Prague on December 14, 2009. In the 7 founding member countries – which together represent a market of about 150 million people in the EU – approximately 17,000 hotels have been categorized based on the same principles since 2010. As a result of the uniform requirements and the unified qualification procedures, the service level of the hotels in the participating countries has improved, the classification of the hotels has become more transparent for guests, and marketing activities have become more effective. The Hotelstars Union is also open to hotel associations of other EU member states.

The Hotelstars Union – in the participating countries – has defined uniform requirements for each category from 1* to 5*, which can be summarized as follows:

1* – Tourist hotel that meets modest needs:

All rooms are equipped with a bathroom and toilet, the rooms are cleaned daily, all rooms have a colour TV, the room is equipped with a table and chairs, the hotel has a concierge, telephone and fax are available to guests, an extended breakfast and drinks are offered in the hotel, and luggage storage is provided.

2* – Standard – a hotel that meets moderate needs:

Buffet breakfast, reading lamp by the bed, towels and shampoo, wardrobe with shelves, sale of hygiene items in the hotel, credit card payment option.

3* – Comfort – a hotel that meets average needs:

Reception open at least 14 hours a day and available 24 hours by telephone, staff who speak foreign languages, telephone in the guest rooms, internet access in the rooms or in the common area, hair dryer in the bathroom, cosmetic towels in the guest room, suitcase rack, shoe cleaners, washing and ironing for guests on request, extra pillow and blanket on request, organized handling of guest complaints.

4* – First class – a hotel meeting high demands:

Reception open for at least 18 hours, available 24 hours by telephone, comfortable furniture in the hotel lobby, drinks service and bar, buffet or à la carte breakfast, room service, bathrobes and slippers on request, various bathroom amenities (shower gel, shampoo, shower cap, etc.), cosmetic mirror, ample storage space, internet access and internet terminal.

5* – Luxury – a hotel that meets the highest demands:

24-hour reception with multilingual staff, valet and doorman, concierge service, restaurant, minibar, 24-hour room service, individually packaged branded cosmetics in the bathroom, internet access, PC connection in the guest room, room safe, ironing and shoe cleaning service, evening turndown service, anonymous testing of services.

5. HSU criteria in the Kempinski Hotel Corvinus or luxury and elegance at the highest level

Kempinski Hotel Corvinus clearly represents the highest level of luxury and elegance. Even the “smallest” Superior rooms are as well equipped as larger suites in some other hotels. In terms of size, it is true that they are only 28 m², but even this is enough space for relaxing after a business trip or meeting. After relaxing, guests can return to work immediately, as every room has a desk, free Wi-Fi and a high-speed internet connection. In addition, every room has an in-room safe, flat-screen TV and air conditioning, and 99% of the hotel’s rooms have bathtubs and/or shower cabins. All rooms offer excellent views, looking either onto Fashion Street, lined with fashion stores, or onto Erzsébet Square park. If the living space of the three room types (28 m² – 43 m²) is not sufficient, guests can also choose from five types of suites. The living space of the suites is much larger than that of the rooms mentioned above, ranging from 43 m² to 172 m². Each suite has its own Nespresso machine. Due to

their size, guests can already feel as if they were at home; the suites provide an excellent home during their stay. The executive suite is particularly special, as it not only has a safe in which guests can keep their wallet and phone, but even a laptop fits comfortably inside. The most distinctive offer, however, is the Corvinus Collection suites, as here five different types of suites are distinguished, each individually equipped and decorated:

- Herend Suite – with a valuable porcelain collection. The suite is decorated with worldfamous, handpainted Herend porcelain. Size: 120 m².
- Elizabeth Suite – the atmosphere of the furnishings recalls the era of the monarchy, with warm colours, a homely feel, many mirrors and original paintings. Size: 95 m².
- Matthias Rex Suite – every moment is unforgettable among the elegant furniture and valuable works of art. Size: 105 m².
- Beatrix Suite – the wonderful view creates a majestic feeling for guests. Size: 105 m².
- Andrásy Suite – located in the heart of the city centre, with a wonderful view of Andrásy Street. Size: 90 m².

Finally, the largest and bestequipped suite, chosen with particular preference by VIP guests, is the Royal Suite “Corvinus”, which offers unique and special elegance, generous spaces and the highest level of comfort. A staff of 300 is available 24 hours a day. The Corvinus 11 Royal Suite, furnished in a classic style, is located on the top floor of the hotel with a wonderful view of the city. The equipment includes free WiFi, minibar, 46” LCD TV with communication and entertainment system, DVD player, movie channels, a fully equipped office with an Apple iMac 21.5” desktop computer, safe, individually adjustable air conditioning, dressing table and trouser press.

It has happened more than once that a VIP guest not only booked the suite, but also reserved an entire floor for the accompanying staff; such requests are fulfilled as far as possible, for an extra fee. For example, one famous Hollywood actor asked for a fountain in the suite as a finishing touch, which was arranged for him. When he arrived, he did not know whether his request had been fulfilled, but when he saw it, he was very satisfied and congratulated the staff. Every suite includes two turndown services a day, 24hour room service, 24hour concierge service and all other services that are indispensable in a 5* hotel. The so-called “Lady in Red” service is a distinctive Kempinski specialty. As the name suggests, ladies dressed in red help guests manage their affairs, accompany them in the hotel, listen to them, talk to them, and guests can share all their requests and complaints with them. This service is available in all Kempinski hotels, and the ladies’ clothing is always inspired by the local culture.

6. Family-friendly hotel rating

MSSZÉSZ has developed a new, uniform evaluation and requirements system for familyfriendly accommodations. This transparent system was developed as a supplement to the Hotelstars rating system, and the registration of the certification mark was initiated at the National Intellectual Property Office. The criteria system consists of 91 points, which cover the entire operation and approach of the hotel. The rating can be requested by hotels already rated by Hotelstars. The trademark provides a positive distinction in three quality levels (Gold–Silver–Bronze). Bronze represents the entry level, silver the advanced level and gold the mature level, but high expectations must be met even at the entry level. The familyfriendly rating is not tied to the number of stars; for example, a threestar hotel can also be goldrated familyfriendly, and a fivestar luxury hotel can be silver or bronzerated. The fee for the familyfriendly certification is HUF 75,000 + VAT, and the price for the trademark plate is HUF 34,000 + VAT.

7. International barrier-free certification

With the help of the Acces4you qualification system developed by two domestic professionals – managing director Balázs Berecz and strategic director Tamás Méri, who is also personally involved as a wheelchair user – Szállás.hu can issue accessibility certificates to its partners. As a result of this development, people with mobility impairments or limited mobility, the blind and partially sighted, the hard of hearing and the deaf, people with cognitive impairments and those arriving with assistance dogs can easily and specifically find suitable accommodation. With the introduction of the barrierfree filtering system, accommodations can confidently welcome guests with special needs, and travellers can choose accessible properties with reliable information and confidence.

After a detailed market analysis, they started developing the system. With the involvement of rehabilitation engineers, a system of criteria consisting of 550 points was created, which can be applied to all types of real estate, not only hotels and restaurants, but also shopping centres and public institutions. There is a short, free prequalification with 30–35 questions for everyone. Those who pass this can apply for an onsite audit, during which the property is inspected and assessed based on the 550 points. Afterwards, the experts evaluate what they have seen and, according to the customer's request, make suggestions on where the result could be improved; the outcome can be a basic, bronze, silver or gold level. These developments typically require relatively little investment.

8. Green hotel certification

The development of green values is one of the most defining factors of today's tourism, both on the demand and the supply side. The number of hotels that place great

emphasis on green, environmentally friendly operation is increasing day by day. The presence and application of green products and services in a hotel is an increasingly important criterion for conscious consumers when choosing accommodation.

The successor to green tourism is ecotourism, a form of travel that aims to reduce the negative effects of mass tourism in the 20th century. Ecotourism is defined by the World

Conservation Union as: “Ecological tourism or ecotourism is environmentally responsible travel and visits to relatively undisturbed natural areas for the purpose of enjoying and appreciating their natural, present and past cultural values, in a way that spares them by mitigating the effects of the visit, as well as the social and economic impact to the benefit of the local population.”

Eco or green tourism can also be called sustainable tourism, since all three concepts involve the smart use, development and protection of natural, cultural and built environmental elements.

Defining a green hotel. According to the Association of Green Hotels, the management of ecological programmes (water and energy conservation, waste management, etc.) and the Save the Planet initiative make hotels “green”. On the one hand, green operations can be a competitive advantage for hotels, as they can differentiate themselves from other properties and improve the company’s image, while at the same time reducing their energy consumption and thus their operating costs. Currently, nearly 50 hotels in Hungary hold the “Green Hotel 2019–2020” title.

9. The process of hotel qualification

Hotels can be grouped into certain categories based on their quality. The quality of a hotel is determined by the “hardware” it offers – the building’s appearance, structure and condition; the size, equipment and number of rooms; the service locations (e.g. catering units, business centres, conference rooms, fitness, wellness and spa centre, garage) and their design; the quality of the materials used and their equipment – and by the “software”, i.e. the operation and management of the hotel, the number and preparedness of the staff, their politeness and many other small factors together. (<http://www.hotelstars.hu/Default.aspx?tabid=93>)

The main purpose of categorization is to provide tourists with reliable information and to let them know what they can expect and in what quality. There are many ways to classify hotels, but there is not yet a unified organization or system that has been accepted by the governments of all countries, and it is possible that there never will be, since all nations differ in some ways, value luxury differently and have different needs. The quality of hotels is usually measured in stars: the more stars the hotel receives, the higher the standard. 1* is the lowest, 5* means the highest category, but at the same time there are some hotels that offer a higher level of quality than the 5* category. All of these hotels are in the cities of the United Arab Emirates, such as the 7* Burj Al Arab Jumeirah Hotel in Dubai and the 7* Emirates Palace Hotel in Abu Dhabi.

3. THE EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 VIRUS ON THE HOTEL INDUSTRY IN BUDAPEST, THE PRESENTATION OF RELATED RESEARCH

1. Introduction

In 2020, the COVID-19 epidemic significantly affected domestic tourism. Compared to the same period in 2019, the losses of commercial accommodation in Hungary exceeded HUF 257 billion (54%). This is supported by the fact that, as a result of the crisis, the number of guest nights of foreign tourists and the accommodation fee income of hotels in the capital dropped dramatically by 78% in Hungary, resulting in HUF 147 billion less income (ÁSZ, 2021). Hotels that reopened after closures due to the virus raised their prices in the capital by an average of 24% to compensate for the loss of income. Tourism data for the second half of 2021 improved as a result of the lifting of some travel restrictions at international and domestic level, which was mainly due to the lower average number of new coronavirus cases. Domestic and foreign demand started to grow again.

In September 2021, the number of registered guest nights increased by 76% (1,352,000 nights) nationally, and by 481% (373,000 nights) in Budapest. More than half of all guest nights of foreign tourists were realized in Budapest. In September 2021, Hungarian hotels collectively had a 98% higher total gross turnover (HUF 31,731 million), but this was still 33% lower than the data from two years earlier. In terms of total revenues, hotels in Hungary earned 32.9% less and Budapest hotels 59.3% less than in 2019. Hotel room occupancy was 54.4% nationally and 50.2% in Budapest in September. The average gross price of rooms in the country was HUF 22,747 and in the capital HUF 29,347. These average prices were 6.3% and 14.4% higher than before COVID. REVPAR, i.e. revenue per available room, which is a measure suitable for comparing hotel performance, was on average 22.6% higher in Hungarian hotels and 48.8% higher in Budapest. From Trendriport's study on domestic and international tourism performance, we also learn that in September 2021, 795 hotels were operating nationwide and 153 in Budapest, and that 224 Hungarian hotels were forced to temporarily or permanently close since the outbreak of the coronavirus (MSSZÉSZ, 2021).

How the hotels of Budapest responded to the handling of the epidemic situation?

Enhanced cleanliness protocols were introduced in hotels worldwide, and the hotels in Budapest were no exception. The measures affected all departments. Wear-

ing masks and gloves became essential for all staff members. Hand sanitizers were placed at key points throughout the hotel. Only a limited number of people were allowed to use the hotel elevators at the same time. Members of the Front Office team were required to wash their hands very frequently and to use hand sanitizers before and after each check-in and check-out, as well as in all contact with guests. Management installed transparent plexiglass screens on many reception desks. In order to maintain distance when queuing, many hotels also used markings on the floor.

More and more hotels introduced online check-in and check-out, encouraged cashless payment and urged guests to use these options. In several hotels in Budapest, drop-off boxes for room keys and magnetic cards were placed so that they would not be passed directly from hand to hand between guests and staff. In this way, employees wearing gloves had the opportunity to disinfect the keys or plastic cards after the guest's departure. Staff regularly disinfected frequently touched surfaces such as workstations, cash registers, payment terminals, pens, tables and worktops, and door handles.

In the larger Budapest hotels, the job of concierge almost without exception became impossible and unnecessary, and was therefore abolished. In the absence of guests, there was no longer any need to sell programmes, arrange guests' affairs or order taxis. Since positions in the Front Office department (receptionists, concierges/porters) are largely based on a commission-based salary system, staff income decreased significantly. The position responsible for guest relations was also no longer needed due to the lack of guests. The reception staff took care of the special needs of the very few resident guests (sometimes only one or two per hotel). Porters were required to disinfect guests' luggage. It became increasingly common for guests not to allow staff to carry luggage or park their cars, so this department also lost a significant amount of tips.

The work of colleagues in the wellness department also became impossible, as state hygiene regulations required that this department be closed. The use of swimming pools, saunas, steam baths and jacuzzis was prohibited everywhere. The Back Office department was directly affected by the virus situation, especially in relation to reservations.

Travellers enjoyed strong EU protections, including refunds and the right to information if a trip was cancelled because a trader cancelled independent travel or package tours. The COVID-19 crisis, which affected both consumers and the travel industry, led to widespread violations of consumer rights. Many Member States also introduced national emergency measures directly contrary to EU law. They allowed airlines and tour operators to issue vouchers to customers or to delay the legal deadline for cash refunds. This was no different in the case of Budapest hotels. Before the advent of vaccines, travel cancellations were almost completely tolerated. Cancellation conditions, such as penalties or restrictive booking terms (e.g. advance bank transfer), almost completely disappeared. This was also due to the fact that the constantly

changing epidemiological situation and the latest information repeatedly discouraged those wishing to travel. Hotels were pleased if they received even one or two unconditional reservations. As a first step, hotels always offered their guests vouchers or rebooking options, and only refunded the amount paid as a last resort. In terms of reservation discounts and special offers, hotels almost “bid” against each other.

Housekeeping staff had to pay extra attention to cleaning rooms, changing textiles and ensuring cleanliness. Cleaning times increased, and rooms were provided with more towels and toiletries on a more regular basis. Due to the risk of infection, additional preparations (sweets, flowers, greeting cards, etc.), previously provided to guests, disappeared from hotel rooms. Many hotels (e.g. Sofitel Budapest Chain Bridge) did not release a given room to the next guest until 24 hours after check-out, thereby reducing the risk of infection and reassuring arriving guests. Many hotels used this as a positive communication tool. However, this practice also led to a drastic reduction in capacity and the number of guest nights.

In the Food and Beverage department (hotel restaurants, room service, banquets), all types of food were considered potentially contaminated if they came into contact with any presumably contaminated equipment, surface or environment. Proper cleaning and avoiding cross-contamination became critical. In restaurant and breakfast areas, tables were placed 3–5 meters apart. This meant that, similar to hotel rooms, only about half as many guests could be accommodated at the same time. In many places the tables were not pre-set, so that the virus could not settle on glasses and cutlery. Physical, tangible menus were replaced by online versions. By scanning QR codes placed on the tables, guests could view the current food and beverage offer.

The function of the banquet and event organization department practically ceased completely after the government’s ban on gatherings and events. Hotel management and staff did everything in their power to keep pathogens outside the walls of the building and encouraged guests to cooperate in this.

State subsidies in the tourism sector, in the hotel industryEuropean Union subsidies to the tourism sector:

One important and not to be forgotten element is the EU rescue package, which was provided both by Hungary and by the Union. The measures taken by national governments were of decisive importance for both employers and employees. Employees who remained working in the tourism sector after the beginning of COVID-19 and employers who continued to operate their businesses despite declining guest traffic could apply for state support.

“On March 10, 2021, the European Investment Fund signed a guarantee agreement worth EUR 8.2 million (HUF 3 billion) with the Hungarian Enterprise Development Foundation. From this amount, Hungarian small and medium-sized enterprises operating in the cultural and creative sectors can receive support so that they can keep their employees and get out of the crisis faster. The agreement, the financing

of which is provided by the European Commission within the framework of the guarantee instrument for the cultural and creative sectors and the European Strategic Investment Fund, enables the Hungarian Enterprise Development Foundation to increase its lending capacity and thus helps smaller media enterprises to access funds.” (www.turizmus.com, 2021)

State support for businesses

The majority of companies operating in the tourism sector used state subsidies aimed at mitigating the effects of the coronavirus epidemic. Many companies chose the option of having the obligation to pay contributions suspended. Others took advantage of state wage subsidies for companies. Many businesses also used the moratorium on loan repayments. Some postponed their annual report. Less than 15% of companies operating in tourism applied for development support, while 11% applied for preferential loans.

Accommodation providers registered with the National Tourist Information Center (NTAK) could use state assistance in the form of subsidies. “For these accommodations, the state reimburses the accommodation provider 80% of the net income calculated for bookings registered in NTAK until November 8, 2020, provided that the accommodation service provider pays the wages of the employees employed at the accommodation in at least the month of November. The basis for calculating the amount to be reimbursed is the registered reservations that apply to the period within 30 days from the entry into force of this decree.” (ado.hu, 2020)

Sectoral state wage subsidy for employees: as one of the latest measures, the government expanded the sectoral wage subsidy programme and also enabled subsidies to be paid in advance. Businesses in a difficult situation due to restrictions could receive support in the amount of 50 percent of the gross wages of the employed person, up to HUF 241,500 gross per month from February 1, 2021, and up to HUF 251,100 gross per month if the employer pays the employee’s wages and undertakes not to terminate the employment relationship by notice or mutual agreement until June 30. (www.nfsz.munka.hu, 2021). Similar labour shortages, operational disruptions, and workforce restructuring were observed throughout the European hospitality industry during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the experiences of Budapest hotels should be interpreted within the broader context of challenges faced by the international hotel sector.

2. Primary research results

The goal of my quantitative research, compiled from a statistical and sociological perspective, is to produce objective, quantifiable results about how the coronavirus has affected employees of Budapest hotels. A quantitative research questionnaire was filled out by 120 Budapest hotel employees who were personally affected by the

coronavirus pandemic. Based on the research results, 64% of the respondents were women and 46% were men. Based on their age distribution, almost half of the respondents were between 35 and 50 years old; 27%, i.e. 32 people, were between 25 and 35 years old; 12 people were between 18 and 25 years old; and 20 people were over 50 years old.

One question referred to the employees' years spent in the hotel industry before the appearance of COVID-19. Based on the answers, 53% of employees had worked in the hotel industry for more than 10 years before the pandemic, which means 62 people out of 120. The other half of the respondents, 45% to be precise, had spent less time in the hotel industry until 2019. Approximately one-third of the respondents had been employed in Budapest hotels for 1–3 years, one-third for 3–5 years and one-third for 5–10 years.

According to the job titles and hotel departments of the respondents, 42 of the 120 employees worked in the Front Office area. More than half of these colleagues were employed as receptionists, while the rest worked as concierges, guest relations staff, room reservation assistants, porters and business/call centre agents. The questionnaire was filled out by 16 supervisors, 14 housekeepers and 4 general cleaners from Housekeeping, the department responsible for hotel room cleaning. A total of 22 responses came from the Food and Beverage (hospitality) department, of which 14 indicated the position of server, 4 pastry chef, 3 cook and 1 supervisor. Ten people answered from the Sales and Marketing department. 22% of the 120 respondents came in total from the Purchasing and Accounts, Human Resources, and Maintenance and Security departments, in proportions of approximately one-third each. IT (Information Technology) positions were not represented.

Another point of interest is that 36 of the 120 respondents hold middle or senior management positions, and 8 are hotel managers or deputy managers. The questionnaire did not aim to interview colleagues working in the Spa and Wellness department, because the hotels participating in the research reported that they mostly worked with external staff in this area. Based on the roles played by the respondents in the hotel, it is clear that answers were received from almost all departments and job types. This is fortunate because it made it possible to draw conclusions on the research topic based on the opinions of people involved in almost all areas of the hotel industry.

One of the questions of the primary research was aimed at whether the coronavirus had an impact on the work or employment status of hotel workers in Budapest; and if so, to what extent and in what way. Summarizing the answers, the following results were obtained: 73% (88 people) of the 120 hotel workers surveyed reported that their employment status had changed, and only 27% were still working at the same workplace as before the virus. 40.6% of the 120 employees were dismissed, and 20% resigned voluntarily. There are only 32 people who are still working at the same workplace as before the virus; among them, 28 are currently working in the same position and 4 have changed position. 18% of the workers have been working in

another hotel since the appearance of the virus, and 6% have been working in another area of the tourism industry.

Of the 120 respondents to the quantitative questionnaire, 55 people (46%) are currently working in the hotel industry. Since the appearance of COVID-19, 45% of the surveyed Budapest hotel workers have left the tourism sector and are currently working in other areas of the economy. Four of the respondents are not currently employed, which means that 3.3% of those who lost their job are currently not working. Taking these data into account, a further question was formulated to explore whether those currently employed are satisfied with their current workplace. This part of the research can be indirectly classified as in-depth, because it reflects the current feelings and opinions of the respondents. Based on the results, 73.3% (88 out of 120) said they were satisfied, and 21.7% (28 people) said they were dissatisfied. The open questions of the quantitative questionnaire could be answered optionally.

Those employees who continue to work in hotels claimed that their love of the profession keeps them in tourism and that they see the hotel industry as their vocation. They like maintaining contact with guests, conversing in foreign languages, the non-standard 8-hour schedule (e.g. 8:00–16:00; 9:00–17:00) and the everyday challenges. They appreciate the learning opportunities resulting from the constant change and development of the profession. Some highlighted the “buzzing”, dynamic, constantly moving environment. Many mentioned that they really feel at home in this sector, have experience in it and “almost do not understand anything else”. They feel good when they can help guests and be kind to them.

The results of the quantitative questionnaire research greatly contribute to successful research on the topic. Some questions received mostly negative, others more positive answers. By analysing these, various problems can be identified, negative effects can be defined, conclusions can be drawn and suggestions can be made. Collecting and keeping in mind the positive elements is also of great significance, as they can be regarded as a firm foundation and a source of strength, supporting a sense of security and peace of mind and encouraging success.

Factors influencing the size of hotel staff:

The size of the hotel The higher the number of rooms, the higher the number of staff required. However, this increase is not directly proportional, as several positions can serve a larger number of guests with the same number of employees (e.g. reception, kitchen preparation). On the other hand, the number of staff required for floor work increases more proportionally with the number of rooms and beds.

Type of hotel

The type of hotel and the additional services provided also determine staffing needs. Specific services usually require additional staff, e.g.:
Medical hotel: doctors, assistants, masseurs, dietitians, etc.

Conference hotel: technicians, room decorators, interpreters

Resort: animators, sports instructors.

Airport hotel: employees of 24-hour catering and other round-the-clock services.

Standard

An increase in standard also generates additional staff, because with a higher classification the hotel promises a higher level of service to guests. In addition to a more demanding design (larger, more comfortable rooms, more services), it also means unique products (more time-consuming food and drink selection) and increased individual care, all of which require more staff.

Mechanization or technical development

Machines can replace labour in several areas, e.g. administration (computerisation), cleaning (cleaning machines), washing (dishwashers), material handling (elevators, chutes, storage equipment), garden and park maintenance (lawn mowers), etc.

Workforce situation

A lack of labour in the hotel's operating area or a high average income level may force management to keep staff numbers low.

3. Summary

The turnover of commercial accommodation in Hungary has more than halved, and the number of guest nights has decreased by more than 80% in Budapest alone. As a result of the epidemic, many people lost their jobs or experienced major changes in their working conditions. Looking at the current human resource situation in Budapest's hotel industry, the quality of a well-educated, motivated tourism workforce shows a decreasing trend. It is increasingly difficult to meet both employees' salary expectations and employers' job requirements. Many professionals are turning away from the industry. Most of them complain that the average salary in tourism is low and that their work is not sufficiently appreciated. Many try their luck abroad. Employers complain about untrained or unmotivated employees who, in their view, lack a continuous desire to learn, commitment to the profession, and appropriate empathy and loyalty. Overall, both hotel managers and employees interviewed in the research viewed the current situation pessimistically.

The results of the research questions can be summarized below:

Even as the COVID situation improves, will the staff positions consolidated due to cost reductions remain? It can be clearly stated that until the pandemic situation normalizes and hotel guest traffic and occupancy return to appropriate levels, hotels will not need as many employees as before COVID. However, as conditions return to normal, hotels do and will need all pre-pandemic positions and staff in order to provide the highest possible level of service to guests. There is a reason why hotel jobs

have been developed and refined over decades and centuries: in a high-occupancy hotel it is vital for efficiency and service speed that tasks are performed by employees specialised in different roles.

Is there a department on which the hotel spends less because costs have increased due to the introduction of hygiene protocols? Currently, no definitive statement can be made on this issue. The reason is that, since the third wave of the epidemic, hotel operations have not yet fully returned to normal. At present, the majority of hotels in Budapest are operating with a reduced workforce, and in many hotels their catering departments are still closed. In the long term, it is not yet possible to say whether, due to hygiene regulations, the operating budget of any hotel department will be reduced or reassigned.

Will the priority hygiene measures introduced as a result of COVID remain even after the epidemic has normalized? During the interviews, all hotels stated unanimously that they intend to maintain enhanced hygiene standards in the future for the sake of both employees and guests.

Will many of the workers forced to leave their careers due to COVID leave the tourism industry for good? Employees can be divided into two groups. In one group are those who saw more secure income opportunities in another sector under current conditions. Many of them changed sector successfully, like their new jobs, and thanks to their language skills were employed by multinational companies for a much higher monthly salary, so they no longer wish to return to tourism. The quantitative research results support this, as 45% of 120 former hotel industry employees currently work outside the tourism sector, and 73.3% of them are satisfied with their current workplace. Hotel managers interviewed in qualitative research also confirmed these data and trends.

In the other group are mainly those workers whose income was largely based on commission or tips. The majority of them would return to work in the hotel industry if occupancy levels and guest traffic returned to their pre-COVID-19 state. At the same time, experienced and dedicated colleagues who had been laid off due to the coronavirus and who were close to retirement are often not being rehired by employers.

4. STAGES OF CRISIS MANAGEMENT DURING THE PANDEMIC

1. Introduction

The virus called Covid-19, which particularly affects the tourism industry, spread like wildfire around the world. In the spring of 2020, hotels were forced to close immediately, airports stopped operating, and national borders were closed. As a result, occupancy rates dropped drastically, despite the fact that the 2020 results were expected to exceed the 2019 peak. According to KSH data, the number of hotel guest nights in April was 28 thousand (1.5%), of which 16 thousand (2.1%) were domestic and 12 thousand (1.1%) were foreign. As a result of the coronavirus epidemic, domestic demand was 97.9% lower and foreign demand 98.9% lower than the base in that month (Trendriport, 2020). A total of 10,466 hotel rooms were operated in Budapest in April, which is 47.3% less than the base. The reason for the decrease in hotel capacity in Budapest is that only 121 hotels were operating compared to the previous year's 205, due to falling demand caused by the coronavirus epidemic; the rest were temporarily closed ([www.trendriport](http://www.trendriport.hu) , 2020).

The summer of 2020, after the severe spring months, was a refreshment for hotels, but mainly domestic tourism was able to function rather than international. The reason for this is that border closures and restrictions were still in place in many countries, which severely hampered international travel. With the arrival of September, the number of infected people increased sharply again, so the autumn and winter months required new border closures and another suspension of hotel operations. The autumn–winter months of 2020, full of strict rules and restrictions, produced another setback for hotels. In order to stop the spread of the coronavirus in Hungary, the government repeatedly closed borders, and hotels could only accept guests arriving for business, economic and educational purposes (Trendriport, 2020). Occupancy rates and the number of guest nights were negligible.

At the beginning of 2021, the number of registered infections continued to increase, so the strict regulations to curb the spread of the virus remained in force until spring. As a result, the months of January–February and the spring period also represented weak performance for hotels. The low number of guest nights recorded in December continued until March 2021. In the fourth month of the year, the number of guest nights exceeded that of April 2020 by 316.9% nationwide, by 534.9% in Budapest, by 104.2% in the Balaton region and by 224% in hotels outside the capital. At the same time, the 140,000 guest nights registered nationwide in April 2021 were still 92.5% lower than in April 2019, and the 59,000 guest nights registered in Budapest hotels were 93% lower than in April 2019 (Trendriport, 2021). Although the April values

did not yet bring rapid, profit-oriented growth, they were followed by increasingly positive or similar data until July 2021.

In August 2021 – the second month of the main holiday season – both domestic and foreign demand improved as a result of domestic measures taken to prevent the spread of the coronavirus and the partial lifting of international travel restrictions. In the eighth month of the year, the number of guest nights exceeded those of August 2020, already affected by the outbreak of the crisis, by 12.2% nationwide, by 97.5% in Budapest, and by 1.8% in hotels outside the capital, while in the Balaton region it fell short by 3.3% (Trendriport, 2021).

2. Stages of crises

The course of a crisis can be broken down into stages. It is not possible to determine the exact number of stages, since a crisis produces fluctuating results, which makes it difficult to study and therefore also to find solutions. Crises are most often divided into three stages, i.e. the periods before, during and after the crisis. In the study of Ivan Ka Wai Lai and Jose Weng Chou Wong (2020), three stages are also highlighted. The pre-disaster period is linked to a triggering event, and the purpose of research conducted in this phase is to examine the state of preparedness (Carmeli–Schaubroeck, 2008). The purpose of research in the post-disaster phase is to draw lessons and facilitate the management of future events, while during a crisis – after the emergence of an emergency – the priority is the management and handling of emergency situations (Sawalha et al., 2013; Wai Lai–Chou Wong, 2020).

In the first stage, when the danger appears, we perceive and become aware of the existence of the problem. After that, the situation creating the crisis slowly begins to unfold; this is the formation phase. Then the factors causing the crisis are constantly present and cause more and more damage. According to this, the next period is reaching the peak. As a result of reaching the peak, a decline develops in the system, which is followed by the search for solutions in the hope of a successful outcome. What is required for a successful outcome? The tourism industry sought an answer to this in 2020. Due to closures and restrictions, the only way out of the epidemic for tourism institutions and service providers was to prepare for and then carry out a grand reopening. For a successful reopening, thorough preparation and conscious crisis management are essential. The recovery and rehabilitation time from the crisis are unpredictable; tourism decision-makers can mitigate the damage suffered to a certain degree by applying crisis management plans (Marton et al., 2018; Kovács et al., 2021). Each stage requires a different strategy (Barlai–Kővágó, 1996; Boros, 2002). In the case of the coronavirus, the solution stage was the administration of the vaccine. Entering this stage, it became possible to strengthen the idea of reopening, plan it and then implement the rebuilding. However, these all require a stable and well-functioning crisis management strategy.

3. Crisis management

Tourism is a sector that reacts very sensitively to crises. Travellers' sense of security is shaken in a crisis situation. Travel no longer means freedom and experience, but risk and danger. In order to restore the sense of security for those involved in tourism, the damage must be repaired and the entire organization rebuilt or strengthened. All of this is only possible with an appropriate crisis management strategy, rules that create security, the introduction of new measures and the creation of an offer that meets new demand.

In order to choose the right method for dealing with a crisis, the root cause, effects and interrelationships must be known, as well as well-established crisis management theories. Effective crisis management deals with threats in sequence. First, it prioritizes the restoration of public safety, followed by the recovery of financial losses, and finally the protection of the organization or area affected by the crisis and its participants, as well as the reduction and elimination of additional sources of danger arising from the crisis. Crisis management is not a tool that suddenly provides a solution to every problem, but rather a process. The purpose of this process is to prevent a crisis, to manage a crisis that has already occurred, or to provide a plan for dealing with subsequent crises.

Several researchers deal with the analysis of crisis management; thus, the above-mentioned stages appear in different formulations in different studies. József Veress and László Tihanyi, in their book "Crisis Management Instead of Bankruptcy" (1991), and Etelka Katits, in "Financial Methods of Corporate Crisis Management" (2000), describe the phases of crisis management in three different ways. These theories have been explained by many researchers and experts, sometimes with different terminology or by breaking down the management process into more stages, but their aims and content are essentially the same. Crisis management models were often based on the "crisis life cycle" adopted from biological models and showed the relationship between a crisis and an organization, as both go through birth, growth, maturity and decline (Herrero–Pratt, 1996). This analogy helps crisis researchers to study the development and staging of crises (Crandall et al., 2016; Abo-Murad et al., 2019).

Preventive form

This form prioritizes prevention before a crisis occurs. It is characterized by early and sometimes drastic intervention, since the goal is to recognize and prevent potential or hidden crisis processes as soon as possible.

Active crisis management

This serves to protect against an acute crisis situation that has already developed, to prevent the crisis from fully unfolding, and to mitigate unavoidable damage.

Reactive crisis management

In this stage, the prevention of future crises and preparation for them gain prominence. During this period, the aim is to identify risks and reduce them. Possible scenarios are developed and the level of threat is assessed (Kovács et al., 2021). According to Stojanovic and Ilic (2016), during risk management, stakeholders and risks must be identified, and the latter must be analysed based on their impact on the destination. Decisions on the necessary measures must be taken after the risks are known and possible outcomes have been examined (Kovács et al., 2021).

After this, the preparation phase can begin. In the second stage of the model, building on lessons learned from known crises and by analysing known solutions and theories, a path to a successful outcome is sought. The most effective possible responses to events occurring during the crisis are researched. In the case of the coronavirus, it is difficult to plan far ahead due to its fluctuating effects; however, preparedness and knowledge of possible outcomes can be an advantage even when damage occurs quickly. These crisis management stages can be directly applied to hotel operations, where preparedness, rapid operational response, and post-crisis recovery planning determine organisational resilience and long-term competitiveness.

After the appearance of the crisis, the intervention phase begins. During this period, a quick and appropriate reaction is essential. The leaders of an organization – in this case hotels – must start crisis management based on the information and plans developed during the preparation period. Using the example of the coronavirus, typical rapid reactions in an already established crisis situation included securing the people staying at the given destination, i.e. placing them under quarantine, as well as introducing and enforcing rules and regulations related to the virus. In addition to all this, different industries can respond to the negative effects caused by the crisis, in this case the virus, with customized solutions and measures.

In the post-crisis period, in addition to mitigating the damage caused by the crisis and applying the solutions found, it is important to explore ways to prepare for new crises. Learning from the damage, analysing the pros and cons of the facts and adapting to the new situation is not an easy task. For this reason, and learning from the crisis, a risk management strategy must be created after the crisis. During this preparation, it is important to select and plan an appropriate crisis management method for the given type of crisis. According to a study by Coombs (2007), an organization can be better prepared for a possible crisis if it has a crisis management plan that it develops and updates at least annually. In addition, for successful recovery from a crisis, it is necessary to appoint and train a crisis management team, which will put the crisis management plan into practice and can also assess its effectiveness. On this basis, effective crisis management can be developed, which provides preparedness for future crises. However, it is important to stress that even a well-designed and effectively functioning plan cannot always be a complete solution to a crisis. Each type of crisis requires a different procedure and treatment method, and there is no rule or guide that can guarantee 100% recovery.

The process of crisis management, like the crisis itself, can be approached in several ways. There can be various strategies and steps that help managers to overcome crisis situations. The following suggestions are from John K. S. Chong (2004), who formulated crisis management in six steps.

As a first step, he considers coping to be the most important. As he writes in his work (2004), everything must be done “like taking a bull by the horns” in order to alleviate the damage caused by the crisis as soon as possible. According to experts, the development of reaction plans is also an important activity in the prevention of crises. This suggestion by Chong also appears in his study, as he proposes to deal with crises by deploying an existing crisis management plan. Those who do not have a crisis management plan face a more difficult road to recovery. After management has done everything to reduce the losses that have occurred, it is necessary to rethink the actions needed in the next stage. When a company is recovering from a crisis, senior managers must make calm and conscious decisions.

To do this, they should ask themselves the following questions:

What happened and how?

What made this possible?

Why did it happen in this way? (Chong, 2004).

The essence of these questions is to bring the organization closer to solutions and not to find a scapegoat (Chong, 2004). In the rethinking phase, it is about assessing the extent of the damage, drawing lessons, gathering information that can be used in the future and mapping and overcoming the expected difficulties of the next stages.

Coping

Redesign

Initiative

Perception

Intervention

“Sandbagging”.

As a third action, initiative is mentioned as a crisis management step. The question may arise: what should be initiated during a crisis? The answer is change. Change is mostly necessary in organizations where there is no adequate crisis management plan, or where the crisis is of such a type that, despite preparedness, pre-planned solutions are not effective enough. Changes caused by the crisis must be measured and implemented in parallel, in order to enable recovery and further development.

Among the stages described in the study, perception is listed in fourth place. The primary purpose of this step is to assess the early warning signs of a potential crisis (Chong, 2004). In this period, the focus is on forward thinking and planning. Managers observe their external and internal environment and study possible sources of danger, for example with the help of a SWOT analysis. It is difficult to predict future crises, especially if they are not man-made. However, recognizing early signals, analysing the market, understanding the functioning of other industries, building

relationships with them and managers' in-depth knowledge of all areas of their own organization can provide a path towards solutions (Chong, 2004).

According to Chong (2004), the fifth step is intervention. During this period, after signals have been detected, responses follow one after another. The best strategy is always prevention and rapid reaction, but this is not always possible given the speed and severity of the crisis. In such cases, the primary goal of the organization is to defuse the unfolding crisis as soon as possible. As the last, sixth step, "sandbagging" is highlighted as a solution. This term is paralleled with the method of stopping the rise of water levels. People living on riverbanks know this phenomenon best, when they prevent water from entering houses by placing sandbags. This means that the danger must be "blocked", i.e. defence comes to the fore. In this case, the company or organization deploys all its resources and encourages its members to intervene forcefully (Chong, 2004).

4. Crisis management in the hotel industry

In recent studies of crisis management in the hotel industry, researchers have examined how to develop a successful crisis management model. For example, Kovaltchuk et al. (2016) examined the concept of crisis and tried to develop a crisis management model based on the Russian hotel industry. Barbe and Pennington-Gray (2018) provided insight into the way hotel owners and managers use social media for crisis communication during a crisis. Abo-Murad and Abdullah (2019) conducted interviews to explore the impact of turnover culture on crisis management in Malaysian hotels. Mikulic et al. (2018) applied the principles of integrated risk management to carry out an exploratory assessment of the most important risks for Croatian tourism (Wai Lai–Chou Wong, 2020).

László Juhász, in his study "Steps of Crisis Management in the Hotel Industry" (2009), formulated the necessary steps for a successful theoretical crisis management process in eight points, some of which are highlighted here. Organizational restructuring is a necessary step in the crisis management process. In such cases, the transformation may also mean the complete or partial termination of an entire department. The structure of the organization may also be changed, by introducing new positions or eliminating existing ones. Limiting the provision of services can also be a partial solution, which may result in a reduction in the number of employees. This also includes general downsizing or group-level restructuring of the participants in the organization.

Centralized financial control is another step that helps in recovering from crisis situations. The financial managers of international chains such as Accor Hotels Zrt. must centrally determine spending opportunities by region. "Strict expenditure control, stronger controlling and the introduction of purchasing restrictions" (Juhász, 2009) are essential for effective crisis management. However, this type of provision can

only provide a solution at the beginning, because recovery and further development may differ from region to region and proceed very individually. Therefore, the centre must take into account the differences that appear in each area.

The next reform to be introduced is the renewal of sales processes. The development of distribution, sales and reservation processes is a tool that can be used against decreasing demand (Juhász, 2009). According to Juhász (2009), “from a professional point of view, this type of transformation is the biggest challenge in hotels and proves the capabilities and professional knowledge of managers”. In an emerging crisis situation, drastic decisions must be made regarding revenues and costs in order to recover successfully.

Among the measures, this is often the first that comes to mind for managers, namely cost reduction. Managers often consider this the fastest and most effective solution, although “in many cases, it can cause greater market damage in the medium term than economic advantage in the short term” (Juhász, 2009). For example, this includes organizational restructuring involving the dismissal of employees. It is well known that many hotel chains and independent hotels resorted to this step during the epidemic caused by the coronavirus.

Tourism is constantly evolving and must always adapt to current demand. For hotels, this can be manifested through up-to-date services as well as renovation of buildings and maintenance of equipment. All of these require investment. However, when the crisis develops and during its management, it is necessary to reduce and contain such investments. In this period, it is often justified to stop innovations, equipment replacements and other investment purchases. Further investments are only planned in line with demand and after the crisis (Juhász, 2009). Although these studies are valuable for the hotel industry, detailed crisis management practices are still lacking as a reference in the case of pandemics and similar outbreaks (Wong et al., 2020)

It's a question of personnel management

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, a well-educated workforce migrated to other industries, and solving personnel management issues became essential for the restart of the hotel industry.

Within an employment relationship:

Open-ended, full-time or part-time employment

Fixed-term employment, suitable for handling seasonality

Occasional employment (for events, peak periods)

Manpower mediation: outsourcing

Suitable for following fluctuations in staffing requirements due to changes in traffic

Client or contractor contracts can also play a role.

The relationship between hotel staffing requirements and traffic

Depending on the utilization of capacity, the number of staff required for professional

services increases step by step.

E.g. 200-room hotel (3 stars)

Number of services

Rented rooms (pcs) – Required number of people (persons)

0 40

20 50

40 60

60 70

100 100

150 180

200 160

The number of staff required for general activities is relatively constant: 30 people.

Personnel policy

The size of the staff is also influenced by the hotel's staffing policy. These may include:

Permanent staff as minimum staff.

The minimum staff is the hotel's standby staff, which is required even if there are no guests in the house. The task of management is to define the basic jobs (key positions) and the minimum number of employees that must be filled under all circumstances.

In the first example: 70 people.

With this solution, the hotel prepares for very low capacity utilization. A major advantage is the lower wage cost, but a disadvantage is that it is very difficult to secure a sufficient number of skilled, local, mobile workers in the event of an increase in traffic. Quality generally suffers and this principle is typically applied only by smaller, lower-category hotels.

Permanent staff as maximum staff

In this case, management employs as permanent workers the number of staff required for maximum capacity utilization. There is a full staff available for every job and every shift; they know the hotel's philosophy, customs, regular guests and their expectations. However, they place a heavy burden on the hotel's budget and are often unreasonable to maintain. This type of personnel policy is typical only of the highest quality hotels, which strive to offer "everything for the guest", especially if guests pay such a high price that it also covers staff costs.

In the first example: 190 people.

Permanent staff corresponding to the number of employees required for average occupancy.

Most hotels operate by knowing their usual occupancy rate or seasonality and employing staff for this level. If traffic increases, temporary assistants or part-time workers are called in to make up for the missing staff.

Based on the previous example:

Minimum: 70 people

Maximum: 190 people Average (optimal): 100 people (at 60% capacity utilization)

Labour needs, determining the number of employees

The above shows that the staffing requirements of a hotel cannot be determined on the basis of generally valid standards, but only by taking into account its unique characteristics.

According to the method recommended for management, the following must be considered in all operational units of the hotel:

The jobs to be performed.

The number of shifts to be worked in each position.

The staffing requirements of each shift.

Mandatory rest periods for employees and the amount of compulsory leave.

The number and type of services provided.

The organizational characteristics.

On this basis, the necessary staff must be planned.

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that effective crisis management has become an essential component of modern hotel management rather than an exceptional organisational activity. Hotels that were able to respond quickly through flexible operational practices, clear communication, digital service solutions, and effective human resource management proved to be more resilient during the crisis.

The experience also highlighted the importance of preparedness, business continuity planning, and organisational learning. Future crises—whether health-related, economic, environmental, or geopolitical—will require hotel managers to combine strategic planning with rapid operational decision-making. Consequently, crisis management should be regarded as a continuous managerial function that strengthens organisational resilience, service quality, and long-term competitiveness.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT DURING THE PANDEMIC, PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH

1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the most dynamically developing industries in the world. Tourist service providers, including hotels, have been able to record positive results year after year compared to previous years. However, world events always have an impact on the tourism sector. Terrorist acts, wars and economic crises all affect the industry's turnover. A similar period has emerged today, when countries closed their borders and hotels were forced to close as a result of the pandemic caused by COVID-19. This clearly shows that tourism and the hotel industry are vulnerable sectors, and businesses have to face risks from time to time.

A risk is a possible alternative outcome as a result of which the operation of the company deviates from the usual or expected path and has a negative effect on the company's results. Tourism can be understood as a large system that interacts with the economic, natural, social, political and technological environment. During the operation of a hotel, these factors also appear as risks in everyday life. As a result of the 2008–2009 economic crisis, for example, willingness to travel decreased significantly, mainly affecting the level of the population's discretionary income (one of the basic conditions of tourism). The current pandemic also appears as a risk factor in the life of tourism businesses, because in this case (even if border closures are disregarded) willingness to travel decreases, but here another basic condition of tourism – motivation – is damaged.

There are typological categorizations of risks (e.g. market, social, economic, etc.); however, in hotel operations the focus is more on risks occurring during daily operation. It is mandatory for hotels to create strategies and measures to eliminate operational risk factors. An example is fire, which hotel management also assesses as a risk. Furthermore, there are risk factors for which a hotel can prepare, but there are also some (such as the current pandemic) for which it is almost impossible to prepare fully.

In my research, due to the current situation, I aim to use an online questionnaire to obtain a clearer picture of the current risk management situation of the Hungarian hotel industry and to see whether hotels will re-evaluate their current strategy after the pandemic and, for the sake of safety, keep hybrid services in the future that helped them survive the crisis (e.g. long-term room rental to local residents parallel

to traditional accommodation for foreign tourists). Furthermore, I would like to obtain information on whether hotels were prepared in previous years for risks caused by external environmental factors (e.g. economic risks), whether the industry was able to learn from previous crises or whether good practices were forgotten. I also examine whether hotels consider only internal, operational risk factors or also monitor market risks.

With the help of a risk matrix, I would like to assess how likely Hungarian hotels consider individual types of risks and how much impact these may have on hotel operations. Based on my preliminary expectations, hotels focus mainly on risk factors occurring during operation and often ignore the fact that tourism is part of a larger system in which the influence of various environmental factors can be observed. Presumably, hotels place more emphasis on risk management for a period but return to their original services as soon as possible and suspend hybrid solutions. Operational risk factors are likely to be considered as having the greatest impact, followed by economic and market risks, while environmental and social risks are often assigned a lower probability.

2. Research

The goal of my quantitative research, compiled from a statistical and sociological perspective, is to produce objective, quantifiable results about how the coronavirus affected employees of Budapest hotels. A quantitative research questionnaire was completed by 120 Budapest hotel employees who were personally affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Based on the research results, 64% of the respondents were women and 46% were men. Based on their age distribution, almost half of the respondents were between 35 and 50 years old; 27%, i.e. 32 people, were between 25 and 35 years old; 12 people were between 18 and 25 years old; and 20 people were over 50 years old.

The first question concerned the years spent by workers in the hotel industry before the appearance of COVID-19. Based on the answers, 53% of employees had worked in the hotel industry for more than 10 years before the pandemic, which means 62 people out of 120. The other half of the respondents, 45% to be precise, had spent less time in the hotel industry until 2019. Approximately one-third of the respondents had been employed in Budapest hotels for 1–3 years, one-third for 3–5 years and one-third for 5–10 years.

According to the job titles and hotel departments of the respondents, 42 of the 120 employees worked in the Front Office area. More than half of these colleagues were employed as receptionists, while the rest worked as concierges, guest relations staff, room reservation assistants, porters and business/call centre agents. The questionnaire was filled out by 16 supervisors, 14 housekeepers and 4 general cleaners from Housekeeping, the department responsible for hotel room cleaning.

From the Food and Beverage (hospitality) department, 22 responses were received, of which 14 indicated the position of server, 4 pastry chefs, 3 cook and 1 supervisor. A total of 10 people answered from the Sales and Marketing department. 22% of the 120 respondents came from the Purchasing and Accounts, Human Resources and Maintenance and Security departments, in proportions of approximately one-third each. IT (Information Technology) positions were not represented.

Another point of interest is that 36 of the 120 respondents hold middle or senior management positions, and 8 work as hotel managers or deputy managers. The questionnaire did not aim to interview colleagues working in the Spa and Wellness department, because the hotels participating in the research reported that they mostly worked with external staff in this area. Based on the roles of the respondents in the hotels, it is clear that answers were received from almost all departments and job types, which is fortunate because it made it possible to draw conclusions about the research topic based on the opinions of people involved in almost every area of the hotel industry.

One of the questions of the primary research was aimed at whether the coronavirus had an impact on the work or employment status of hotel workers in Budapest; and if so, to what extent and in what way. Summarizing the answers, the following results were obtained: 73% (88 people) of the 120 hotel workers surveyed reported that their employment status had changed, and only 27% were still working at the same workplace as before the virus. 40.6% of the 120 employees were dismissed, and 20% resigned voluntarily. There are only 32 people who are still working at the same workplace as before the virus; among them, 28 are currently working in the same position and 4 have changed position. 18% of the workers have been working in another hotel since the appearance of the virus, and 6% have been working in another area of the tourism industry.

Of the 120 respondents to the quantitative questionnaire, 55 people (46%) are currently working in the hotel industry. Since the appearance of COVID-19, 45% of the surveyed Budapest hotel workers have left the tourism sector and are currently working in other areas of the economy. Four of the respondents are not currently employed, which means that 3.3% of those who lost their job are currently not working. Taking these data into account, a further question was formulated to explore whether those currently employed are satisfied with their present workplace. This part of the research can be indirectly classified as in-depth, because it reflects the current feelings and opinions of the respondents. Based on the results, 73.3% (88 out of 120) said they were satisfied, and 21.7% (28) said they were dissatisfied. The open questions of the quantitative questionnaire could be answered optionally.

The questions focused on whether those who had to leave their hotel jobs voluntarily or under pressure from their employer due to the situation caused by the virus would return to work in the hotel industry or not, and why. They also asked what keeps those who still work in hotels in the industry. Approximately 70 evaluable

answers were received to these questions, which were grouped into five motivational categories:

- “They would go back to work in the hotel because of the love of the profession.”
- “They would go back to work in the hotel if they were paid more. As long as employers do not raise average salaries, they will not look for work in hotels.”
- “They would go back to work if everything in the hotel industry returned to the way it was before COVID.”
- “They would not go back to work because of the instability of the sector and the currently unpredictable situation.”
- “They would not go back to work because they like their new job outside the tourism sector.”

Those employees who continue to work in hotels stated that their love of the profession keeps them in tourism and that they see the hotel industry as their vocation. They like maintaining contact with guests, conversing in foreign languages, the non-standard 8-hour schedule (e.g. 8:00–16:00; 9:00–17:00) and the everyday challenges. They appreciate the learning opportunities resulting from the constant change and development of the profession. Some highlighted the “buzzing”, dynamic, constantly moving environment. Many mentioned that they really feel at home in this sector, have experience in it and “almost do not understand anything else”. They feel good when they can help guests and be kind to them.

The results of the quantitative questionnaire research greatly contribute to successful research on the topic. Some questions received mostly negative, others more positive answers. By analysing these, various problems can be identified, negative effects can be defined, conclusions can be drawn and suggestions can be made. Collecting and keeping in mind the positive elements is also of great significance, as they can be regarded as a firm foundation and a source of strength, supporting a sense of security and peace of mind and encouraging success.

The interviewed hotel managers unanimously stated that before the outbreak of the pandemic, the hotels in which they worked experienced the strongest guest traffic and the most profitable years of all time. Several managers claimed that 2020 was expected to be the most promising year, both in terms of high price levels and bookings already received. In terms of guest composition, some of the guests of the surveyed 3–4* hotels (Danubius Budapest, Charles, Lion’s) are Hungarian, and some are European leisure and business tourists. Their visitors prefer mid-sized, centrally located accommodations, and many business tourists are regular returning guests. In the case of luxury category hotels (Sofitel, Corinthia), almost 100% of guests come from abroad. In these high-class hotels, sea and ocean cruise passengers of over 100 people (e.g. Avalon Waterways, Viking Cruises), world-famous musicians, Formula 1 drivers and influential political leaders arrive every day. Their guests demand special, highly personalized treatment and high-quality, expensive room products.

In the spring of 2020, due to the rapid spread of COVID-19, there was a great deal of uncertainty and helplessness regarding the management of the situation. The number of guests decreased dramatically in all hotels. Before the national border closure, hotels were almost completely empty. Panic broke out worldwide and most guests cancelled their reservations. Accommodations were forced to partially, temporarily or permanently close. Danubius Hotel Budapest closed in May 2020. For 24-hour security duty, it employed 5 people per day and 2 people at the reception in 12-hour shifts. Charles Hotel did not close due to the coronavirus, but continued operation within a revised framework. Lion's Garden Hotel was temporarily closed in September 2020, while the owner of Sofitel Budapest Chain Bridge ordered a complete two-year closure due to renovation as of 1 December 2020. Corinthia Hotel Budapest still had 72% occupancy in mid-March 2020, which dropped to 0% in nearly 7 days. On 20 March 2020, the hotel was completely closed. "I personally escorted the last German couple out of the main entrance of the hotel," said Tibor Meskál.

The interviews also revealed which income-generating services managers still saw as opportunities to avoid final closure despite the drastic reduction in guest nights. With regard to other hotel services, two areas stand out as important sources of additional revenue: the hotel's own restaurant and its wellness department. All five surveyed hotels operate their own restaurant. According to the managers, restaurants were mostly visited by hotel guests, even though external, non-resident guests were also welcome. Danubius, Lion's Garden and Corinthia Hotels completely closed their catering units due to the almost zero number of guests. Charles and Sofitel hotels, however, did not have to close their restaurants, mainly because of their layout: János Restaurant of Charles Hotel and Paris Budapest Restaurant and Bar of Sofitel Budapest are located on the side of the accommodation, not inside the hotel. As a result, guests can access these units directly from the street. Sofitel also introduced home delivery from the restaurant, but as the owner planned a complete renovation and a full closure was decided relatively quickly, continuing the catering unit as part of a long-term operation strategy became irrelevant after a few months.

The 4–5* hotels (Lion's Garden, Sofitel, Corinthia) all have swimming pools, saunas, fitness facilities and massage services. Many guests prefer higher-category hotels specifically because of these options. Due to new rules ordered in response to COVID-19, these services had to be suspended one by one. In this regard, hotels received many complaints from guests, which could only be handled by referring to the officially ordered rules. Despite the governmental measures and rules, guests still expected this kind of extra service, and many chose other accommodations where they could use a whirlpool or jacuzzi inside their own room.

Regarding measures and rules introduced as a result of the virus, all interviewed hotels gave almost identical answers. Under hygiene restrictions, interviewees mentioned the following: permanent disinfection and cleaning (especially at the main entrance, reception, elevator), placing hand sanitizers throughout the hotel, mandatory wearing of masks in public areas for both staff and guests, complete closure of the

spa department, promotion of room service, prohibition of staff entering guest rooms when providing room service or carrying luggage, introducing more frequent room cleaning, and emphasizing frequent handwashing. Daily cleaning and changing of work clothes also became the norm. Mandatory social distancing was introduced in all hotels, both in public areas and elevators. Staff temperatures were measured every day. Management at Sofitel Budapest reported that only every second room could be rented; they encouraged the use of key boxes (room key drop-off boxes), as well as the possibility of fast check-out and issuing electronic invoices. They also introduced staff limits based on floor area. At Lion's Garden and Corinthia hotels, management expected staff to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

Hotel operators had to develop sustainable operating strategies and examine thoroughly which compulsory measures to introduce given the situation. One of the first drastic steps was reducing labour costs. In almost all hotels, employees were first required to take their annual leave. Before COVID-19, Corinthia Hotel Budapest employed 248 staff and the same number of outsourced workers. After the virus appeared, outsourced work was no longer needed and the hotel tried to cover all tasks with internal staff. There were no changes in the working hours and duties of the hotel management, reservation and sales staff, technical department, operations manager and hotel IT manager. The housekeeping supervisor and manager, some receptionists and porters could work a maximum of 2–3 days per week and also had to perform technical, operational and maintenance tasks. Colleagues over the age of 65 were offered unpaid leave. Most staff in commission-based positions (reception, concierge) and a large proportion of hotel employees resigned voluntarily.

At Sofitel Budapest Chain Bridge, job and operational reorganization during the virus took place similarly to Corinthia. At the beginning of the epidemic, the hotel dismissed probationers, interns, retirees and contract workers. Afterwards, up until the full closure in January 2021, the entire staff was laid off in several phases. In March 2020, Danubius Hotel Budapest offered employees without families unpaid leave or a 70% reduced salary. Remaining staff were given the opportunity to work seasonally in the company's Balaton hotels during the summer. At the beginning of May 2020, another 20% of the remaining workers were dismissed. Lion's Garden Hotel also parted with probationers, placed employees on forced leave and required office staff to work from home.

The owner of Charles Hotel reported that, due to the size and equipment of their rooms, they had the opportunity – “by sheer luck” – to rent rooms as small apartments for medium- and long-term housing purposes. Management did not dismiss any employees, but all colleagues experienced reduced wages and reduced working hours. These forced measures led to half of the staff leaving by September 2020.

For sustainable operation, hotels tried to reduce energy costs (water, gas, electricity) as much as possible. Two wings of the three-wing Corinthia Hotel building were closed. Entire floors and parts of Sofitel Budapest Chain Bridge were closed. Before

final closures, hotels emptied minibars, labelled remaining food and drinks as safe, and prepared the remaining stock for staff meals. All hotels surveyed in the in-depth interviews used state subsidies offered to the tourism sector for both employers and employees.

The last questions in the interviews concerned the expectations hotels had to meet during reopening and the difficulties they currently face. Lion's Garden reopened in May 2021, initially without breakfast service. Corinthia Hotel Budapest reopened its iconic copper revolving door on 15 July 2021. In terms of expectations, the most important task remained maintaining hygienic conditions and safety, such as spotless cleanliness, mandatory mask-wearing and regular disinfection in all departments of the hotel. Before reopening, Lion's Garden and Corinthia hotels carried out a complete disinfection of the entire building. Common areas and restrooms were checked and cleaned hourly. The permanent placement of disinfectants is likely to remain an essential feature of accommodation for a long time.

The greatest difficulty is replacing dismissed staff. Experts interviewed were unanimous that it is currently very difficult to find well-trained and loyal workers in tourism. Whereas in the past, fluency in at least two foreign languages and a college/university degree were considered basic requirements for positions such as receptionist, nowadays these qualifications are often considered only an "advantage". According to the Front Office Supervisor of Danubius Hotel Budapest, this is due to non-competitive salaries and the migration of skilled workers abroad. "I have no idea how accommodations with lower revenues than ours will solve the lack of professionals. I hope that everything will return to normal as soon as possible and that skilled tourism workers will be more valued in the future," said the former porter turned Front Office Supervisor, who now works in another area of the tourism sector due to the closure of Danubius Hotel Budapest.

Employees who left Corinthia Hotel Budapest found work in various fields. Some became real estate agents or construction workers, others found jobs in supermarkets. Those with strong language skills now work as assistants in medical clinics or as employees of telecommunications and foreign companies. Most new staff are unskilled. Expectations are high in the Front Office department of a five-star superior hotel: Corinthia only hires colleagues with prior experience for receptionist and concierge positions, and language skills and a driving licence are also essential for porters. The hotel currently uses headhunting companies to find suitable front-office staff, which is very expensive for the hotel budget. The housekeeping department works with an external contracted service company. According to Senior Deputy Manager Tibor Meskál, it is very discouraging that many new employees stop coming to work after 1–2 days due to the high expectations and strict hygiene standards.

In the Food and Beverage department (non-managerial positions), people without experience but with potential, willingness to learn and work can also be hired, for example as servers. During the three-month trial period, it is usually decided whether

they will remain part of the Corinthia team. “If two out of ten people succeed, that is considered good. Current conditions and the general climate of the profession require us to be flexible and to train our own employees,” the manager added. “There is huge labour migration in the sector. Employees are easily lured away by competing hotels offering a 10,000–20,000 HUF higher monthly salary. I experience this sadly, because in the past it was prestigious if someone could say they were a ‘Corinthian’, ‘Sofiteles’ or ‘Ritz’ employee.” Quoting the senior specialist: “The situation is currently ‘desperate’ – that is, it can be considered hopeless.” The owner of Charles Hotel has a similar opinion. Almost all of his new colleagues are beginners in the profession, and training them requires a lot of time and energy.

By contrast, it was a positive note to hear the words of Lion’s Garden’s Sales Manager, Andrea, who said they did not have to hire large numbers of new employees during reopening and have been working with the same team for years. They consider themselves lucky, as in many other places the situation regarding recruitment of new staff is much less favourable. Overall, in-depth qualitative interviews helped to explore the topic more deeply and to produce more accurate results for the research questions. Quantitative results supported or partially contradicted some questions but often showed only the “surface facts”, while interviews provided insight into underlying processes and human behaviours, decisions and attitudes. The findings also indicate that effective risk management should become an integral part of strategic hotel management rather than being viewed solely as a response to extraordinary events.

3. General index of hotel staff

In the hotel industry, the most common indicator of personnel management is the number of staff per room. Here the “room” means the residential unit of the hotel; the type, quality or size of the room does not matter for the calculation. An apartment and a single room count as one unit. The number of employees is the average number of staff calculated for the given period.

Typical values of this indicator:

In a 4–5-star city hotel: 0.6–0.7.

In a lower-class, staff-saving hotel: 0.3–0.4.

In a luxury hotel: over 1.

Other indicators of personnel management

Staff composition: the staff of a given staff group as a percentage of total staff, e.g.:

By activity

Proportion of managers

Composition by age

Proportion of skilled and unskilled workers

Proportion of female workers

Mobility indicators, turnover

Live labour cost management

The concept of live labour cost

The monetary value of the use of live labour; it expresses how much it costs the hotel to employ its staff.

Content and structure of live labour costs.

Labour cost:

Regular staff salaries

Commission fees

Redemption of paid leave

Payment for overtime

Allowances

Bonuses

Rewards.

Further cost elements may include:

Honorary awards

Cash benefits

Sick pay

Meal supplements

Employer contributions to pension funds

Support for commuting

Housing support

Holiday contributions

Social benefits

Training contributions

Reimbursement for use of own car

Meal reimbursement

Laundry cost reimbursement

Severance pay

Other monetary benefits.

Benefits in kind:

Staff meals

Wage-related contributions (public charges):

Social security contributions (pension and health insurance)

Health contribution

Employer's contribution

Rehabilitation contribution

Vocational training contribution

Personal income tax on certain in-kind benefits

From a management point of view, this grouping does not fully coincide with the personnel payment categories used in accounting.

Wage systems

Hourly wage: can be calculated as daily, weekly or monthly wage.

Performance-related pay: the employee's income depends on the amount of performance achieved. In the hotel and hospitality industry, this is usually linked to sales revenue. This form of remuneration is called turnover commission.

Pure commission-based remuneration: the employee's income consists exclusively of commission.

Commission system combined with base salary:

The employee has a base salary – or a reduced base salary – and receives commission on turnover in addition.

System for dividing commission among employees

With appropriate IT support, turnover per person can be tracked separately, making it easy to measure individual performance. More typically, the brigade system is used, where only joint performance is measured and the division of performance pay within the brigade becomes a separate task. In hotel practice, this is done in a differentiated way, based on a point system and the number of working days or hours, which together allow qualitative and quantitative aspects to be considered.

As an example, the distribution method of the point-based commission is as follows:

A three-member brigade receives 5% of turnover of HUF 1,600,000 as commission, which is distributed differentially among them. The total amount is HUF 80,000. The different points assigned to each person (determined by the manager) reflect professional qualifications, years of service, practical experience, language skills, position, etc. These factors represent the “quality” of the worker, while the number of days or hours worked represents the “quantity” aspect. On this basis, their variable pay is calculated.

System of employee incentives

Performance-related pay, as a form of remuneration, also has a strong incentive role.

Financial incentives:

Bonus: payment of an amount specified in advance in writing upon completion of a task (goal).

It can be an absolute amount or a percentage, and it is legally enforceable.

Reward: subsequent financial recognition of an employee's activity, usually differentiated.

13th and 14th month salary.

Cash benefits.
Benefits in kind.

Moral incentives:

Various non-financial forms of recognition may also play a role (e.g. praise, awards, opportunities for development).

In current practice, performance-based pay is not used in many places in the hotel industry. The system of monetary and in-kind benefits, on the other hand, is relatively wide-ranging in larger hotel companies.

The findings suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic fundamentally changed the perception of risk within the hotel industry. While operational risks remain a primary managerial concern, external environmental risks have gained significantly greater attention. Future hotel strategies should therefore integrate comprehensive risk management, organisational resilience, and flexible business models to improve preparedness for future crises.

6. INNOVATION IN TOURISM, THE WEIERMAIR MODEL

1. Introduction

Innovation in the tourism sector is an essential tool for a given destination or business to keep up with its competitors. Due to globalization, tourists can travel to almost any part of the world, so it is necessary to compete with continuously developing countries at different levels of development. In many cases, innovation involves significant risk for businesses, as it often requires large investments that may only pay off in the long term. From a financial point of view, it may happen that the invested amount, or a part of it, has to be recorded as a loss. For these reasons, entrepreneurs' willingness to invest in innovation is often low, especially in the hotel industry, and this contributes to the generally slow pace of development in the sector.

The services of a child-friendly wellness hotel will most likely be used by leisure tourists, so it is useful to clarify what leisure means. The quality of leisure time first became a social issue after the industrial revolution, when a significant part of the rural population moved to cities. Their previous activities (such as domestic agricultural work) were no longer necessary, so they had more free time, which they wanted to use in a meaningful way. Nowadays, psychologists investigate how people are affected by their leisure time. They have found that a lack of purpose and motivation can lead to anxiety. It is therefore important to spend leisure time in a suitable quality so that overall well-being can improve. Active leisure activities often require prior planning and "attention capital", so different programmes must be thought through in advance. Service providers in the leisure industry professionally plan the time remaining after work.

Application and types of innovation in tourism

Innovations are not primarily aimed at the tourism sector but at productive sectors; however, innovations in transport and infrastructure, for example, can significantly influence tourism. In tourism, the novel use of information and communication technologies or their incorporation into tourism services can also be considered innovation. If such technologies are used, transaction costs can be reduced, since consumers can stay in direct contact with service providers. The strength of this direct relationship lies in the reduced likelihood of miscommunication between the parties.

Innovations are not always the result of lengthy research; sometimes they arise from rethinking existing processes. There are several ways to innovate. The tourism industry is often characterized by open innovation and the use of best practices. In

open innovation, companies make their innovation processes public and available to others, thus sharing knowledge. Best practices are similar, but here companies analyse the most successful examples, draw conclusions and then apply the lessons learned. The tourism sector therefore primarily adopts and incorporates innovative products from other sectors. Developments in tourism usually occur when the competitive situation demands it or when defensive strategies require openness to innovation.

Approaches to innovation in tourism

Innovation is a key driver of economic development. It is important that entrepreneurs do not simply maintain a static economy but create and apply innovations, which are usually realised through the activities of larger companies. Existing institutional arrangements may have to be dismantled to create new prosperity through innovation. It is essential that new entrepreneurs are willing to take calculated risks (Hjalager, 1997).

Innovation is created through the further development of existing achievements, and is influenced by trade and sales factors. One influential framework is the tourism interpretation of the Abernathy and Clark model, in which niche innovations, architectural innovations, revolutionary innovations and regular innovations are distinguished. In tourism, the level and pace of innovation are primarily determined by supply-side factors, demand drivers and the intensity of competition. Research has shown, among other things, that the private sector only assumes the costs associated with innovation if it promises to be profitable; expected profitability is thus the strongest driving force. In this approach, great emphasis is placed on product and process innovation, forming collaborations and networks, product differentiation and providing the best possible quality at the most favourable price. It has been found that tourism is particularly deficient in process innovations and organisational innovations.

2. Weiermair model

Weiermair's model is especially relevant because, in addition to types of innovation, it pays particular attention to the driving forces and various limitations. A key driving force is the need to satisfy customer needs faster and more efficiently than competitors. Among the limitations, funding plays an important role. Small businesses generally cannot afford to invest their resources in research and development, and innovation costs in this sector are rarely fully recouped.

The hotel industry is of great economic importance, as it generates tax revenue for the state. Commercial accommodation services are subject to a reduced VAT rate of 5%. Services included in the basic package are also subject to reduced taxation within the accommodation; breakfast can be such a service if it is included in the room rate. The amount of the tourist tax (IFA) is determined by local governments.

One method is to calculate it as a percentage of the accommodation fee, and the other is to set a fixed amount per guest night. In Győr, the latter method is used, with a tax of HUF 450/person/night. The multiplier effect also greatly contributes to the sector's economic importance, as hotels, in addition to selling services, use many other services and purchase various products as an essential part of their operation. From a social perspective, wellness hotels help guests relax and unwind, potentially contributing to better performance at work as a result of rest.

Facility-level planning process

During facility-level planning, care must be taken to create buildings that fit into their environment. Facilities are designed to meet demand needs. Two types of planning can be distinguished: facilities can be created as part of spatial planning or independently. Facility-level planning is technology-oriented, so entrepreneurs are mostly involved in planning, and their main concern is that the given business should be profitable. Less emphasis is often placed on eliminating negative environmental impacts. Legal requirements typically focus on the immediate surroundings of the facility. In land-use plans, it is worth indicating how the function of the facility fits into the landscape and whether it corresponds to the environment's carrying capacity.

Smart technology in the hotel industry

In smart hotels, technology creates added value by enhancing the guest experience before, during and after the stay. Smart solutions can contribute to an immediate response to problems that may arise at any stage of the guest journey. The typical stages are: search, purchase/booking, pre-arrival, arrival and check-in, stay experience, departure and check-out, and post-stay. With the help of technological innovations, hotels can better identify guests' needs and can therefore create services tailored to them. The use of smart solutions leads to efficiency gains, but since traditional hotels also undergo continuous technological development, it is difficult to determine exactly when a hotel can be considered a "smart hotel".

The most important feature is that smart hotels use a wide range of information technologies to maximise the guest experience and focus on accurately assessing guest needs and handling complaints as smoothly as possible through technology.

Political factors

EU regulations also apply to market competition; the European Union prohibits several unfair market behaviours. These include market sharing, price fixing and illegal relationships or agreements between different companies. Such prohibited agreements may involve price fixing, division of the market or customer base and agreements on distribution. If companies do not comply with competition rules, sanctions may include fines, and in the case of managers of the companies involved, even imprisonment.

According to the National Tourism Development Strategy 2030 – Tourism 2.0, the Hungarian Tourism Agency assigns an extremely important role to contributing to

the protection of Hungary's environmental and social values. Among the goals of the agency is to ensure that tourist destinations cooperate harmoniously with local communities and strive to protect the natural environment.

Economic factors

In 2021, 1.36% of gross domestic product at current prices was generated by the national economy sector of accommodation and hospitality. The unemployment rate in September 2022 was 3.8%, and the employment rate was 74.6%. The population spent HUF 354,118,000,000 on travel in 2021. From September 2021 to September 2022, inflation reached 21.1%. The average gross monthly salary of workers in the hospitality and tourism industry is approximately HUF 300,000.

Social factors

On January 1, 2022, the population of Hungary was 9,689,010. Hungarian society is ageing, as shown by the data below:

The 0–30 age group accounts for 3,150,320 people (32.51% of the population).
The 31–60 age group accounts for 4,080,243 people (42.11% of the population).
The 61–100+ age group accounts for 2,458,447 people (25.37% of the population).
The largest single age cohort is 46-year-olds (born in 1975), representing 1.87% of the population.

A total of 93,594 children were born in 2021 (0.97% of the population). These data show that almost twice as many people were born in 1975 as in 2021, and that the 31–60 age group accounts for around 10% more people than the 0–30 age group. The proportion of women and men is roughly similar.

Hungarian people scored an average of 5.93 on a 0–10 scale of life satisfaction, where 0 means “not satisfied at all” and 10 means “extremely satisfied”. The Hungarian National Social Catch-up Strategy 2030 focuses on combating poverty and improving the situation of the Roma population. In 2019, 5.3% of the Hungarian population reported crime, violence or vandalism in the vicinity of their residence, about half the EU average of 11%. Based on this survey, Hungary was the 4th safest country in the European Union.

Technological factors

The development of the digital economy and society is measured by the European Commission through an indicator called DESI. In 2022, Hungary ranked 22nd among EU countries. Scores are given for human capital, internet access, integration of digital technologies and development of digital public services. Hungary scored 43.8 points, while the EU average was 52.3, indicating that further development is needed to reach the EU average. In Hungary in 2020, only 11.9% of electricity was produced from renewable energy sources.

Environmental factors

The European Environmental Information and Monitoring Network (EIONET) is a partnership network of the European Environment Agency (EEA) and its member and cooperating countries. The EEA provides environmental information that is used in the development of environmental protection policy and is also a useful resource for businesses and society.

In Hungary, air pollution has been higher than the limits set in EU Directive 2008/50/EC, and infringement proceedings have been initiated against the country for failing to meet its obligations. To restore air quality, the government adopted an intersectoral action programme to reduce PM10 in Decree 1330/2011 (X.12.), to be implemented by 2030. As previous measures did not sufficiently reduce PM10 (small airborne particles), further steps were required, and a 10–15% reduction in PM10 emissions is expected.

WWF Hungary is the national organisation of the international World Wide Fund for Nature. One of its main objectives, within the “Living Rivers” programme, is to improve the condition of Hungarian rivers and their associated ecosystems and to preserve their biodiversity.

Legal factors

Accommodation management software is a mandatory IT system for all accommodation providers; its use is compulsory at all registered accommodations. Data are forwarded to the National Tourist Information Centre (NTAK). Accommodations must also hold a valid accommodation qualification. Among labour law rules, it is important to note that work under the age of 16 is prohibited and that workers under 18 are entitled to various protections and benefits.

Full working time is eight hours a day and forty hours a week, but shorter or longer working hours can be agreed between the parties. Everything related to the employment relationship – including its establishment, termination and any changes in working conditions – must be recorded in writing.

For a new accommodation to operate, it is necessary for it to meet the quality level available to it in the national 1–5-star accommodation rating system. The requirements for the chosen category must not only be met at the time of rating but must be continuously maintained afterwards to ensure that the accommodation meets all criteria.

Trends in the hotel industry

High quality.

Value for money (quality for price).

Specialised hotels targeting specific market segments (branded products).

More functional rooms (comfort combined with operational efficiency).

Eco-friendly design and operation in harmony with the landscape.

Diversity of additional activities (sports, leisure, healthcare, etc.).

Innovation has become a fundamental component of competitiveness in tourism

and hotel management. The Weiermair model highlights that innovation is shaped not only by technological opportunities but also by changing customer expectations, competitive pressures, financial constraints, and the broader business environment. In the hotel sector, successful innovation therefore requires a balanced approach that integrates technology, service development, organisational change, sustainability, and economic feasibility. Hotels that are able to continuously adapt their products, processes, and business models are better positioned to respond to changing guest expectations and maintain their long-term competitiveness.

7. CASE STUDY: MARKETING MANAGEMENT OF THE VISVITALIS MEDICAL WELLNESS CENTRE

1. Introduction

The marketing activities of the VisVitalis Medical Wellness Center began in 2002, when the owners became familiar with Kaqun water and its particularly beneficial health properties. Construction started in 2003 and is now nearing completion; the opening is planned for 2010. The long implementation period is explained by the fact that the project was primarily self-funded, and the owners only require a minimal bank loan in the near-completion phase. In the meantime, Kaqun water has undergone two series of human clinical tests, and its positive health effects have now been scientifically verified (Molnár-Remenyik 2017). This fact alone is of great importance and clearly strengthens the company's marketing position.

The property is located in Kerepes, next to the main road leading from Budapest to Gödöllő, in a pleasant green area. The 2.5-hectare site lies in the most geographically attractive part of Kerepes, in a valley, providing an ideal environment for a health centre. The centre is easily accessible by car and by suburban railway (HÉV). Its location is particularly favourable from a transport point of view, especially since the M0 ring road was completed. The proximity of Gödöllő and various industrial enterprises in the area offers significant opportunities for the development of the settlement. A large number of parking spaces have been created within the health centre, in line with the facility's capacity. When locating the complex, the owners paid attention both to ensuring a calm environment appropriate for the services and to easy accessibility. All these factors influenced their intention to start the business.

The concept, whose key strength is the healing power of Kaqun water, is based on the latest synthesis of Eastern medical traditions and modern Western medicine. VisVitalis will offer complex services that strengthen the effects of individual therapies in combination with one another.

2. Mission

With deep dedication, the owners strive to create a space in which guests can return to a healthy life in a dignified, high-standard hotel environment. The primary mission of the Centre is to promote a mindset of health preservation and disease prevention. In addition, an important task is to alleviate complaints with the complex yet

unified toolkit of VisVitalis in the case of existing diseases. By improving guests' quality of life, VisVitalis also contributes to easing the burden on healthcare financing and to cost savings, for example by reducing the use of medicines and surgical interventions, while helping to maintain quality of life and ability to work.

The owners envision the therapies – bathing, rest, nutrition and exercise – as parts of a single complex system, considering all of them as forms of therapy. They regard a healthy lifestyle as the unity of these elements: neither has real value without the others. By connecting them, guests can become healthier, more balanced and more self-confident. The mission is essentially to integrate traditions that have proved effective for centuries into the achievements of Western medicine, in a service environment that meets modern expectations.

3. The offer of the hotel

Those who are thinking in terms of traditional wellness should not necessarily book a room in Kerepes, as VisVitalis takes the concept of medical wellness very seriously. This is currently the world's largest Kaqun spa, where water therapy is carried out in 36 tubs. One bath consists of 50 minutes in water at 38 degrees Celsius. During this time, the structurally modified, higher oxygen-content water exerts its beneficial effect; the oxygen is absorbed through the skin and incorporated into the cells, thereby increasing the body's immune strength. This has been confirmed by earlier scientific tests. Otto Warburg was already studying oxygen therapy in the 1930s. Combined with water therapy, the increased oxygen content can be extremely effective and may offer solutions for various skin problems and chronic diseases.

The hotel has 68 rooms, including 7 apartments and 3 junior rooms. All rooms are equipped with telephone, cable TV and internet connection. The building is characterised by high technical standards; the engineering solutions, building services and finishes are of high quality, modern and fit for purpose. Treatment rooms are located on the ground floor, while guest rooms are on the first floor. The building also houses a pharmacy, a bar and a tea house, and includes rooms suitable for conferences. The five conference rooms can accommodate between 20 and 60 people. There is a large-capacity restaurant, and the property includes a 10,000 m² garden with a lake, a meditation garden and areas for active recreation. The most important features and technical parameters of the VisVitalis Medical Wellness Center are listed in the appendix.

4. Hotel services

VisVitalis Hotel offers three main categories of service: basic services, additional services and derived services. The basic service includes accommodation and, in part, meals – but only in part, because nutrition is itself considered a form of therapy.

The health centre includes a 68-room hotel section whose size, technical design and quality reach four-star level. Guests can choose from standard double rooms, deluxe rooms (double room with pull-out sofa) and apartments (two-room units). Each room has a bathroom and washroom.

Following modern technology, room locks no longer use metal keys but are opened with magnetic cards. When designing the rooms, great care was taken to ensure that all rooms are bright. Room colours and furnishings are intended to meet guests' needs and help them relax. Some rooms have carpeted floors, while others have parquet, partly to accommodate guests with allergies. All rooms are technically well equipped; many of these features can be classified as additional services. Meals are served in the restaurant on the ground floor of the hotel, a spacious, bright space whose atmosphere, colours and furnishings are close to an oriental style, further supporting calm and relaxation. VisVitalis provides breakfast and dinner for its residents.

5. Competitors

VisVitalis Medical Wellness competes to some extent with the services of private clinics and sanatoriums, such as the Főnix castle sanatorium and health hotel in Nógrádgyárdony, especially those offering alternative medicine, as well as hotels that offer health maintenance and prevention packages. These competitors are mainly located in Budapest and in key holiday areas. Currently, the hotels that are concrete competitors on the Hungarian market are mostly situated in regions with well-known thermal baths (Hévíz, Zalakaros, Bükk). Their service packages are built around established medicinal water treatments, and they have integrated medical wellness services into these offerings.

At VisVitalis, the medical package room price per person is HUF 18,900, calculated at an exchange rate of EUR/HUF 270 (approximately EUR 70/person/day). There is no extra charge for single occupancy, which is a conscious risk, since guests may arrive alone.

6. SWOT analysis (strengths and weaknesses)

With the help of a SWOT analysis, the company's position relative to competitors can be determined by identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This plays an important role in planning and in deciding the direction in which the company should proceed, taking into account internal strengths and weaknesses as well as its market position.

The key strength of the VisVitalis Medical Wellness Center is the complexity with which it aims to respond to the market demand of an increasingly health-conscious population. Health tourism has not yet been able to fully meet this need. A compre-

hensive health assessment is followed by complex well-being-improving therapies, during which each guest can receive services tailored to their individual needs. Another strength is the ability to satisfy guests' demands for higher quality. The hotel offers a market-leading product: guests can use Kaqun therapy and other health-preserving therapies in one place, in a hotel environment. Accessibility for guests with reduced mobility (e.g. wheelchair users) has been considered from the foundation stage, overcoming problems that many older buildings struggle with due to structural limitations. Child care will be provided by animators, and telephone and internet access are available in every room.

Defining weaknesses was more difficult. One potential weakness is the location: Kerepes itself may raise reservations despite good accessibility and attractive surroundings. Groups using the conference rooms may disturb hotel guests, despite staff efforts, as the layout does not fully allow separation of small and large groups from individual guests. Another primary risk factor is that the hotel is new and can expect competitors in the future. An economic downturn may reduce demand, even though prices are intended to be affordable. The business also faces significant challenges even before opening. As mentioned, the owners financed development themselves but are now forced to take out a bank loan to complete construction and fit-out. The loan application has been ongoing for months; the owners are discouraged and can justifiably fear that their unique project may be rejected by an inexperienced bank manager.

Assuming the loan is eventually approved, the health centre may still be vulnerable if the economic environment changes, recession sets in, profits decline and exchange rate fluctuations increase the burden of debt service. The interim period while the bank makes its decision is also difficult: costs continue to be incurred, the opening date is postponed and income is not yet being generated. Banks, however, often show limited understanding of this situation, which also symbolises the generally unfavourable attitude of financial institutions towards small enterprises. Being aware of this, the owners prepared and successfully applied for a grant even before applying for the loan. This grant both supported construction and helps reduce unemployment, since one of its conditions is the employment of jobseekers.

The owners are doing everything they can to achieve their goal and hope that their project will not fail at the last stage because of a bank decision. The road has been bumpy: they have had several problems with contractors' reliability and expertise, which is critical, as the owners place great emphasis on quality and have sometimes been taken advantage of due to their trust. It is hoped that the bank loan will soon be approved, as many people are looking forward to the opening of the hotel and to the new and interesting experiences it may offer.

7. Defining marketing objectives

At present, the hotel is unique on the market, but other companies will also recognise the opportunities and perspectives inherent in medical wellness, so it must constantly strive to maintain its leading position. The company's goal is to increase its revenue by 33% within one year. When setting this target, they considered the market situation, competitors, the economic crisis and the decline in living standards. The hotel's capacity is sufficient to achieve this goal. In addition, the aim is to reach the planned level of utilisation within two years.

Effective operation of the health centre requires an introductory and sustained marketing campaign. The budget for the introductory campaign is HUF 40 million, planned to be spent in 2025 to introduce the company. Financing this marketing campaign is one of the purposes of the investment loan. In order to maintain brand awareness, 3% of annual net sales will be used. The goal is to become market leader in the field of medical wellness and to provide guests with a genuine experience by consistently delivering high-quality services, while guiding Hungarian and foreign guests towards a more conscious perception of health. The owners do not seek to impose a particular lifestyle on their guests; rather, they aim to encourage healthier and more sustainable lifestyle choices.

In this spirit, they have sought out physicians, naturopaths, movement therapists and special massage experts who share these values.

In addition, as a four-star hotel, VisVitalis offers refreshment and relaxation through its special catering units and programmes. Ancient and conservative medical approaches, combined with future-oriented technologies, form the complex therapeutic system of VisVitalis as a coordinated whole.

8. Elements of the marketing mix

Product policy

The target group of medical wellness consists of chronically ill and health-conscious people in Hungary and in nearby, economically developed countries, who have sufficient purchasing power and can be reached with appropriate marketing tools. The health centre is aimed at guests who wish to recover, have recognised the importance of a healthy lifestyle in disease prevention and are willing to act accordingly. VisVitalis does not focus on a narrow segment; it welcomes guests regardless of gender, age or culture. With the spread of a healthy lifestyle and the importance of prevention, younger age groups also become potential target markets compared to other medical centres and sanatoriums.

The hotel offers various packages to suit different needs. Within the Day Spa framework, guests interested in a healthy lifestyle can participate in programmes or therapies, or visit the restaurant, without requiring accommodation. The 3-day package

draws attention to lifestyle change by offering additional elements. For example, guests can cook together with the chef, talk in person about newly introduced ingredients, learn how to prepare them and thus gain inspiration for change. “Food recognition” is an important aspect of this programme, as modern food products and preparation methods have dulled many people’s natural sense of taste. The meal can be followed by a special massage combined with a tea ceremony. During these three days, guests can complete a full lifestyle programme: exercise – nutrition – Kaqun bathing.

Guests taking part in the 7-day package bathe daily in Kaqun water and receive therapies based on their health assessment, including special massages, exercise programmes and tailored meals. The 14-day package includes the services of the 7-day programme, and after 14 days measurable improvements can be demonstrated under certain conditions.

Pricing policy

Price is the amount of money paid for the use of a product or service. When setting prices, both the needs and paying capacity of consumers in Hungary and neighbouring countries were examined. As hotel prices are above average, the plan is to target a more solvent, higher-income segment regardless of age. The primary focus is on foreign guests, where a health-conscious lifestyle is typically stronger. Meeting the needs of guests seeking recovery and lifestyle change is not tied to seasons, so medical services are largely independent of seasonality, and the classic distinction into pre-season, peak season and post-season is only partially relevant.

When determining prices, costs related to sales, commissions and competitors’ prices were taken into account. 33% of expenses will be wages and related contributions, 51% material, energy and subcontractor costs, 6.5% marketing and agency commission, and 8% will be paid into renovation and replacement funds. Prices have been aligned with those of four-star spa hotels and four-star rural hotels. Opening prices are deliberately favourable in line with the introductory period. According to the plans, the company will offer a 15% discount for bookings made one month in advance. Guests booking directly will receive an additional 8–10% discount depending on occupancy. There are no permanent discounts; instead, value-added packages (described under product policy) are offered.

The hotel accepts health fund cards, which is beneficial in two ways: it increases market share and demand while reducing commission-related expenses. The economic recession and potential market downturn have been factored in, and a “worst-case scenario” analysis has been prepared. This scenario examines what measures the company would take to remain operational if a significant market downturn occurs. A critical feature of the hotel and health centre is its high proportion of fixed costs, making it more exposed than average to cyclical fluctuations: in a boom it generates above-average profits, while in a downturn its income falls more sharply than demand.

In a crisis situation, the renovation and replacement funds can be used. In an optimal scenario, these funds would not be needed for around ten years. The property renovation fund works similarly to a replacement fund for furniture and equipment. Comparable hotels in hospitality and healthcare are usually fully renovated and modernised about every 15 years to maintain the required quality. This includes replacing interior finishes and a significant part of doors and windows, as well as modernising building services. The total cost of complete renovation and modernisation is about 30% of the building's original construction cost. To ensure financing, 2% of the current reconstruction cost is paid annually into the renovation fund. In an emergency, this amount can help sustain operation.

To manage risks, the company is prepared to reduce staffing and optimise operating costs in underused areas, and to reduce building-related costs in the event of a drop in demand. In some cases, this may also mean closing entire floors. When pricing, cash-flow calculations are recommended. In cash-flow forecasts, the cash flow available to the owner is calculated from expected revenues minus expenses, debt service and tax obligations. According to plans, the company will maintain solvency every year, with positive cash flow and no need for additional capital injections, provided the owners withdraw only the generated cash flow from the business until 2038. Annual cash flow is expected to grow, though not uniformly. By the end of 2024, an income of HUF 60 million is expected, which is projected to almost double by 2026, as the health centre reaches its designed capacity and a general 10% price increase (aligned with inflation) is expected. Cash flow will rise sharply around 2030, mainly because the loan will have been fully repaid by then.

Sales policy

Sales are organised around three pillars: medical services, conferences, and weddings and other events. The main sales objective is to gain market share. The most important product category is medical package prices (details under product policy). The 3-day package can be recommended for health-conscious people who want to change their lifestyle but have limited time. Their programme is based on indulgence and experience: massage with tea ceremony, paleo dinner, movement therapy, Kaqun bathing, food recognition and an oriental tea ceremony, as well as getting to know kettlebell training, a relatively new but health-supporting sport.

The second pillar includes 7- and 14-day programmes based on Kaqun therapy, which are complex and contain many services. To increase revenue, VisVitalis also offers daily guests (Day Spa), a concept aiming to provide as many services as possible and keep guests within the premises. The sales network is built on the agent system used in healthcare. Priority is given to online sales. The hotel's website will provide direct booking and payment (pre-authorisation) options using proven hotel technology. Contracts are being concluded with health funds, and sales via travel agencies specialising in medical tourism and conference organisers are also planned, as the hotel's facilities are suitable for hosting medical conferences. Cooperation with insurance companies is also envisaged.

Communication policy

Contemporary health-tourism marketing increasingly relies on personalised digital communication, social media content, online reputation management, and direct booking channels to build trust and strengthen long-term guest relationships. In addition to online sales, other marketing tools will be used: appearances in various media, use of print and offline surfaces (e.g. trade journals, PR articles), central Kaqun advertisements and club events. A substantial amount is allocated to introductory campaigns. Direct marketing will be used by sending letters to regular guests and partners, and other internet tools such as newsletters will also be exploited. The hotel plans to broaden its clientele by inviting potential guests via personalised invitation letters to informational events combined with a meal, where they can learn about the hotel and its services.

It is important to keep partners continuously informed about changes and discounts. The hotel intends to build active links to global online booking systems. Target group analysis and competitor market analysis have been carried out using research and market analyses by Magyar Turizmus Zrt. and the Hungarian Hotel Association. The research focused on:

Competition monitoring

Domestic guests: 1. consumption habits of individual guests; 2. willingness to spend on health; 3. leisure habits and changes; 4. changes in the financial situation of the population; 5. demographic trends and general health status.

Changes in membership of domestic health funds over the last four years and related trends

Foreign guests: 1. changes in guest nights for individual and group guests, particularly in medical tourism; 2. willingness to spend and trends.

Occupancy indicators for medical hotels over the last five years and prospects; the state of the Hungarian economy and its impact on tourism; tourism priorities in the National.

Development Plan

Prospects for medical wellness (holistic spa) and the role of integrative medicine.

Deeper details of the analysis results were not provided. The hotel plans to encourage partners to sell more actively by offering free services, such as a complimentary weekend stay.

9. Summary

The VisVitalis Medical Wellness Center is unique on the market, sets new goals and fills a gap that neither the healthcare system nor the hotel industry has so far been able to cover. Although many highly qualified and dedicated medical professionals work in current patient care, overall outcomes often remain below what would be

possible, which is one of the reasons why VisVitalis was created. The aim is not to introduce a new philosophy or promote a never-before-seen method; rather, it combines traditional and modern concepts of health and disease with today's medicine to create a harmonious synergy. Within the Centre's walls, health and well-being are closely intertwined.

Medical wellness services include scientifically validated procedures that promote lasting improvements in quality of life and perceived health from a preventive perspective, while aiming to help guests acquire a health-conscious lifestyle. A key task of human life is to realise the most complete version of oneself in harmony with nature's rhythms. Through an awareness-infused life, creating opportunities for individual development and self-fulfilment, and acquiring methods that support self-regulation, guests can continue their lives on a higher level, becoming active maintainers and managers of their own well-being. The integrated medical wellness concept aims to support guests in adopting more health-conscious lifestyles and in taking a more active role in maintaining their long-term well-being.

8. CASE STUDY: HOTEL SENDE'S BUSINESS PLAN

1. Introduction

The location of Hotel Sende**** is Szendehely, which, although situated in Nógrád County, is from a tourism perspective part of the broader Danube Bend region. Nógrád County is in a disadvantaged position compared to the capital in several respects: its opportunities are more limited and its infrastructure is less developed, although continuous development plans are in progress. At present, there are plans to relieve the heavy transit traffic passing through small settlements by building a new road and connecting the expressway network with the northern neighbour. This would mean extending the M2 motorway between Parassapuszta and Vác, with mountain tunnels and valley bridges overcoming natural constraints.

The appearance and services of the hotel stand out among regional hotels. The atmosphere is family-like, staff are kind, friendly and highly qualified. As employees are local residents or originally from the area, they can authentically present Swabian values and, in addition to their professional expertise, add value with their personal qualities. Although the hotel employs fewer staff than a city hotel, it still creates jobs, and visiting guests also generate income for other local service providers, such as small producers.

2. Presentation of the hotel

The planned hotel is located on the outskirts of Szendehely, surrounded by the Börzsöny and Cserhát hills and vineyards. The location next to main road 2 allows easy access by car. It can be reached in around 25 minutes from the northern border of Budapest, and there is also a direct long-distance bus from Budapest (Újpest–Városcapu) with a journey time of about 45 minutes. The exterior of the building evokes Swabian traditions and architecture. A more modern building would be alien to the landscape and would not convey the feeling the hotel aims to create. A hotel reminiscent of the city and urban life would not achieve the intended goal.

The long, yellow-plastered façade of the main building is decorated with Swabian relief motifs. The long porch is supported by wooden beams. Doors and windows are made of wood or wood-effect plastic, taking into account durability and the high price and maintenance needs of solid wood. Wood requires continuous care and treatment, which is significant in terms of cost and labour, yet its use is important: beams and shutters help create the unique atmosphere of the hotel.

On entering the room, a corner wardrobe with hangers, shelves and drawers is available in the hallway for storing clothes and suitcases. Behind the door there is a wooden counter with a refrigerator and a minibar with snacks. A coffee machine with matching accessories (capsules, sugar, sweeteners, cups, saucers, coffee spoons), bottled water, glasses and a fruit bowl are placed on the counter and offered free of charge to guests.

Ground floor, F&B, services

The reception is located opposite the main entrance. Reception colleagues speak German and English. Since they are the first point of contact, in addition to professional competence the most important requirement for reception staff is the “4M”: appearance, smile, education (general and professional, including empathy) and manners. Problem-solving skills are also essential, as guests primarily turn to reception if they need help or are dissatisfied with something.

The restaurant is located on the ground floor and serves both hotel guests and external customers. Between 7:00 and 10:00 a.m. a buffet breakfast is served for hotel guests, while from 11:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. the restaurant is open to everyone. Next to the restaurant is a lobby bar with a terrace and wooden panelling, where guests can enjoy coffee, alcoholic beverages, wines from local producers and homemade syrups. This unit is also open to walk-in guests. At the end of the room, large gallery windows provide a view of the surrounding mountains.

Szendehely is a wine-growing region with its own wines, and the hotel regularly organises wine-tasting dinners to present them. In addition to hotel services, there is a playground with wooden toys and a small wildlife park with rescued animals, operated in cooperation with the local chief forester. The aim is to provide an educational experience that supports the protection of nature and animals. Since the hotel is located along the national “blue trail”, it cooperates with a tour company that organises hikes of various lengths and difficulty levels in the area according to guests’ fitness.

Organizational structure

The organisational structure clearly shows the hierarchy and reporting lines of each position. As Hotel Sende**** operates as a family business, several tasks are carried out by the owners themselves. A key feature of hotel human resources is complexity. Since the hotel operates 24/7 and 365 days a year, work schedules differ from typical office hours. Employees are in constant contact with guests and represent the hotel, Szendehely and the wider region. It is therefore essential that they not only meet professional expectations but also have inherent personal qualities that cannot be taught but are crucial in hospitality.

3. Business plan

Marketing and sales plan

Marketing plays at least as important a role in tourism as in the operation of a multinational company. To generate the greatest benefit by bringing the hotel's tourism product to market, its tasks and elements must be clearly understood. Among its many tasks, the most essential is linking the product – in this case, the hotel – with appropriate potential markets. To adapt services to market needs, market research is required, allowing pricing policy, pricing strategy and sales channels to be determined based on the results. The central element is always the consumer, the guest.

Market research involves collecting and processing data from various sources and then carrying out a detailed analysis that provides information and supports individual marketing decisions. The hotel's position must be understood in order to make effective decisions that increase service value, identify guest needs and enable appropriate responses to competitors' moves. After understanding the market situation, a marketing strategy and plan must be created to ensure room sales, profit generation and continuous growth. If this task is solved well, business goals can be aligned, the target guests can be reached and convinced that the hotel is the ideal choice for them. For this, the appropriate channels must be mapped.

Market situation analysis

Based on KSH data, the accommodation figures for Nógrád County – particularly for hotels – are very low. This is due to the dominance of private accommodations in the county, while commercial accommodations tend to be small guesthouses and inns. Tourism data for the Northern Hungary region clearly show how small Nógrád's share is. From the perspective of opening a new hotel, this can be both an advantage and a disadvantage: few hotels mean few direct competitors, but there is also the risk of underutilised potential.

Szendehely lies on the border of Nógrád and Pest counties, and its distance from Budapest makes it accessible for city guests. From a tourism standpoint, Szendehely and surrounding settlements belong to the "Budapest area" tourism region, which also includes the Danube Bend, but within this framework Nógrád County is in a disadvantaged position. Guests in the area typically come from within Hungary, and the proportion of foreign visitors is very low. This is partly due to the concentration of tourism in Budapest and Lake Balaton, and partly to infrastructural deficiencies in parts of Nógrád further from main roads. For example, Alsópetény can be reached by car from Vác in 20 minutes, but the same journey by bus takes 50 minutes.

The low number of guest nights is also explained by the fact that although Nógrád County has many cultural and natural attractions, visitors often only come for a day and do not stay overnight. The number of foreign guest nights in hotels and the avail-

able bed capacity both confirm how limited hotel capacity is in the county compared to the broader Northern Hungary region.

Benchmarking, price-value matrix

A price–value matrix helps visually position the hotel in the market. It shows where competitors stand relative to the planned hotel in terms of price and perceived value. To do this, relevant competitors must first be identified. In marketing terms, a competitor is any provider offering products or services that fulfil the same function from the consumer’s point of view. Ultimately, the customer decides who is seen as a competitor.

To avoid getting lost in too much information, the list of hotels examined must be narrowed based on specific criteria. In this case, five hotels were selected that are geographically close and offer similar or comparable quality of service. Because of the region’s geography, the competitive radius cannot be defined in a simple circle; natural features within 15–20 km can separate guest segments significantly. For example, Visegrád and Szentendre are within 20 km and several four-star wellness hotels are located in Visegrád.

For Hotel Sende****, competitors cannot be limited to other hotels: from the guest’s perspective, pensions and guesthouses are also alternatives if they provide appropriate comfort, cleanliness and at least breakfast. In Szendehely several apartments operate, but many guests do not wish to cook on holiday, which makes full-service providers more attractive.

The first competitor to analyse is Szepi Fogadó in Szendehely, a family business operating for many years. It produces its own wines and runs a family-owned winery. The restaurant is popular with locals, offers daily menus with home delivery since COVID, and frequently hosts weddings and other celebrations. Rooms are simple but tidy, catering mainly to passing tourists, event guests and occasionally local residents (e.g. during home renovations). Next to the restaurant is the “Lagzis ház”, an event hall for up to 300 people, which significantly expands capacity.

Bánk is 10 minutes by car from Szendehely, and coming from Budapest the two settlements are practically adjacent. Lake Bánk is a popular leisure destination for hotel guests and residents of surrounding villages. It has a beach with infrastructure, is easily accessible by bus, is suitable for water sports and offers a lake stage as a unique attraction. Bánk regularly hosts events and festivals, and offers wooden cabins, guesthouses, apartments and hunting lodges as accommodation. Lake Wellness Hotel has 58 rooms, including connecting family rooms and accessible rooms. All rooms are air-conditioned and non-smoking, with some overlooking the lake and offering balconies or French balconies. The restaurant serves both hotel and external guests, and the hotel frequently hosts weddings, events, conferences and team-building trainings. Additional facilities include a tennis court and an adventure park (currently temporarily closed).

Szent Anna Pension and Restaurant in Berkenye, a few kilometres from Szendehely, is another relevant competitor. The villages of Berkenye and Szendehely are historically and practically intertwined; a cooperation agreement links them and many children from Berkenye attend Szendehely's German Nationality Primary School. Swabian origins are reflected in the pension's restaurant and in some of its rooms. Traditional Swabian dishes are served, and two "old-style" Swabian rooms are furnished with carved wooden furniture; nine additional rooms have more modern but simple furnishings. Rooms are air-conditioned and suited mainly to short stays and event guests. The wellness area consists of a small jacuzzi and Finnish sauna.

Since Szendehely sits on the border of Pest and Nógrád counties, Pest County settlements can seem more attractive to guests from Budapest. Vác, 10 km from Szendehely, is in Pest County and houses further competitors. Vác Hotel is located in the town centre near the train station. It is easily accessible for guests arriving by public transport, and also offers closed parking for car users. Its atmosphere is urban, with a modern, youthful design considered unique in the town. It has 14 air-conditioned rooms with Wi-Fi throughout. The restaurant serves breakfast only and there is no separate event or community room.

Camelot Club Hotel, located on the banks of the Danube between Vác and Verőce, is a stronger competitor. It has 20 rooms accommodating 54 people. Room furnishings are simple but air-conditioned, and Wi-Fi is available throughout. Its restaurant also serves walk-in guests. It has a conference room, grill terrace and wine cellars suitable for events of 40–50 people. From spring to autumn, significant portion of guests are wedding parties, as the hotel's private riverside and event tent for 220 people provide a highly attractive venue. Services can include catering as well as organising photographers, decorators and musicians. Parking is primarily designed for car users.

For the comparative analysis, these five commercial accommodations were evaluated based on selected criteria in a points system, and then compared with Hotel Sende****. The planned hotel, as the origin, was assigned 0 points in each category, and the relative advantages or disadvantages of each competitor were assessed against this benchmark.

Price-value matrix

Based on the coordinate system, Hotel Sende**** appears at the origin, while Lake Wellness Hotel scores higher both in price and in total points. This means that although it is more expensive, it also stands out in terms of service quality and facilities. For Nógrád County, its price level is exceptional, reflecting the fact that its target segment is not local residents but business tourists, both domestic and international. The hotel has six technically equipped, naturally lit, panoramic conference and event rooms (two of which can be opened together) and a 600 m² wellness area, including indoor and outdoor pools, steam cabins, various saunas, a fitness room, salt room and related services such as massages and beauty treatments. Every year the international

Louis Armstrong Jazz Festival is held on the lake stage in Bánk, to which the hotel restaurant's name is linked. Guest rooms are modern, clean and well equipped, giving the impression of a contemporary city hotel.

Camelot Club Hotel achieves a higher overall score but has a lower average price than Hotel Sende****, making it highly competitive. Despite its Danube-side location, its immediate natural environment is somewhat less favourable. It is located next to main road 12, more than 2 km from residential areas, and is best accessed by car or bus. From spring to autumn, weddings represent a major share of guest traffic. The event tent on the riverbank and the catering services make it attractive for couples. Room furnishings are simple and somewhat outdated: dark colours, older televisions and older-style furniture dominate.

The coordinate system also shows that although Szepi Fogadó, Szent Anna Fogadó and Vác Hotel charge lower prices than the planned Hotel Sende****, they score lower in terms of services and characteristics.

SWOT analysis

A SWOT analysis provides a comprehensive assessment of a company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. On this basis, specific goals can be set for the planning period. Typically, multiple goals are defined, such as profitability, increasing bookings, risk mitigation and building a good reputation. The purpose of the SWOT analysis is to support planning the most effective strategic steps for Hotel Sende****.

SWOT analysis of Hotel Sende****

Strengths

- Location in a natural setting
- Unique appearance of the hotel
- Professional competence of staff
- Good accessibility
- Adequate infrastructure
- Parking facilities
- Links with local producers and service providers

Weaknesses

- Relatively weak tourism image of Nógrád County compared with more established Hungarian destinations
- Low number of rooms
- Financial constraints
- Lack of a wellness department
- Limited suitability as a conference venue
- Possible interruptions of telecommunication services

Opportunities

Expansion of room numbers
Upgrading room equipment
Implementation of innovative solutions
Expansion of target markets
Introduction of new services
Development of the IT system

Threats

New entrant to the market
Presence of competitors in the area
Potential closures on the M2 motorway in winter
Instability of the economic environment
Environmental impacts
Changes in tourism policy, taxation, or public funding conditions
Changing consumer needs

Income plan

The largest share of hotel revenue is room sales. The revenue plan sets out expected revenue by guest segment, year and main revenue group. Based on USALI segments, Hotel Sende**** primarily targets individual tourists, who are the main focus in pricing and package development. As the hotel has an event hall and plans to host weddings, group bookings (more than 10 rooms) are also possible, but will not represent the majority of revenue. For groups, advance payments will be requested and, in case of cancellation, treated as no-show fees and booked as other room revenue.

When setting room rates, competitors' prices in the area must be considered. A nominal annual room-rate increase of 5% is assumed in the forecast, subject to inflation and market conditions.

Rural occupancy data are generally lower, and seasonality is an important factor. The hotel is open year-round, as natural attractions draw hikers in all seasons, but guest numbers are higher from spring to autumn than in winter.

In addition to room sales, the other major revenue group is catering. For hotel guests, buffet breakfast in the restaurant is included in the room price. Optionally, half-board or full-board can be requested. The restaurant is open from 11:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. and also serves external guests, whose spending must be recorded separately from hotel guest revenue. If a hotel guest consumes in the restaurant without pre-booked meals, the bill can be charged to the room and settled at check-out, while walk-in guests pay directly (card, cash, SZÉP card or other cashless methods). In the revenue plan, separate forecasts were made for à la carte food and beverage revenue from external guests. As breakfast is included in room rates, 100% demand was assumed for this service.

After revenue planning, operating expenses and costs must be analysed to determine feasibility and the expected return on investment.

HR plan

A human resources plan is prepared to determine how many employees and what profiles are needed based on the number of rooms, services and other indicators. For the proper operation of the hotel, labour demand must be calculated precisely. In addition to professional competence, dedication to the profession, hospitality, loyalty, flexibility and the right attitude must be considered, as negative word of mouth spreads much faster than positive experiences in tourism.

Hotel Sende**** has 30 rooms, a restaurant and a small lobby bar. Catering units and expected occupancy determine workforce size. Room furnishing and equipment strongly influence the time needed for cleaning and therefore housekeeping labour demand. The hotel is planned to operate from 1 January to 31 December, so staffing must be planned for year-round operation.

Live labour management calculation 2022–26:

Taking into account annual leave and weekends, staff numbers were rounded up where needed. In general, as room numbers increase, labour demand increases roughly proportionally, but some jobs are independent of room count. In Hotel Sende**** this includes the maintenance worker, who in addition to technical duties also cares for animals in the mini wildlife park. The hotel is surrounded by mature trees rather than extensive lawn areas, so grounds maintenance is less labour-intensive.

There is a 24-hour front desk. Receptionists work in three shifts, one person per shift, and in addition to reception duties they also handle some sales tasks and operate the lobby bar. A total of five reception staff is planned on an annual basis; the owner also occasionally helps at the front desk but is not included in live labour calculations. As the hotel has an independently operating restaurant, separate staff are needed. With approximately 50% forecast occupancy and 30 rooms, two kitchen staff are required per shift (one chef and one kitchen helper); due to holidays and days off, this means four people in total. The kitchen helper also washes dishes and supports the chef. The chef is present mainly in the afternoon and prepares breakfast for the next day. Servers work in two shifts: one in the morning (7:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.) and one in the afternoon (1:00 p.m.–9:00 p.m.), with two on duty at a time and three in total employed. Two housekeepers are responsible for cleaning rooms and public areas. The entire hotel is managed by one person – the owner/manager – who, in addition to administration, is involved in sales, HR and reception but is not counted separately in the staff plan.

Pay plan

In wage calculations, the 2022 legal changes were taken into account: the 1.5% vocational training contribution was abolished and the social contribution tax was reduced from 15.5% to 13%. Thus, the total employer burden decreased from 17% to 13%. Taking into account economic changes, inflation and minimum wage increases, an annual salary increase of 5% was assumed.

Profitability plan

To analyse profitability, a profit and loss (P&L) statement must be prepared, grouping forecast revenues and operating costs by profit centre and by levels. As with any business, the goal is to generate profit, i.e. total revenue exceeds costs and expenses. For Hotel Sende****, two profit centres are examined: room rental and F&B operations.

Revenues were planned earlier; in the P&L they are combined with cost items. Sales revenues from room and F&B are shown separately. From this, the purchase cost of goods sold is deducted (applicable only to F&B, since no resale of third-party services is planned). The resulting margin is then reduced by direct operating costs to obtain the operating unit result. The largest part of direct costs is wages plus employer contributions. Wages in the P&L are taken from the wage plan, except for the maintenance worker and hotel manager, whose costs are recorded under other headings. For both profit centres, percentages are applied for cleaning products, laundry and other direct costs (e.g. table decorations, printed materials) that cannot be directly allocated.

Commission costs for indirect bookings (e.g. online booking systems such as Booking.com) are deducted from room revenues. The next part of the P&L statement shows indirect costs. Under Administrative and General, the hotel manager's salary and management-related costs, including accounting software, are recorded. Under Property Operation and Maintenance, labour and material costs for maintenance are shown. Sales and marketing costs include marketing plan implementation and participation in trade fairs. As previously mentioned, sales and some marketing tasks are carried out by front-office staff.

Utility costs (energy, water, etc.) and IT system operating costs are also accounted for here. From revenue minus direct and indirect costs, Gross Operating Profit (GOP) is obtained. Among local taxes, only local business tax (HIPA) affects the hotel. The rate is currently 1.6%. The tax base is net sales revenue minus certain deductible items (e.g. material costs, subcontracted services). In Szendehely there is no land tax, municipal tax or building tax. Tourist tax of HUF 200/day is charged directly to guests and does not appear in the P&L.

A tourism development contribution is also paid based on net sales, but not on the full amount. The tax base is the net value of locally prepared food and non-alcoholic beverages subject to 5% VAT; the contribution rate is 4%. From 1 January 2020 this was extended to net income from accommodation. Since the business plan is a feasibility study, exact figures are not yet available; estimates and statistics are used instead. According to KSH and analyses by Károly Zerényi, restaurant turnover is distributed approximately 75% food and 25% drinks, and alcoholic drinks represent around 10–11% of total turnover (approximately 40% of beverage turnover). Based on the planned F&B distribution, the tourism development contribution is calculated on food revenue (breakfast, half-board and à la carte) and on around 60% of à la carte beverage revenue, as lobby bar consumption is expected to be largely alcoholic.

Investment plan

To implement the project, external financing is needed; ideally, 20% of the total budget is available as own funds. One of the long-term consequences of the pandemic has been the severe impact on many economic sectors, especially tourism and related services. Curfews, restrictions and closures put hotels, restaurants and other tourism-related businesses in an almost hopeless economic situation. As restrictions were gradually lifted, the government introduced state-backed loans and other measures to support the restart of the economy and preserve or create jobs.

This environment offers an opportunity to launch the investment – the establishment and construction of Hotel Sende**** – using a combination of own funds, state support and loans. By applying for a grant covering about 30% of the planned HUF 900 million investment amount, the project has a realistic chance of success, as there is currently no comparable hotel in the area. The hotel would be the only one targeting this segment, offering employment to local residents, reducing unemployment and contributing to revitalising the sector.

By selecting a favourable economic stimulus loan with an interest rate of around 2.5%, 50% of the investment (approx. HUF 450 million) can be financed. As the building will have a residential character reflecting local culture, and the basement will be used for technical and storage functions, structural work in this area can progress relatively quickly. After the building shell is complete, multiple contractors can work simultaneously in different parts of the future hotel without interfering with each other, which saves time.

Rapid construction is important not only for opening but also because material and labour costs are rising; earlier completion helps lock in lower prices and allows loan repayment to be covered by operating profits as soon as possible. The non-productive period must be kept as short as possible. Staff recruitment, training and familiarisation also require time and costs, so this should be carried out during the construction phase in such a way that sufficient staff are available by opening, but without over-staffing, as full occupancy cannot be expected immediately.

Training and equipping staff are one-time, unavoidable costs that pay off if guests are welcomed by well-prepared, friendly and hospitable employees. Wage costs, however, are ongoing, so the project schedule must be planned carefully to minimise wage expenses during the construction period, when employees cannot yet work productively. At the same time, having staff available for the final phases (cleaning, tidying, furnishing) can be beneficial, as external workers are not needed for these tasks and staff can become more attached to the hotel by participating in the final preparations. Overall, the business plan suggests that Hotel Sende could occupy a distinctive market position by combining a natural setting, locally rooted services, personalised hospitality, and a diversified accommodation and catering offer. The feasibility of the project, however, depends on realistic occupancy assumptions, careful cost control, appropriate financing, and the hotel's ability to differentiate itself from established competitors in the wider Danube Bend region.

9. CASE STUDY: MARKETING PLAN FOR AVAR HOTEL

1. Introduction, the objectives of the marketing plan

Due to the diversity and size of the tourist offer in the hotel's environment, the positioning of the hotel must be consciously shaped. This requires the development and implementation of a well-founded marketing strategy. It is important that the hotel carries out comprehensive marketing activities that contribute to a sustained increase in awareness, promotion and guest traffic.

In addition to tangible physical developments, it is essential to create and operate successful, effective communication and public relations, which further support the achievement of the project's objectives. The purpose of the marketing plan is primarily to meet the communication expectations of the hotel rehabilitation project. The direct tourism development goal is to create a diversified yet unified and innovative image, based on the hotel's own style and visual identity, that satisfies the needs of both domestic and foreign tourists.

Marketing activities must also contribute to introducing the local development into public consciousness as a new tourism product. Thirdly, by strengthening tourism's revitalising effect through development, the plan aims to increase the awareness and image of the city and its surroundings, continuously adapting to changing and differentiating market needs and to the requirements of sustainable, conscious tourism development.

From an economic perspective, efforts should be made to reduce the seasonality of attractions in the development area by offering new, additional hotel services. These should encourage longer stays in the city, increase guest traffic in local accommodations and, in parallel, raise income from visitor spending.

Regarding timing, marketing communication related to the area and the development should start before the hotel's rehabilitation, and later be adjusted to the major construction milestones. The impact of marketing activities does not end with technical handover; they must continue in an intensified form as part of the hotel's ongoing operations.

The marketing system of the project can be summarized as follows:

Table 1.

Target audience of marketing communication.

Target system	Device system
Increase in number of guests and guest nights	Exploiting the new service quality gained by the development
Increasing foreign guest traffic	Taking advantage of the new quality of service gained by the development, employees speaking a foreign language
Increase average length of stay	Offering additional services (e.g.: compiling and recommending program packages)
Increase in accommodation fee income	Higher level, quality services
Increasing the specific spending of tourists	Higher level, quality services, additional services
Effective cooperation with players in the tourism sector	Contact with tour operators, Tourinform offices
Seasonality reduction pre- and post-season elimination	Compilation and recommendation of program packages
Improving the quality of guest service	Finding and further training qualified and experienced personnel
Establishing a system of relations with regional international companies	Development of a set of conditions for concluding individual contracts

Source: own compilation

When analysing target groups to be reached by the marketing communication of the tourism product, the diversity of demand must be a primary consideration, in light of trends described earlier and the specific features of the area and its surroundings. This diversity must be reflected in the standard of the hotel environment. To increase guest traffic and improve hotel utilisation, it is also worth gaining the support of the following stakeholder groups.

Target groups of internal – public – communication:

Public offices, public institutions, public administration bodies, which can act as important opinion formers.

Local communities, informal groups, interest associations and organisations.

For these groups, the development area can be attractive as a venue for events, since it offers a high-quality environment.

Target groups of external communication:**General economic and environmental relations**

Tourists, potential tourists, visitors

Local residents

Population living outside the settlement (tourists, workers, students, potential settlers)

Government bodies (for lobbying and advocacy)

Tourism enterprises

Potential investors (subjects of investor relations)

Regional municipalities and sub-regional associations

Educational institutions, research institutes, consultancy firms, cultural organisations

Conference and event organising companies

Vineyard farmers and wine cellars

Wine merchants

Other businesses related to catering and winemaking

Wine-growers and wine associations

Competitors (to strengthen the overall complexity of regional tourism)

Special attention must be paid to one of the key opinion-forming groups: the actors of mass communication:

Local and regional press.

National press.

Electronic media.

2. Presentation of services

After the development, the hotel will be able to provide extensive, complex services.

The building will serve conference tourism with a conference hall for up to 200 people, equipped with state-of-the-art technical facilities:

Projector and projection screen to support visual presentations

Lavalier, clip-on or hand-held radio microphones

Modern loudspeaker system for high-quality sound

Four interpretation booths

Internet access

Flip charts

Television

Computer

Telephone

Fax

Laser pointer

The panoramic meeting room on the fifth floor can accommodate 20 people.

The wellness department

The boat-shaped paddling pool fully meets the needs of families with small children, allowing them to enjoy the pool safely. For adults, relaxation is ensured by a 90 cm deep whirlpool and an adventure pool.

For guests who enjoy swimming, an 8 × 10 m pool opening onto the garden offers year-round relaxation, helping to reduce seasonality. A relaxation terrace further enhances comfort.

Wellness services expected from **** hotels include:

Beauty farm

Finnish sauna

Bio sauna

Salt cabin

Ice fountain/ice crush

Solarium

In the fitness room, guests are supported by a personal trainer and modern fitness machines (rowing machine, stair climber, elliptical trainer, treadmill, exercise bike, wall bars, water bike, step machine, twist machine, arm and chest muscle equipment).

The smallest guests are entertained by a children's playground that meets EU requirements (swings, spring toys, climbing frames, slides).

3. Pricing

During the review of **** hotels in the region, their guest nights, services and price levels were assessed. In our pricing concept, we take into account these services and facilities and set our prices accordingly. After development, Avar Hotel will be able to satisfy a wide range of needs, offering ideal relaxation opportunities to several well-defined target groups through comprehensive wellness services, by creating the infrastructural and technical conditions for conference tourism, and by introducing family-friendly services.

When determining prices, we considered the rates for suites and single and double rooms, which also form the basis of the business plan.

4. Sales and Marketing Communication

When choosing marketing communication channels, the diversity of target groups makes it essential to manage and coordinate tools in an integrated way. Instead of focusing on individual elements, communication should take a holistic approach to achieve maximum effect. The tools to be used include:

5. Publications, PR materials

Publications must meet two key requirements:

Brochures presenting the hotel and its services in a simple, comprehensible way, in at least two languages, suitable for tourism promotion and as inserts in other city tourism publications.

Informative, practical publications for guests already on site.

Image publications (image posters)

Informative publications in Hungarian, English, German and Italian; it is recommended to create an offer-focused brochure in close cooperation with local entrepreneurs.

Instead of relying solely on regional programme brochures, it is advisable to proactively prepare programme recommendations with innovative activities.

Printed materials related to specific products, e.g. a conference organiser booklet.

Inclusion of city events and programmes in event calendars and programme listings. Gift items developed together with operators of nearby attractions (e.g. fridge magnets, locally themed children's toys).

A regularly updated website providing current news on programmes, weather, new attractions and other tourism-related information. The site should be available in Hungarian and English and preferably in German as well.

A digital image and information archive (e.g. a photo CD or media library) can support the design of the hotel's brochures and website, as well as those of tour operators and travel agencies, and can be used in PR activities.

Contemporary hotel marketing should integrate the hotel's website and direct booking platform with social media communication, search engine optimisation, online reputation management, personalised e-mail marketing, and data-driven customer relationship management. These tools can strengthen direct bookings, improve guest engagement, and reduce dependence on intermediary distribution channels.

6. Participation in exhibitions and fairs

At tourism events, the hotel can be presented in the context of the wider regional offer. A programme for participation in domestic and international fairs should be developed, with particular attention to the professional focus of each event. Among domestic travel exhibitions, those in Budapest, Veszprém and Győr are especially significant. Participation in health tourism fairs, the Business Travel Show and the "Welcome to Hungary" fair is highly recommended.

Given the high cost of foreign exhibitions, it is advisable to make greater use of online accommodation brokerage and advertising opportunities.

Linking of certain tourism products

By combining several different tourism products, higher-value services can be offered than by selling them separately. Product association allows, on the one hand, tourists with different motivations to use services related to attractions beyond their

primary motivation and, on the other hand, to create “associated products” already at the trip planning stage, providing a richer experience.

Examples of product association:

Linking conference tourism with use of wellness services

Linking health and wellness tourism with visits to wine and gastronomy events

It is also recommended to develop loyalty programmes for returning guests, such as:

Group discounts

Frequent-guest discounts

Business traveller offers

Family, senior and honeymoon discounts

Early booking discounts

Restaurant promotions (e.g. happy hours, unlimited consumption, children’s offers)

Gifts, contests and games

Contracts with various health funds are increasingly accepted and popular, especially those supporting health preservation; cooperation with them also provides an indirect advertising channel.

At different stages of the project’s life cycle, notice boards, commemorative plaques, posters and information boards complying with EU information and publicity rules may be produced by the technical contractors as a cost-saving measure, which should be reflected in public procurement requirements.

When implementing and using the above marketing tools, special attention must be paid to the sustainability of the development project. Communication tools related to the project should remain functional and relevant even after construction work has been completed.

10. DEMAND ANALYSIS FOR A PLANNED HOTEL IN GYŐR

1. Introduction

The hotel's services must be adapted to its profile, so one of the most important design aspects is to provide families with children with a full experience during their stay. Taking into account adults' needs, separate sections will be created for them so that parents also find relaxation. First, the planned room types are presented. When selecting them, attention was paid to offering alternatives in several price categories and layouts for both families and couples.

2. The structure of the hotel

Standard room: This room type is ideal for couples and provides maximum comfort. It is available with either a double bed or twin beds.

Standard room with extra bed: These rooms have a larger floor area and can be expanded with an extra bed.

Deluxe room: This room type ensures an extremely comfortable stay with spacious, intimate design and the option of up to two extra beds.

Deluxe suite: The two-space open-plan suite is ideal for families with children and also suitable for couples travelling with grandparents or friends.

Family suite: In this suite type, colourful, themed children's rooms await younger guests. Fairy-tale characters, Disney heroes, special beds and playful equipment provide an unforgettable experience. It can accommodate two adults and two or three children.

Family suite plus: Similar to the family suite, but accommodating up to six guests in total, with a maximum of four adults.

Twin rooms for guests with reduced mobility: These are located on the ground floor. When furnishing them, sufficient space for movement and specially equipped bathrooms are key to ensuring a smooth stay.

Family suites are equipped with a kitchenette, where parents can prepare baby food and formula. In addition to standard equipment, rooms include children's bathrobes, pacifier sterilisers, bottle warmers, baby cots, baby baths, step stools, toilet seats, changing mats that can be placed on a cot and balcony doors with safety locks. The hotel restaurant will offer high chairs, plastic cutlery and bibs. Children's favourites such as fried cheese, spaghetti Bolognese and pizza will feature on the menu. The menu will also include allergen-free, vegan and vegetarian dishes, with a preference for seasonal fruits and vegetables.

A special feature of the menu is that, to support a healthy lifestyle, it will indicate average calorie content and macro- and micronutrient ratios, providing useful support for guests on a diet. Buffet breakfast will be served in the restaurant, and a breakfast room-service menu will be available for those who prefer to eat in bed. Lunch and dinner will be à la carte. In addition to all-inclusive and half-board options, fresh fruit, drinks and snacks will be provided for children throughout the day. The hotel bar will offer a range of alcohol- and sugar-free cocktails for children, served in glasses inspired by fairy-tale characters.

Leisure programmes will aim to create a magical fairy-tale kingdom for children and relaxation for adults. A playhouse will be set up where qualified childcare staff look after children during opening hours; after hours, babysitting will be available for an extra fee. A separate baby playroom will be located upstairs, with an adjacent changing room, nursing corner and warming kitchen. Children can enjoy tournaments, contests, crafts, treasure hunts and puppet shows. For older children and teenagers, a club will offer Xbox, table football, table tennis and karaoke.

After dinner, musical evenings, magic shows, dance performances and wine tastings for adults will be organised in the restaurant. The wellness area will include hot and cold pools, indoor and outdoor adventure pools and children's pools. Next to the adults-only sauna world, a salt cave will provide a quiet relaxation space with soft music. Facilities will include a Finnish sauna, infrared sauna and bio sauna. The bio sauna will be combined with light therapy and a maximum humidity of 40% to ensure pleasant relaxation.

Sensory-deprivation floatation therapy will allow guests to block out the outside world and relax floating on saline water. In addition to the jacuzzi, guests can choose from Swedish massage, relaxing aromatherapy massage, stress-relief shoulder–neck massage or hot stone massage. The hotel will offer numerous sports facilities: a gym with personal trainer support, an aerobics room with classes, a swimming pool, basketball court, foot-tennis court and mini-golf in the garden. Generous green areas will allow children to play tag, hide-and-seek and other outdoor games. Sports strollers will make moving around the hotel easier for families, and scooters and bicycles will be available for rent.

3. Sustainability

The Association of Hungarian Hotels and Restaurants encourage domestic hotels to adopt sustainable practices. Every two years, a call for applications is announced; winners receive the “Green Hotel” title for two years in gold, silver or bronze categories. Green hotels work to reduce their carbon footprint by implementing environmentally friendly practices in products and services, maintenance and supply chains.

Several measures can support environmentally friendly operation. Digital technology

can reduce the need for traditional check-in and check-out, thereby lowering plastic card and paper use. Energy and motion sensors, smart room thermostats and LED lighting are effective tools for energy savings. A central switch system can prevent guests from leaving lights on. Although solar panels are expensive, they are a one-time investment that pays off in the long term. Planting trees around the hotel creates shade, reduces the need for air conditioning and keeps outdoor areas cooler.

Reducing plastic waste is also important. Replacing plastic straws with glass or metal, switching from plastic bottles to glass and using refillable dispensers instead of small toiletry bottles can significantly reduce waste. Guests control their own water use, but small signs can encourage more sustainable habits. Technologies such as the “Comfort Saver” – a shower-hose attachment that mixes air into the water stream – help reduce water consumption.

Since almost 8% of greenhouse gas emissions come from wasted food, composting can help combat climate change. Rainwater can be used for irrigation. Creating an organic herb garden or a larger vegetable garden will enhance the restaurant’s flavours and reduce CO₂ emissions linked to transport. Chemical-free cultivation promotes health, and children can be involved playfully in caring for the garden, while games can be used to educate them about environmental protection. Bicycle rental will be offered as an alternative transport option.

4. Accessibility

Accessibility is crucial: businesses, attractions and hotels that neglect guests with disabilities make travel difficult or impossible for many people. If a town, attraction or hotel fails to address their needs, they can be fully excluded from travel experiences. A 21st-century hotel’s business policy must therefore be sensitive to disadvantaged groups.

It is essential that designers and architects not only create accessible guest rooms but design the entire building with accessibility in mind. Multiple staircases without lifts, steep ramps or poorly connected car parks can quickly become insurmountable obstacles. Barrier-free access must be ensured from parking to entry. A suitable parking space for a car transporting a person with reduced mobility is at least 350 × 500 cm. Guests must be able to enter the hotel without barriers, via a ramp, step-free entrance or lift of at least 110 × 140 cm.

Inside, entrances, rooms and dining areas must be accessible to wheelchair users. This is possible if these spaces are on the same level or connected via low-slope ramps and lifts. Accessible toilets are needed not only in hotel rooms but also in public areas near, for example, the restaurant. Lifts must be step-free and have controls mounted at accessible height. Doors, corridors and rooms must be sufficiently wide, and bathrooms require ample manoeuvring space. Recommended bathroom features include folding grab bars, accessible sinks and shower seats.

For blind and partially sighted guests, Braille signage should be used and regularly disinfected. Since COVID-19, health precautions and a sense of safety have become even more important. For deaf and hard-of-hearing guests, subtitled videos, visual information and voice-announcement systems in lifts can be very helpful. In the playhouse, toys should be selected that are suitable for hard-of-hearing, deaf, visually impaired and blind children, such as tactile games and board games adapted for the visually impaired.

5. Smart Hotel

The planned technological innovations aim to provide a high-quality guest experience. Potential guests browse many websites when searching for accommodation and are fully dependent on online information. The more detailed and transparent this information, the greater the sense of security it creates. Collecting guest reviews from booking sites on the hotel's own website and enabling quick responses, for example via chatbot, can reduce uncertainty.

While most hotels upload photos of rooms, these do not always reflect reality. A smart hotel can present rooms through virtual tours, providing a realistic picture of facilities, appearance and quality. Guests could also log in to the hotel website using social media accounts, with automatic data entry, speeding up the booking process. The system could also read ID-card data from a photo. Guest data are stored in a CRM system, making customer relations more transparent and easier to manage than with fragmented Excel files. Tasks can be assigned to departments through a task manager.

A well-integrated CRM system could create a network that gives all hotel departments an overview of operations. For example, housekeeping can signal when room cleaning starts and finishes; reception can record arrival times and room-priority needs; and restaurant staff can see daily menu information and minibar status. This enables better coordination and faster responses to guest requests.

A mobile application will allow guests to check in online or at the front desk. Uploading ID photos in advance speeds up check-in by pre-filling forms. After check-in, an "electronic key" is activated on the smartphone, allowing guests to open their room using a door sensor. The app can also control in-room experiences: lights, air conditioning and other services, as well as food orders – which may be delivered by service robots instead of staff. At check-out, the bill, including minibar consumption recorded via sensors, is shown in the app and paid electronically. After departure, guests receive a notification inviting them to share their experience, and staff respond quickly to both complaints and positive feedback, which can be shared on social media at the guests' request.

6. The evolution of the Hotel's expected demand

In primary research, a questionnaire was used to assess demand for a child-friendly wellness hotel. The hypothesis was that such a hotel would be in demand and would attract several target groups. The questionnaire included questions about Győr and its accommodations, respondents' priorities when choosing accommodation and which programmes and services would be important in a new hotel. Additional questions focused on the imagined hotel and demographic data. A total of 115 people completed the questionnaire.

Self-assessment of income situation (%):

I live well from my income and can also save: 44.3

I live well from my income but cannot save: 37.4

I can barely survive on my income: 14.8

I cannot survive at all: 3.5.

Most respondents were women and nearly half belonged to Generation Z. The fewest responses came from the Baby Boomer generation, likely because the questionnaire was shared online via social media, which is less used by older age groups. Most respondents lived in county seats and towns. 44.3% had discretionary income, forming a key potential demand segment for tourism.

82.6% had already visited Győr. These respondents (95 people) evaluated the city on a 1–5 scale (5 = very satisfied, 1 = not at all satisfied). Average scores:

Guest houses: 4.02

Sights: 3.82

Infrastructure: 3.76

Cultural programmes: 3.7

Leisure and music programmes: 3.55

Accommodations: 3.48

Art programmes: 3.43.

A score of 2.5 is considered neutral; all aspects scored above this, indicating that visitors, tourists and residents are generally satisfied with the city's offerings.

80% of those who had visited Győr had used commercial accommodation in the city. Among these (76 people), only 15 (19.74%) expressed dissatisfaction, and multiple aspects could be selected. Most (53.3%) missed sports opportunities, 46.7% mentioned hospitality, 40% a lack of wellness facilities, and 26.7% cited comfort, equipment and standard of accommodation. 20% were dissatisfied with cleanliness, and 13.3% found the hotel's restaurant and bar inadequate.

Leisure trips

Only 6.1% of all respondents said they do not usually travel for leisure, so almost everyone had travelled for this purpose. When choosing accommodation, the following factors were most often mentioned (multiple answers possible):

Price category: 78.7%
Services: 70.4%
Location: 66.7%
Facilities: 63%
Nearby leisure opportunities: 53.7%
Adequate parking: 33.3%
Proximity to city centre: 30.6%
Design of the accommodation: 29.6%
Ease of access: 26.9%
Online presence: 22.2%.

Respondents also evaluated the importance of wellness services on a 1–5 scale. For sauna use, 26.96% rated it “5” (most important), 20.88% “4”, 22.6% “3”, 11.3% “2” and 18.26% “1”. Thus, 47.84% – almost half – consider sauna important (rating 4 or 5). For the steam room, only 10.43% rated it “5”, 7.82% “4”, 32.17% “3”, 21.74% “2” and 27.84% “1”. Overall, 18.25% considered the steam room important to some degree, so this service appears less critical.

Respondents were also asked which programmes they would gladly participate in (multiple options possible). 69.6% chose wine tasting, 67% concerts, 57.4% bowling, 42.6% sauna sessions, 36.5% canoeing, 32.2% SUP and 25.2% water aerobics.

7. The planned hotel

Respondents were asked how long they would like to stay in a child-friendly wellness hotel with a rich programme offer. 56.5% would stay 3–5 days, 17.4% 1–2 or 6–7 days, 6.1% more than one week, 1.7% two weeks and 0.9% more than two weeks. Thus, 82.6% would spend more time in such a facility than the current average length of stay in Győr’s hotels.

An open question explored which services and equipment are essential for guest satisfaction in a wellness hotel. The most frequently mentioned elements were pools, saunas, massages and hot-water pools.

8. The needs of families

64.3% of respondents had not yet started a family, while 35.75% had. Those without children were asked whether they would stay in a child-friendly hotel if there were adults-only areas such as a sauna world. 93.2% said yes, indicating that almost everyone would consider staying in such a hotel even if currently childless.

Respondents with children (35.75%) answered further questions. 80.5% indicated that they consider it important for accommodation to be designed in a child-friendly way. Parents then rated the importance of selected services in a child-friendly hotel

on a 1–5 scale (5 = most important). The proportion rating each service as “5” was: playhouse 60.98%, playground 65.85%, children’s menu in the restaurant 58.54%, children’s pools 63.41%. No respondent rated children’s menus, children’s activities or the playground as “1” (least important). The least valued service was baby massage: 43.9% – almost half – considered it the least important.

9. Conclusions

The research examined whether there is demand for a four-star, child-friendly wellness hotel, and this was confirmed. Overall, respondents were positive about the idea. It was striking that almost all respondents, with or without children, would stay in a child-friendly accommodation if adult-only quiet zones were provided. This is important for target-group definition: not only families but also couples and older guests should be considered as secondary target groups.

A very high proportion of families with children stated that they consider child-friendly design important, reinforcing the hypothesis of demand for this type of hotel. Most respondents would spend more time in such a facility than the current average length of stay in Győr’s hotels, suggesting that this type of hotel could increase average length of stay. Furthermore, when choosing accommodation, most respondents named price category as the most important factor, indicating that Hungarian consumers are highly price-sensitive, so discounted package offers will be crucial.

10. Summary

The questionnaire results indicate a positive level of interest in the proposed four-star, child-friendly wellness hotel concept among the respondents. However, due to the sample size and the predominance of younger respondents recruited through online channels, the findings should be interpreted as exploratory rather than representative of the wider tourism market.

However, during an interview with Bernadett Vörös, thought-provoking questions arose, such as how the hotel could persuade a resident of Budapest to choose Győr over very strong competing destinations. The conclusion was that by focusing on the needs of families and relaxation seekers, offering a wide range of programmes, sports opportunities and technological innovations, the hotel can take on this competition. The rich children’s programme offer could compensate for the relatively limited number of child-focused programmes in Győr.

The key to competitiveness lies in how convincingly the hotel can be realised as a genuine “children’s kingdom”. Ultimately, the hotel’s success will depend on the quality of its design and services and on the effectiveness of the marketing team that introduces it to the market.

11. CASE STUDY: FRONT OFFICE TRANSFORMATION AND THE OPEN RECEPTION CONCEPT AT MERCURE-IBIS BUDAPEST CASTLE HILL

1. Introduction

The Mercure-Ibis Budapest Castle Hill hotel serves as the primary research site and provides an excellent example of the Open Reception concept, which was introduced as part of the hotel's transformation completed in summer 2019.

As part of the research, several personal in-depth interviews were conducted, which comprehensively describe both the traditional and the latest systems based on personal experiences. The subjects of the interviews: - Ágnes Holczer, who is currently a staff member of the Association of Tourism Developers and Consultants Texts (or TUTSZ). In 1982, she was a member of the opening team of the Buda Penta hotel. - Krisztina Chripko, who started working in the profession in September 1970, in the Duna Intercontinental (now Marriott), the first five-star, elegant hotel in Hungary that opened that year, where she spent 25 years. In the beginning, he worked on room reservations, after a few years he was promoted to the hotel counter, cashier position. In 1995, Márton Áváry, who is currently the Deputy Manager of the Mercure-Ibis Budapest Castle Hill hotel, started working at the invitation of a hotel in Buda, which was then called Mercure Buda under the management of the French Accor group. During his career, he worked in several hotels, from the initial role of a Londoner, climbing the steps of the Front Office to the position of Deputy Director. He worked at the reception of the old Mercure Buda and accompanied the transformation of the hotel as Deputy Manager. – Tamás Szíjjártó, the Front Office Manager of Mercure-Ibis Budapest Castle Hill, who also gained experience within the walls of the Mercure Buda before the renovation, and for the past two years has led the transformation process as the head of the reception.

2. Duties of hotel manager

The manager (managing and/or executive) has decision-making responsibility. Contributors who trigger live work, co-workers and/or their own staff are influenced by managers in order to achieve goals, make decisions, establish norms, and motivate without the need for completeness. Managers influence the activity at different levels (conceptual, influencing, technical) and what activities the hotel owner undertakes. The management is influenced by the tasks necessary for the performance of its activity and the services belonging to the activity, defines them, describes work pro-

cesses, develops procedures and makes decisions for the continuous and smooth performance of activities. Hotel management is the organization of the production of activities and services. The hotel manager obligatorily makes organizational decisions in compliance with the conditions included in his job description. It organizes that sufficient live labor and employees are available at a given time for the production of a specific activity (sales, maintenance) and/or service (check-in, room cleaning). There should be as many housekeepers available as they are able to clean the rooms rented out that day. It organizes and ensures that the dead work (tools, equipment, material, goods) necessary for the provision of the activity and/or service is available at the planned delivery time. If a room needs to be cleaned, a maid, a maid's car and a vacuum cleaner should be on site so that the activity can be carried out smoothly. "The concept of leadership can be explained in several ways. The following interpretations are the most common:

- management is an activity during which goals and the paths and methods leading to their achievement are determined;
- the essence of management is to influence people, i.e. they must be persuaded to go in the direction that management considers important;
- management can be understood as a change activity, during which we help create favorable changes in the enterprise;
- researchers examining the nature of leadership often conceptualise leadership as an exercise of power, they consider the relationship between the leader and subordinates to be decisive;
- finally, leadership in business life is, according to many, the science of producing success. This can also be considered the most general perception.
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The above examples suggest that managerial leadership and executive leadership are separated. At the same time, according to the American literature, the Hotel Manager's task is to achieve the goals so that the procedures meet the standards. The wording suggests two factors, on the one hand, it also clearly points out from its name that it is executive management. Secondly, compliance with standards is a priority, three-quarters of American hotel rooms are branded hotels, and this is what the definition represents. At the same time, the activities, work processes, and tasks appear not only in job descriptions, but also in process regulations.

3. Hotel departments, the Room's Division

Room's Division (Hotel Operations Unit) - this division is responsible for the operation of accommodation activities and can be divided into further sub-areas:

- Front Office (Ground floor area) - is physically located on the ground floor of the building and is responsible for the sale of the rooms and for the problem-free stay of the guests,
- Housekeeping (Upstairs area) - the department responsible for the order and cleanliness of the hotel rooms and the entire house,

- Reception - the part of the Front Office that deals with the sale of rooms and the reception of guests,
- Concierge (Porta) - part of the Front Office, its most important task is to provide hotel guests with information and help them solve their requests,
- Cassa (Cash) - part of the Front Office, which handles invoicing and payment related to guests,
- Food & Beverage (Hospitality unit) - provides hotel and external guests with food, drink and entertainment at the hotel's various catering locations,
- Banquet Department (Events department) - usually works as part of Food & Beverage and is responsible for the organization and conduct of events in the private room and conference,
- Health Department (Medical unit) - may have several names (e.g. Therapy), the department of spa hotels where treatments are provided,
- SPA (Wellness department / plant unit) - the swimming pool, relaxation and other treatments and possibly beauty treatments belong to this department,
- Sales Department - is responsible for the most effective sales of the hotel, acquires partners, concludes contracts,
- Marketing Department (Marketing) - its task is to apply market research and influencing tools, e.g. advertising, PR,
- Accounting Department - responsible for the registration, control and reporting of economic processes, including financing and controlling,
- Engineering and Maintenance - responsible for the repair and prevention of technical errors,
- Security Service (Police) - the department responsible for security, also called Security Service,
- Human Resources (Labour Affairs) - responsible for securing and retaining the right number and quality of employees.

4. Research results

Presentation of the hotel: The hotel is located in the 1st district of Budapest, on Krisztina körút next to the South Railway Station. Not only the reception, but the building itself has undergone huge changes over the years. The hotel opened its doors in 1982, then still under the name Buda Penta, the last Budapest building of the so-called “panel hotel era”. It has 400 rooms and is one of the largest hotels in the capital. When it was built, a shopping center was even planned for this area, which explains its size and design. At the time of its opening, it was considered a truly modern place, with a swimming pool, sauna, winter garden, and event halls. The restaurant belonging to the F&B area has 2 large separate rooms, a beer bar, an espresso bar, a coffee shop and a night bar. The latter was the hottest nightclub in Budapest at the time. There was also a small drink bar in the “swimming pool”. There were 50 rooms per floor, half of them faced the railway station, all of them were twin rooms, slightly smaller in size than those facing the castle. Typically, we accommodated groups here, while we left the other side for individual guests, who of course paid

more for that. In accordance with the expectations of those times, every room had a bathtub. Half of the Krisztina rooms on the 7th and 8th guest floors are approx. They are 6-8 m² larger - when viewed from the outside, these are the ones that jut out a bit from the facade -, here it was also possible to place extra beds. Since its opening, it has undergone several changes of ownership and remodeling. At the end of the 1990s, it was bought by the Accor group of companies, and it was then named Mercure Budapest Buda. No really significant and apparent changes took place at that time, but from then on, the standards and expectations characteristic of the Mercure brand were applied in all areas of the hotel. However, it has undergone the biggest transformation in the last two years. Although small and large constructions, innovations, and renovations were constantly carried out on the house, a full-scale transformation was necessary to meet the expectations and trends of 21st century guests. The special feature of the house is that it has not only been completely renovated, but as the first combo hotel in Hungary, two hotels have been created in one building at the same time. To this day, both hotels belong to the Accor hotel group, one belongs to the 3-star Ibis brand, and the other part remains represented by the Mercure brand. This is how the hotel became Mercure-Ibis Budapest Castle Hill from August 2019. Ibis Budapest Castle Hill offers travelers 150 rooms and Mercure Budapest Castle Hill another 250 modern, comfortable rooms. In addition, a bar and restaurant with a new concept and 6 conference rooms await guests. In addition to being the country's first combo hotel, many technical innovations were also introduced, in which the hotel is also at the forefront. This is also the case with the Open Reception concept, the essence of which is that the old, traditional reception desks were demolished in order to create a much more direct, personalized guest experience.

The beginnings and the shared division of labor

Based on the interviews, the examination of hotel systems dates back to the 1970s, when the big domestic hotels opened and when the accommodation service really started to pick up. Buda Penta opened in August 1982, at that time this building, marked by the names of architect József Finta and interior designer, was considered very modern. In addition, they used very sophisticated materials and furnishings and furniture, most of which came from Austria. The whole building was characterized by the color brown, its many variations, which, by the way, arose from the image of the Penta chain and was partly mandatory, of course, in addition to beige. The structure of the building itself has not changed much, but the colors and interior design have already disappeared. Today, however, you can still see the many interior spaces illuminated by natural light from above, which were full of green plants at the time. From the first moment of its opening, the hotel operated with very high utilization, ahead of the other hotels that opened at the same time - Novotel (BAH junction), Főútról (now Intercontinental), Hyatt (now Sofitel) - even though compared to them it was the most disadvantaged, close to Next to Déli railway station. Upon opening approx. A total of 360 people worked in the 400-room hotel. At that time, hotel counters were divided into three different work areas: cash desk, reception and concierge. This triple division remained for decades and characterized the 4- and 5-star hotels

that opened later, only after privatization, the management of the hotels that came under foreign management changed this. In the 1970s, only men were allowed to work at the reception and reception of hotels, and this was justified by the fact that it was a three-shift job, and the nature of working in the night shift was not suitable for young girls. So, it was a great privilege that after a few years some female colleagues were transferred from the cash register to the hotel's front desk, where the work was much more colorful than on the other side of the counter. The task was to provide the necessary information for the guests' programs, organize city tours and country programs, provide tour guides and interpreters, purchase opera tickets and theater tickets (the Internet was not even heard of at the time), manage table reservations, and call a doctor or an ambulance if necessary. In those days, there were far fewer IT tools available than today. In other words, all the data recording and administration that PMSs, CRMs, booking engines and channel managers, revenue management systems, etc. do today, all with pen and paper, typewriter and telex (predecessor of fax) arranged. The opening Front Office team of Buda Penta is approx. There were 20 people, supplemented by the back office of 8-10 people. Five of them were room managers, 8 people each at the reception and at the cash desk, because there often two people were needed to serve such a large number of guests. In other words, 5 people each worked in the morning and afternoon shifts, and one person per department at night, i.e. a total of three people worked at the same time. The latter dealt with sales and administrative tasks, i.e. the Front Office manager managed a total of 25-30 people. At that time, it was a serious, respected middle management level, with extensive professional knowledge and good sales skills. A few years later, with the increase in the number of guests and the development of the hotel, the labor requirements of the front office also changed. In 1995, when the hotel was already called Mercure Buda, the staff at the reception was about 30 people. During these years, the number of Front Desk employees was much higher than what is customary today, a total of 7 people worked at the front desk, 12 people worked at the reception, and another 11 people worked at the cash register. Even in those years, the main task of the reception, i.e. the room managers, was to welcome individual and group guests and register them in the Fidelio computer system (it could have been another system, although it was the most common and was used at the Mercure Buda hotel at the time). The morning reception shift (1-2 people) arrived at half past 7 in the morning and took over the shift from the overnight workers. He read the Handover Book, which contained all the important information for the given day, such as room occupancy, complimentary rooms for that day, day use rooms for that day, transfers, daily prices, the hotel's revenue plan for that day and its daily position compared to the plan. After handing over, all daily orders were checked to ensure that special requests, prices, price codes, and payment information were properly entered into Fidelio. By the way, handling room orders was the responsibility of the back office. The rooms of individual guests and groups were then assigned according to special needs. In those years, there was only one floor of non-smoking rooms and only one suite on each floor. The official check-in time was 2:00 p.m., but guests often arrived earlier, in which case the reception, in consultation with housekeeping, found rooms that had already been cleaned and checked for them. Upon arrival, the guest filled

out a so-called Registration Form, which included his/her personal data, name, place of birth, year, address, nationality, purpose of stay (due to statistics, business or tourist), passport number, and duration of stay. In these years, it was not necessary to request and authorize a credit card upon arrival, and many foreign guests did not have a credit card at all. The order included the method of payment or, in the case of company payment, a reference to this. Despite this, not many people left without paying, and those who did left the mini-bar at most. Credit card authorization upon arrival was introduced a few years later, and later a credit card guarantee was also required when booking a room. The guests also knew that the «boss» was the one to whom they arrived - that's why in Hungarian it was called: room boss. He was the responsible manager of the given shift, who was responsible for each department, and if the middle manager was not there, he also took over the authority, if it actually happened. Therefore, if the guests saw the head of the room go to the other part of the counter and cash in their \$20, they considered it a special honor. The cashiers handled the payment for the rooms, the travel and the currency exchange. Since there were no safes in the rooms at that time, managing them was also part of them. For a house of this size, approx. There were 40 guest safes, for which one key was with the guest, another at the reception, with the cashiers, and both were needed to open it. There was a hard plastic box in the safe, which had to be handed over to the guest, meaning that the cashier could not see what the guest was putting in. It was considered very modern at the time that, if the guest watched the home channel of the TV in the room, a printed slip appeared in the cash register about it, as well as about the outgoing calls made from the room. These served as receipts in addition to the guest bill, in case of dispute the exact time and program could be presented, or called phone number. This was certainly a topic of discussion many times, which is why the cashier colleagues really didn't like this so-called PayTV. The invoices signed by the guest were also brought from the F&B stores to the cash register, which had to be debited one by one to the guest accounts. If the catering units were closed, the subordinate managers handed over the daily income here, which the cashier locked in a safe designed for this purpose. The closing of the day looked like the cashier charged each room (meaning: the room price for 1 night with breakfast) individually to the guest accounts, also charged the room price to the accounts of the groups in one sum, while the night room manager manually entered the room price for each room on a large sheet sleeping capacity and the charged room price with breakfast. In principle, he also had to check that everything was correct and that the account was opened at a price according to the contract. If something was suspicious, you could look up the contract in the back office and see if the price is correct, or the material in the envelope provided for this purpose next to the guest invoice - price offer, customer, booking and confirmation, online amendment documents - also had to be browsed many times. The hotel porters, carriage marshals, and Londoners (who at that time did not yet work at the reception desk, but carried each guest's luggage, ordered taxis, collected the breakfast slips at night, and stored the luggage of guests who had already paid but were traveling later, they brought opera, theater and concert tickets ordered by phone to the guests, etc.). The main porter's task is to manage the listed jobs, organize and control their tasks, and maintain contact with other related work areas.

The general task of hotel concierges is to provide various tourist services to guests during their stay. You should know the programs, restaurants and entertainment offered by travel agencies. His work includes the provision of transfers to and from, timetables, traffic information, sports opportunities, sports events, Budapest and Hungarian monuments, knowledge of attractions, opening hours of churches and times of services, opening hours of shops and markets, availability of dentists, provision of reliable baby-sitters, availability of ambulance services, and the solution of all tasks entrusted to the guest. For groups, the task of the Londoner was to arrange travel with a so-called boy card. This meant that after the Londoner loaded the packages into the group's bus, he had to check with the cashier that all extra bills were paid. If it wasn't, you couldn't (in theory) let the bus out of the parking lot until it was paid for. The task of the afternoon reception shift is to manage daily arrivals and room changes. The night staff printed various lists related to hotel traffic and received guests arriving at night.

Until the beginning of the 2000s, such a segmented counter system, which can now be called traditional, operated everywhere in larger hotels. In division 3, the jobs were completely separated from each other, and everyone was solely responsible for their own work tasks. It was a single long counter divided into 3 invisible sections. The cashiers stood at one end of the counter, the porters at the other end and the room managers in the middle. A sign hung on the counter or above the counter showed the guest which was the Reception, the Cassa and the Concierge. So, for example, a receptionist did not have the task of ordering a city tour, did not know the different offices, tour guides, and prices. If the guest approached him with such a request, he «walked» the guest over to the colleague standing two meters away. In the same way, if a guest came to a concierge saying that his room was too noisy and wanted to exchange it for a quieter one, the concierge wandered over to the adjacent reception, where the room manager working there called the guest over and completed the room exchange on the computer. The cashiers also negotiated with the guest only about money exchange and payment, if he asked for anything else, the harassment began. Since at that time the entire counter was one long unit (nowadays the employees stand at several separate small tables), walking the guest was not a very polite solution.

Consolidation of workflows

With the advent of software, the clerks first disappeared, then the reception began to merge with the porter, and eventually with the cash register, followed by a decrease in the number of sales staff. Interestingly, it can be said that the approx. Even then, the head of the FO 40 years ago had the vision and expectation that the receptionists should understand all three areas to the extent that we could even handle a shift alone in case of low utilization. Work processes were reorganized and work areas merged in the Mercure Buda and other Mercure hotels at the end of the 1990s, in Buda in 1997. Reorganization of work and responsibilities was the responsibility of the Front Office Manager, the Cashier and the Chief Porter. The objective was that everyone

who works at the counter should be aware of all the work processes, and that the work schedule could be prepared in such a way that anyone could be assigned to any job role. The reorganization lasted a few months, during which the employees took part in cross-training. At the end of the trainings, the reception and front desk workers were first brought together under the supervision of a supervisor then when the work was going smoothly, the cash register workers were also involved, and when the reorganization was completed, everyone was competent in all roles. The purpose and benefit of the reorganization was optimal staff management, the same work (arrival, travel, currency exchange, program organization) could be solved with a smaller desk. As a Front Desk Supervisor, the task was to manage and control not only one department, but the entire counter in a given shift. In the beginning, two Supervisors worked, one in the morning shift and the other in the afternoon shift. This was later expanded to include a third Supervisor working the night shift. The boss of the Supervisors was the Front Office Manager. In 2005, the total staff of the desk was 8 Front Desk Agents, 3 Front Office Supervisors, 1 Front Office Manager, so a total of 12 people. It is important to mention that in 10 years the technical background and computer applications have developed a lot, all of which made this change and the reduction and optimization of the number of employees possible. Although the training and retraining were successful, the entire integration process took several years. A colleague who initially worked as a porter could not, even years later, prepare a room schedule like a former receptionist, and even after years, a former receptionist did not have as deep and comprehensive tourism and service knowledge as a colleague who had worked at the reception for a long time. Of course, in addition to the combined jobs typical of today, there are even more jobs that belong to the traditional division of reception work, if the clientele requires it. The main concierge job is a position that currently exists in five-star hotels and some four-star hotels. The concierge department was kept in those hotels, and with it the position of chief concierge, where the clientele demands and expects that any special needs of theirs will be given special attention, and even dealt with individually over a longer period of time. A very illustrative example of this came up in the interviews, according to which, for example, the young Andy Vajna, late government commissioner and Hollywood producer at the Intercontinental, said at 5 in the afternoon that he wanted an air-conditioned room for 16 people by 7 in the evening. to order a minibus in which a professional guitarist entertains the film crew until they get to Lajosmizse. At that time, there were two air-conditioned minibuses in Budapest, and it was not easy to find a professional guitarist in two hours. This example shows that porter work was a very challenging and serious profession. The combined staff and work organization have been operating stably for many years, and they have not changed it since then. In 2017, the division of the Front Office at the Mercure Budapest Buda was also 1 Front Office Manager, 3 Front Office Supervisors and then 11 receptionists and 2 Londoners. By then, of course, the remains of the divided reception system had completely disappeared, everyone performed all tasks in every shift as room manager on a completely equal basis.

Transformation of traditional reception desks

The latest reception systems and the so-called Open Reception are essentially the latest, even further thought and developed version of fully automated systems and unified work organization. At this type of reception, the change in attitude is actually the biggest leap compared to the previous models, the guest experience and more direct contact are in focus. The primary aspect leading to its development was the strengthening of the service level and not the optimization of costs. In addition, of course, the most modern technical developments that make all this possible are essential. At this reception, the most striking thing is the physical change that is visible to the eye. Traditional, long, large desks will be demolished and there will be no reception desks at all, or they will be replaced by smaller workstations, islands, and work stations. In the case of the Mercure-Ibis Castle Hill, 4 separate, completely walkable, relatively small workstations were created. These surfaces can accommodate a laptop or tablet and, when necessary, provide a convenient workspace for both guests and staff. It is perhaps particularly important for group arrivals, when a larger group must be arrived and coordinated in a short time. Due to the size and nature of the hotel, workstations were also necessary, since it has 400 rooms, which provide a great help in coordination during the high season and on full days. In addition, of course, the primary goal is completely free movement throughout the lobby area, whether sitting in an armchair, having a drink at the bar or just walking around, checking in and helping guests during a tour, and thus also providing an experience and not just a service. In addition to counters or non-existent counters, technical and technical developments are also necessary for this type of work. One of the most important steps for mobilization is the introduction of laptops or tablets instead of traditional desktop computers. At Castle Hill, tablets entered everyday use. Due to their size, these are suitable for receptionists to work on in their hands, just like a telephone, but they can also function as laptops with a keyboard for more difficult and longer work processes. Of course, they use the same hotel PMS (Opera) system and all other functions are available on them as on traditional computers. In addition to tablets, the use of new bank card terminals (3C Payment) was also introduced. The system is much more modern, simpler and more convenient to use. In the hotel industry, perhaps the biggest advantage appears in the field of bank card pre-authorizations. Everything can be controlled from the PMS system, all authorization data is automatically transferred to the PMS and stored, it is not necessary to record them manually. These can also be used automatically when paying, there is no need to use the terminals manually. In contrast, with their predecessors, the well-known and used bank card terminals, the card had to be pre-authorized manually, and the issued slip had to be kept and stored in guest materials until the guest left. When checking out, this had to be taken out and, if the guest wanted to use it, the code had to be entered again, followed by the pre-authorized amount and the total amount of the bill. If the guest did not want to use it, canceling it was an equally complicated, separate task. Thus, these types of terminals represent another great technical leap and greatly facilitate the registration process, but above all the invoicing. 36 Another important characteristic of Open Reception is that it tries to completely minimize the use

of printed formats and paper, everything is done digitally. Primarily because without counters it is not possible to print and collect everything in the usual way. organize, string together and store, only digitally. Thanks to this and the aforementioned innovations, such as the renewal of the bank card terminals, guest materials in the usual sense have also disappeared. All relevant data is recorded in the Property Management System (PMS), and related documents can also be attached digitally the customers and all the data of the reservation to the given reservation. They can thus be accessed and retrieved in seconds at any time. The notification forms are the only ones that are still in use today in printed form, but these have also changed a lot. The guests have the opportunity to enter their mandatory data on almost every booking interface, which, if they do, will be automatically transferred to our system and upon arrival they only need to be checked, any missing information must be filled in, and all that is required is a signature from the guest. Not only at this type of reception, but in almost all hotels, guests can now use the so-called Fast Check Out option, i.e. the accelerated check-out option. The essence of this is that the final invoice is sent by email to the address specified by the guest automatically after check-out. For this, it is essential to clarify the method of payment and the billing address with the guest upon arrival. The most common payment method is payment by bank card, and thanks to the new type of bank card terminals explained above, this has become much simpler, and the pre-authorized amount on the guest's card can be automatically used upon departure. You can also enter the billing address either on the booking page or online, otherwise you can do this at any time upon arrival or during your stay. If all this information is clear, then the guest does not even have to check out at the reception in an official sense, just drop the room card in a collection box or even leave it in the room when leaving, he will receive the bill automatically. Of course, it is also possible to issue printed invoices, but fortunately this option is becoming more and more widespread and accepted among guests, as electronic invoicing has already appeared not only in hotels, but in many areas of everyday life. The environmental protection aspects of this are also not negligible, as it does not use paper and is much faster, and can be easily retrieved at any time. In addition to the Fast Check-Out option, guests also have the option of the Online Check-In process. As the name suggests, in this case the guest can fill in the information required for check-in in advance, or even enter the amount that can be authorized on their bank card for the hotel. In this way, everything can be prepared in the system, there is no need for unnecessary administration upon arrival, the guest can receive the room key in almost seconds. For everyday work, it was also necessary to solve key management and key coding at the reception. For this, a very small key encoding device, almost the same size as a plastic card, is used for tablets. Thus, it can also be fully mobilized and moved easily, unlike the old type of equipment. The key cards currently in use can be easily programmed and expire automatically on the day of the guest's departure, so they also comply with security regulations. It is also a perfect solution in the event that the guest does not stop at the reception to check out in the queue, he just drops the card into the collector and leaves, since the card will no longer work. Of course, all these changes required various trainings and the continuous training of colleagues, since a lot of changes took place at the same time, both technically and in

terms of work organization and way of thinking. Perhaps the most challenging aspect is the change in mindset, whereas technical innovations can be mastered much more quickly. For these, department managers, Front Office Managers and Supervisors held internal trainings. In practice, they worked very quickly and successfully. What helped a lot was that the colleagues had the opportunity to participate in training and try out the open reception in another hotel of the Accor group, the Mercure Budapest City Center, where for the first time, approx. this idea was realized a year earlier. Here, the members of the reception could try everyday work and gather ideas and prepare a little for the changed working conditions.

5. Conclusions, suggestions

The world around us is constantly changing, and every profession, every industry is looking for better, more modern, simpler solutions, including the hotel industry. The hotel industry and tourism is currently a leading economic sector in most countries, it is growing at an incredible rate, the number of tourists is constantly increasing every year, so changes are necessary. In addition to the profession, people are also constantly changing and looking for new things and special things. This is a particularly important element of tourism, where people want experiences and want to discover new things and places. Nowadays, travel has become widely available, and the daily use of the Internet has also changed travel habits a lot, since a lot of things are available and can be learned about in advance, even virtually. In light of this, the guest experience and the quality of the service provided by hotels play a particularly important role. Nowadays, this is one of the most important indicators that can be used to compare accommodations of the same category, and guests also choose based on this. Perhaps one of the most important questions is how much tourists like this type of change, how much they demand and accept this very open, friendlier atmosphere. In my opinion, it is not possible to give a clear answer to this question, since every person has different needs, different stimulus thresholds and different personal attitudes. One of the biggest challenges in the profession from the beginning is that the person standing on both sides of the counter finds a common voice, the members of the reception can handle different types of people and expectations well. Many people believe that working with people is one of the most difficult challenges, as it requires a lot of patience, adaptability and flexibility. However, in addition to the challenges, there are not only negative, but also many positive aspects of social relations and the profession. Based on the feedback of the interviewees, the concept is functional and the majority of guests see it as a positive change. They are very open to new things and more direct relationships. The absence of a traditional reception counter may initially be surprising or confusing, as guests entering the hotel may not immediately know where to go. The conventional reception desk previously served as a clearly identifiable point of orientation for arriving and departing guests. This innovation is undoubtedly popular among young people and leisure travelers. Taking the example of Mercure-Ibis Castle Hill as a basis, it can be clearly stated that the clientele of the Ibis part accepted and experienced this change much more openly.

The Ibis brand is fundamentally characterized by youth, openness, dynamism and unique design. The Open Reception concept fits perfectly into the image of the brand, as well as the many innovations and thus a new type of hotel experience. This clientele clearly requires communication, personal recommendations and more personal relationships. Many people especially enjoy being able to see a bit into the system and logging in or even checking out is much more interactive. This is fully confirmed and reflected by the guests' feedback. The other part of the hotel operates under the Mercure brand and, as a higher-category hotel, attracts a different guest segment. Individual business travelers, the corporate and mice segments, and leisure tourist groups are much more typical of this segment. Tourist groups are also open to change, but they have relatively few opportunities to benefit from the Open Reception concept. The groups move together, usually have a fixed program and their own tour guide provides them with almost all useful information, there are few individual requests and questions. They are also checked in at the same time, the group leader receives the keys, which he distributes, so there is very little personal contact in this phase as well. Business travelers are the other priority target group and perhaps this is the group that treats them with the most reservations and their attitude towards this type of innovation varies. For them, it usually means nothing and they don't really need personal relationships. They travel a lot, most of the time they are already familiar with the hotel and its services. For business travelers, fast check-out and check-in, professional staff and technical equipment, such as fast Wi-Fi and business corner, are usually the most important. They already know the processes in advance, they prepare the identity card and passport, they handle the check-in routinely, in many cases their data is already in the system and they only want one key. They usually do not require a separate conversation, nor do they have time for leisure activities. It can also be a downright negative experience for them if the receptionist is too direct and because of this they may feel that they are not receiving the usual, fast and professional service. Of course, you can't generalize about this group either, many of them experience the transformation as a good thing, but this layer is definitely the one that is the most persistent and less open. The people working at the reception have a very important role here, as it is extremely important to recognize different needs and to treat different people according to their individual expectations. A receptionist has to recognize how open or closed, or whether they had a good or bad day, so they can help and achieve a good check-in experience by talking to the guest or by issuing the key and the necessary information as quickly as possible, and the guest can be in his room within minutes. This is perhaps the biggest challenge in this job, as it cannot really be learned. You have to be very good at people and be able to quickly adapt to individual situations. Many years of routine and experience can help the most in this. However, what is certainly useful and positive for the business segment as well, are the technical innovations and opportunities introduced by the system. For them, the Fast CheckOut option is a perfect solution, as they do not have to stand in line in the morning rush, they will automatically receive the electronic invoice with the pre-arranged billing address. Logging in can also be much shorter than usual with the latest type of bank card terminal systems and the option of online data filling. In addition, it is possible to check in even as long as we accom-

pany the guests from the entrance to the elevators or even to their room. Another important element, in addition to guest satisfaction, is how the people working at the reception experience the change and how they can adapt to the new working conditions. It also depends very much on the individual as to how much they can open up to the guests and step out from behind the security of the usual counter. In any case, a complete change of attitude is necessary from the point of view of the employees, in order to be able to provide the same, or even higher quality service and a real guest experience. This is perhaps easier for younger colleagues, perhaps this concept is closer to them than to those colleagues who are used to the old desk systems and work organization, but it is certainly a big challenge for everyone. The disappearance of traditional counters can often be a very positive experience not only for the guest, but also for the reception in the case of an open and kind guest. However, during everyday work there are situations that cause difficulties, such as handling problems and guest complaints. Unfortunately, in the life of every hotel, there are angry, disgruntled guests who loudly try to enforce their ideas at the reception. In these cases, especially for the receptionist, this situation can be very unpleasant and can have a bad effect if the guest tries to express what he has to say from a distance of a few centimeters, in a not exactly cultured way. Not to mention persons who may be under the influence of alcohol or other means. In such cases, the traditional counters also functioned as a kind of „protective wall” between the guest and the receptionist. Of course, direct contact can help in many cases, and in the case of certain guests, more direct and friendly conflict management and problem solving may be more effective. This is also a very sensitive part of the receptionist’s job, it requires a very good sense of conflict management, so that they can assess and manage the given person and problem well. Other factors that can greatly influence the success of the Open Reception concept are the size of the hotel and its clientele. Different groups and tourists with different motivations have completely different needs. This is also why most hotels define the few segments on which they build their clientele and strive to provide full, professional service to them. A family vacationer, a businessman or a young leisure traveler may have completely different needs. Innovations are also received in a completely different way due to the demands and expectations that are being met. The Mercure-Ibis Castle Hill hotel mentioned above has to meet particularly complex requirements in this respect, since as a combo hotel it has 2 different brands and classifications and therefore has to meet several different clienteles. In addition, the size and other features of the hotel can also affect the operation. This open, guest-oriented reception perfectly fits the profile of a smaller hotel with fewer guests and a family atmosphere. In the case of a large hotel with many rooms, due to the volume of guest arrivals, this is much more challenging to implement. Castle Hill is an illustrative example of this, as it has a total of 400 rooms. In the high season, this means an average of 150-200 room arrivals and departures per day. Even with adequate human resource capacity, it is very difficult to coordinate this number of guests and provide a personal experience.

12. THE OPERATION OF THE GUEST CYCLE

1. Introduction

The tasks of the Front Office and reception can be examined differently from previous chapters: not primarily by job title, but according to the system that follows the guest's stay. This is the guest cycle. The guest cycle is a clearly separable process that determines the entire division of work in the hotel, and the Front Office work organisation is based almost entirely on these processes. It is the starting point for shift planning, task organisation and scheduling.

Traditionally, the guest cycle has four parts:

the stage before the guest's arrival

the guest's arrival

the hotel stay stage

the guest's departure (Bártfai–Varga, 2000).

The stage before the guest's arrival

The very first stage of hotel service is the reservation process, which takes place before the guest arrives. During this stage, the guest selects the hotel and makes the reservation. This stage has the least impact on Front Office operations, as room reservations in many larger hotels are handled by a separate reservations department. In earlier periods, reception was much more involved in managing reservations, but with a growing number of guests and technological development, this activity was separated.

The reservations team processes bookings, records them in the system and maintains contact with guests. Reception colleagues must still be up to date in this area, as outside the office hours of the reservations department, new bookings may need to be created, existing ones modified or checked 24 hours a day. In the case of walk-in guests – those arriving without prior reservation – reception usually handles the entire booking preparation. Typically arriving in the evening, at night or on weekends, they require immediate room allocation. The receptionist informs them of the rate, records the reservation, clarifies the method of payment and, following standard procedures, checks them in and issues the key. Today, the proportion of walk-in guests is relatively small, especially in higher-category hotels. With the everyday use of the Internet and mobile devices, booking has become very simple; guests can book within minutes via various interfaces.

2. The arrival of the guest

The next part of the guest cycle is the guest's arrival and check-in, which is entirely the responsibility of reception. This is perhaps the most important moment of the hotel stay: the first impression strongly shapes the guest's opinion. Much therefore depends on the professionalism and hospitality of reception staff. During check-in, the guest is welcomed, arrival and departure dates, room type, payment method and any special requests are clarified. Guests must complete a registration form with personal data and confirm it with their signature. They then receive the room key or key card and may occupy the room.

In modern receptions, a single receptionist usually performs all these tasks, from greeting to registration and key issuing, and answers all guest questions. In older-style Front Offices, a guest might meet several staff members on the way to the room. First the front-desk staff welcomed them, the doorman opened the door, the porter took the luggage and escorted them to reception, while the car attendant parked the car. A room clerk then checked the guest in and issued the key. If the guest paid in advance, they also visited the cashier. If the guest did not pay on arrival, they did not meet the cashier, but this colleague still participated in the process by opening a guest account immediately after arrival based on information from the room clerk.

3. The hotel stay stage

During the guest's stay, the most important tasks are maintaining contact, answering questions, solving problems, ensuring comprehensive high-quality service and handling complaints. In this phase, the front desk – including the concierge – plays the central role. They provide information, take care of requests and manage keys in the three-part desk system. Guest experience and satisfaction largely depend on how these colleagues perform their duties. The cashier's role is mainly to post and check charges and carry out money exchange. In today's integrated reception systems, these tasks are usually handled by the duty receptionist as well.

Departure of the guest

The guest's stay ends with departure, which closes the guest cycle. During check-out, guests settle their room bill and pay accumulated charges. In the traditional system this was handled by the cashier; nowadays it is mostly done by reception. Many hotels offer luggage storage after check-out, and porters help with this when needed. Ordering a taxi or transfer is also part of departure-related services.

In older hotels using conventional keys, monitoring returned keys at check-out was particularly important. If a guest forgot to hand in the key, the entire lock had to be replaced – an expensive and time-consuming process. In modern key-card systems, key replacement is easy and relatively inexpensive. Keys work only during the programmed period, so after check-out they cannot be used to re-enter the room, which is also important for security reasons.

The Front Office is the soul of the hotel, the place where guests are received; in everyday language many people identify it with the hotel itself. The Front Office contributes greatly to guest satisfaction and the hotel's reputation. It is the first department to come into contact with the guest and represents the hotel throughout the entire guest cycle. Its role is extremely important, as the quality of the guest's time in the hotel and their satisfaction often depend on it.

Receptionists create the first impression on arrival and the last on departure; professional handling of problems can even turn a negative experience into a positive one. They are a constant point of reference, most often present 24/7, and form the basic contact hub. In addition to providing continuous service to guests, they play an outstanding role in communication between departments and in smooth daily operations. The structure and work organisation of the Front Office is complex; many factors influence job creation and staffing needs, primarily the hotel's size, category, business segment and technical equipment. The labour requirements and structure of a small 3-star leisure hotel differ completely from those of a large 5-star luxury property. Technical development has also fundamentally transformed the entire system.

The "traditional" 3-section reception desk

The first developed reception work organisation was the divided, traditional three-section front desk. This structure is now used in relatively few hotels and was created in the era of older semi-automated or non-automated systems. Its purpose was to divide tasks and responsibilities to ensure efficient service, primarily in large, high-class hotels with many rooms, where many guests had to be served at a high professional level.

Three different subordinate positions worked simultaneously at the desk: porter, receptionist and cashier. They supported each other as a team, but each had distinct tasks. The porters and concierge staff formed the information, problem-solving and messaging centre. They handled messages, mail and shipments, organised programmes and cultural events, booked tickets, called taxis, arranged transfers, sold excursions, helped with luggage or simply opened the door and greeted guests – all essential elements of quality hospitality. This group included porters, doormen, drivers and hostesses, led by a head porter.

The second separate role was hotel cashier. In the three-part desk system, the hotel cash desk was operated here, and only the cashier handled financial transactions and invoicing. Duties included preparing guest bills, posting and controlling consumption charges, processing payments and performing currency exchange. Careful cash management and accurate account settlement were their responsibility. In manual systems, this work was very time-consuming and error-prone; semi- and fully automated systems greatly simplified these tasks. Currency exchange was once a key hotel service, as dedicated exchange offices were rare and foreign guests usually changed money in the hotel. To perform currency exchange, cashiers had to complete a special course.

The third role was receptionist or room clerk. This position is still the most well-known, and with technological development, porter and cashier tasks have to a large extent been merged into it. Room clerks primarily handled guest arrivals and departures, participated in sales and dealt with day-to-day operations. They were responsible for room allocation, special requests and preparations, and handling changes during the stay, such as extensions. Their core task was managing check-in and check-out, welcoming guests – especially VIPs – and coordinating the three positions, ensuring smooth communication between staff and guests.

These three jobs were organised and supervised by the Front Office Manager, who was responsible for uninterrupted operation, work organisation and job creation in the department (Bártfai–Varga, 2000).

Today's Front Office work organization

Today, hotel and reception work organisation has changed almost completely. The old system provided the basis, but technical progress has greatly simplified daily tasks, leading to the merging and transformation of jobs. With the introduction of computer systems, many processes became automated and no longer required live labour. In most hotels, the traditional three-section front desk has disappeared, and Front Office staff typically perform all reception-related tasks at a single counter.

The arrangement of the Front Office largely depends on hotel size and category. Porters, doormen and concierge staff are still present in 5-star and luxury hotels to ensure a perfect guest experience, but are rare in lower categories. In simple terms, the Front Office team consists of the Front Office Manager and room clerks, sometimes supplemented by additional staff depending on services and category. The Front Office Manager is indispensable as team leader, responsible for control, cohesion and decision-making. In hotels with many rooms, the Front Office Manager may have an assistant. In larger teams, the position of Front Office Supervisor (or shift leader) is also common. Supervisors coordinate morning, afternoon and night shifts and are responsible for smooth operation. They usually participate in daily tasks, but their main duties are operational management, coordination, decision-making and complaint handling.

Below these management roles, room clerks follow. Their work is now complex; almost all guest-related requests and tasks are concentrated with them. Typical duties include check-in and check-out, invoicing, providing information and guidance, and a wide range of guest administration. Depending on the hotel's profile and job description, they may also assist with reservations or provide basic restaurant and bar service.

An increasing number of hotels – especially some 3-star properties – combine reception with a bar, where receptionists also serve drinks. These bars often have a limited food and drink range and do not require specialised professional qualifications, but as the reception is usually open 24 hours, guests can always get refreshments, cof-

fee, drinks and small snacks. In breakfast-only hotels, the morning receptionist may assist with breakfast service. In smaller properties, reception staff may also help reservations during larger arrivals. Hotels and catering enterprises aim for maximum efficiency, using a high level of digitalisation to train employees to perform multiple tasks when needed.

Depending on hotel size, all necessary tasks may be performed by one receptionist, while larger units may need two, three or even four. Porters can support room clerks by welcoming arriving guests, assisting with luggage, ordering taxis and transfers, and maintaining order in the lobby. Their presence is typical in 4- and 5-star hotels. In luxury hotels, a separate concierge position may still exist. The concierge fulfils literally every request and remains indispensable in high-end properties, although in lesser categories this role has largely been absorbed into the receptionist's duties due to changing travel habits and the widespread use of the Internet.

A completely new position has appeared in many hotels: guest experience supervisor or manager (sometimes as an entire team). Due to changing travel habits and a wide market offering, unique, personalised guest experiences have become increasingly important. This position was created for that purpose and is typical of higher categories. Their task is to create a unique atmosphere, "animate" guests, make the environment more homely and fulfil special individual requests. They pay particular attention to VIPs, returning regulars and guests needing extra care, such as people with disabilities or families with small children. They are key players in complaint handling, problem solving and compensation, doing everything possible to ensure guests depart satisfied.

The guest-experience colleague may be part of the Front Office team or a separate organisational unit, but even then, close cooperation and communication with reception is essential. Finally, interns also play an important role. During internships, college or university students, with the knowledge acquired at school, can usually become effective team members within a few weeks and actively participate in administration and daily operations.

4. Hotel profit statement

For larger hotels, it is essential to know how much each service contributes to the hotel's overall result and what the direct operating result of each activity is.

Room rate income - Direct costs = Activity result.

Room rate income:

average net room price in a given period × number of rooms sold in that period

Average length of stay:

number of guest nights ÷ number of guests (or arrivals)

Room capacity utilisation:

all rented rooms $\div$ (all available rooms $\times$ 365)

Bed capacity utilisation:

all guest nights $\div$ (all available beds $\times$ 365)

Revenue capacity utilisation:

actual revenue $\div$ potential revenue

Average room rate:

total room sales $\div$ number of rooms sold

RevPAR (revenue per available room):

total room revenue $\div$ total number of available rooms.

Direct costs:

These include costs arising exclusively in connection with a specific guest service, known both at the time of occurrence and at the time of accounting.

They include in particular:

Labour costs of employees providing the given service.

Other direct costs.

The guest cycle provides a useful framework for understanding how Front Office activities are organised around the different stages of the guest experience. Although the traditional model distinguishes between pre-arrival, arrival, stay and departure, technological development has increasingly extended hotel–guest interaction beyond these four stages. Digital booking, mobile check-in, personalised communication, online reviews and loyalty management have transformed the traditional guest cycle into a continuous guest journey. Effective Front Office management therefore requires not only operational efficiency at each stage but also consistent communication and service quality throughout the entire relationship with the guest.

13. DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN HOTEL MANAGEMENT

1. Introduction

Digitalization and the development of information technology have explosively changed everyday life. The progress of recent decades has revolutionised communication and information flow, fundamentally transformed the world economy and made globalisation possible. Different generations experience and process this rapid development in very different ways.

The achievements of digitalisation and the technological revolution are present in many areas of life. With a smartphone we can do our banking, learn languages, buy plane tickets, order food or taxis – the possibilities are almost endless. These technologies save time and energy and, used properly, can make both professional and personal life more comfortable.

In certain fields – for example, communication – digital solutions have been dominant for decades, pushing back analogue methods. In tourism and hospitality, traditional solutions still play a stronger role, although there are many visible efforts to reverse this ratio. This is not surprising in an industry whose central element is personal interaction between service provider and guest. At the same time, digitalisation still holds considerable development potential, and futurologists believe humanity will increasingly exploit it. A fully digitised guest experience may seem unimaginable to many today, but for our grandchildren, the classic “restaurant service” or “hotel receptionist” may become unfamiliar concepts.

The following section presents the general characteristics of the 4th industrial revolution (Industry 4.0), its impact on tourism and hospitality, and current and future technological solutions in hotel operations.

2. Non-automated systems

A non-automated system – also called a manual or traditional system – is the oldest type of reception operation, developed before computers and typical mainly in the first half and middle of the 20th century. Today, hardly any hotel operates without any modern technical equipment. Manual work was extremely time-consuming and required significant live labour. Tasks were carried out differently from today, but the system could still operate in an organised and efficient manner.

In this system, everything was recorded by hand: from room reservations to invoice preparation. The colleague taking the reservation entered details in a book or on a form, then organised these manually. Typical tools included:

- reservation log,
- room registration book,
- appointment book,
- binders,
- room order board.

Tracking bookings months in advance – including modifications – was difficult with handwritten systems. To organise paper-based data, a special cabinet, the “rack”, was developed at reception. The term “rack rate” (the highest published room rate) originates from this organising board. The rack, at first metal then wooden, provided a separate compartment for each room to store guest files and often room keys. Usually, materials were arranged by room number, but sometimes by guest name. Room types and statuses were hard to follow, so colour codes were used.

On check-in, guests filled in a paper registration form, based on which a record card was prepared. This contained guest data, charges and consumption, and later formed the basis of the bill. Manually managing invoices and debits was time-consuming and prone to error. On departure, the guest settled the bill and received a handwritten invoice.

Key management was another important daily issue. Traditional mechanical room keys were used, stored in racks or separate compartments behind the front desk. On arrival, the guest received the key and then had to return it every time they left the hotel. Staff had to ensure that only authorised persons could collect the key. If a guest failed to return or lost it, replacing the entire mechanical lock was necessary – costly and labour-intensive. To minimise this risk, hotels used heavy key fobs displaying the hotel’s name and room number. The reception was also responsible for fulfilling other guest requests, such as wake-up calls, message delivery and mailing, all recorded and carried out manually.

3. Semi-automated systems

The next step, with the spread of technical equipment, was semi-automated or electro-mechanical reception systems. Machines were introduced to support manual work. Their main advantage was that they made tasks faster and easier. Machine-generated documents were legible and clear, simplifying data processing and reducing paperwork.

During this period, many hotels created separate reservation departments, which greatly eased reception workload. The system allowed mechanical posting of charges and consumption, reducing errors and speeding up check-out. Guest accounts became more aesthetic, easier to follow and easier to amend than in manual systems.

The introduction of computers further facilitated information storage, retrieval and the keeping of various records and statistics.

Typical innovations of this era included:

currency exchange machines: they automated currency exchange, issued receipts in two copies (one for the guest, one for accounting) and retained control tapes as basic verification documents,

cash registers,

telephone answering systems,

pay-TV systems: beyond offering extra services, they also helped reception by allowing messages to be transmitted directly to rooms,

Cash registers (also called cash machines) were used for posting amounts to guest accounts. Although these machines simplified many processes, operation and control still required time. Night audit was the most demanding task: data from the cash register and currency exchange machine had to be reconciled with the cash and currency books, charges were checked numerically, then posted. Machine data were compared with figures calculated by the room clerk; if they matched, closing could continue.

This system is the least precisely defined, as the use and configuration of machines differed from one property to another, and initial training was sometimes difficult. Semi-automated systems are still used today in many smaller hotels, where technology provides support but full automation is not necessary and many tasks can still be performed manually. In such properties, traditional keys or key cards may both be in use (Bártfai–Varga, 2000).

4. Integrated Digital Hotel Management Systems

The third group comprises fully automated, computerised systems. Today, modern technologies are present in every area of life, including hotels, driving continuous renewal. Using up-to-date technology, almost all work processes can be accelerated and automated. Various hotel management systems (PMS) and reservation platforms are now available to all hotels.

All administration, booking recording and handling, arrivals and departures, invoicing, statistics and often interdepartmental communication are handled through these systems. Reception performs almost all tasks via computers. Live work remains essential – hospitality is fundamentally built on human relationships, and well-trained receptionists are indispensable for a real guest experience – but all technical conditions for professional work are in place.

Reservations are automatically transferred from booking platforms to the hotel PMS. Payment methods are usually stored, sometimes including card details with limits or debit instructions. Guest preferences, special requests and data from previous stays are visible. In the latest systems, guests can enter personal and invoicing data in ad-

vance, and invoices can be sent by email. All charges are automated: restaurant, bar and other extras can be posted immediately and accurately to the room. Automated room-status changes speed up communication between reception and housekeeping.

This allows check-in and check-out times to be significantly reduced and the same service standard to be delivered more efficiently and with fewer staff. Another major technological breakthrough that greatly eased reception work was the introduction of key cards. These programmable plastic cards replaced traditional keys. They are easy to use, can be programmed at the touch of a button from the PMS, reused and quickly replaced. Guests receive a card valid for the stay, which can also grant access to other services, and return it on departure.

In some hotels abroad, guests can now open their rooms with smartphones, without key cards. A recent trend is key cards made from wood or bamboo. These can be programmed for various lock systems but are more environmentally friendly, making them attractive in an era focused on sustainability.

The past decade has brought enormous change to many areas of hospitality. It is quite possible that development will reach a point where guests will no longer need a reception desk in the traditional sense and check-in/check-out will be handled entirely via smartphones and dedicated apps.

5. Major changes to the Front Office

At both hotels examined (Corinthia and InterContinental), the Front Office department operates according to a long-established structure and standard procedures, but minor and major changes have occurred in recent years. The main changes in both cases were driven by labour turnover typical for tourism. Over the past five years, 80–90% of Front Office employees have been replaced. Despite this, service quality must remain at the same level, which presents serious challenges.

At InterContinental, the current team is stable and all staff have received appropriate training. At Corinthia, a significant wave of staff departures has occurred in recent months, so several new employees must be trained, but all efforts aim to ensure that even newcomers can perform their tasks to expectations.

Labour shortages at Corinthia led to the temporary suspension of the Executive Reception Desk in 2018. Reopening was planned for 2020, but the impact of the coronavirus on tourism has so far prevented this. Due to EU legislation introduced in 2019, both hotels had to switch from Interface-based payments to more secure methods. InterContinental introduced the 3C system, where payment is processed via terminals connected to Opera. Corinthia currently uses POS terminals, so each payment must be entered manually into Opera, but the 3C system is being procured to streamline work.

6. Smart Technology Applications in Hotels

Technology is used in all areas of hotel operations: guest services, reservations, F&B management, sales, service, maintenance, security and accounting. Technological applications increase operational efficiency and reduce costs (Collins & Malik, 1999). Examples of smart tourism technology applications include: hotel smartphone apps, personalised services, smart cards, smart information kiosks, smart waiters, smart rooms, child-tracking wristbands, staff performance management systems and smart hotel resource management systems (Melián et al., 2020)

In-room technologies include self-service check-in/check-out kiosks, mobile apps for room entry and selection, smartphone-based door locks, interactive TV, tablets/iPads, free high-speed internet, virtual concierges, interactive tables and smart mirrors/walls (Brochado et al., 2016). Additional applications involve service automation and robots used in hotels, restaurants, meeting rooms and theme parks (Ivanov et al., 2017), smart buildings, enterprise resource management, health tourism applications, tour organisation systems, restaurant and bar automation, sustainable energy management, and the use of the Internet of Things (IoT) in smart destinations and hotels (Morgan, 2015; Buhalis & Leung, 2018).

Examples include motion, sound and heat sensors in guest rooms, wearable-sensor door-lock systems, position sensors in restaurants and lobbies, inventory tag systems in warehouses, and heat, light and traffic sensors outside the building. Social media content monitoring is also used (Buhalis & Leung, 2018). Smart tourism can be defined as tourism based on innovative mobile communication technologies and integrating tourism resources with ICT such as IoT, cloud computing and artificial intelligence to provide tourists with accurate information and better service (Wang et al., 2016; Guo et al., 2014).

User comfort is central to the smart hotel concept, but ensuring customer satisfaction also requires that guests be informed about smart applications before their stay. Major hotel examples include Starwood's housekeeping robot (2014), M Social Singapore's service robot Aura (room-delivery robot) and Ausca (an autonomous breakfast chef), and robots used in hotels such as Park Avenue Rochester Hotel, Hotel Jen, Yotel Singapore and Sofitel Singapore City Center. Yotel New York uses robots for check-in/check-out and luggage storage via a seven-metre robot arm. Hub by Premier Inn in London offers smartphone-controlled room reservations, check-in/check-out and control of room temperature and lighting (Solomon, 2014; Lin, 2017; Williams, 2018; Skyscanner, 2019).

7. Effect of Smart Technology on Customer Satisfaction in Hotels

Research on smart technology in tourism generally examines the topic from the perspectives of tourism enterprises and tourists, evaluating different smart technologies within smart tourism. High staff turnover, rising labour costs and shortages of

qualified personnel make quality service provision challenging in hospitality. Technology applications can help by improving service quality and increasing customer satisfaction (Cobanoglu et al., 2011).

An American Hotel and Motel Association survey in 1990 found that technology was seen as the greatest advantage in improving customer experience and satisfaction. Whitford (1998) also identified technology as a key factor in increasing customer satisfaction. Stern (1995) suggested that technology can increase customer satisfaction in three ways:

standardised services can be customised to individual needs, complementary support can be provided to help guests use technological products, technology can change the nature of work performed.

Most research confirms that technology is a differentiating factor in the choice of accommodation (Cobanoglu et al., 2011). However, findings are not always uniform. For example, a study in top-quality Korean hotels found that guest-facing technologies such as telephone accounting, electronic locks, energy management and in-room entertainment did not significantly affect overall satisfaction (Ham et al., 2005). Other studies show that TV, minibar and telephone use can have a dominant effect on consumer satisfaction (Cobanoglu et al., 2011).

Research on relationship quality highlights trust and satisfaction as emotional states arising from the evaluation of interaction experiences (Liu et al., 2011). Positive technology experiences can strengthen customer relationships, increase trust and reinforce feelings that the service provider exceeds expectations (Chen et al., 2016; Jung & Soo, 2012; Rajaobelina, 2018). Overall, many studies confirm that technology use in hospitality is important for guest satisfaction and can help hotels better understand and meet customer expectations.

8. The security risk of smart solutions and their acceptance among travelers

The question then arises: what do travellers think about digitalisation in tourism? To explore this, the online magazine hospitalitytech.com was used as a source. The publisher has been closely covering digitalisation in hospitality and the hotel industry since 1997, both online and in print, and regularly organises and attends professional conferences.

One of their surveys carries a telling title: “75% of travellers don’t trust smart hotel solutions, but 44% still want them.” Based on responses from 400 American travellers, 75% have at least minimal reservations about smart solutions (e.g. digital check-in or smartphone-based door locks), yet almost half (44%) still consider booking a smart hotel. This apparently contradictory result suggests that, for many, the

convenience provided by technology outweighs perceived security risks and distrust.

Generation Y travellers and those already living in smart homes are more aware that they may encounter smart solutions during travel and are more likely to actively seek such accommodations. 60% of respondents reported having stayed in a smart hotel, where they encountered technologies such as digital check-in (33%), smartphone door opening (22%), pre-set temperature and lighting, and smart TVs activating via motion sensors (21%). 16% had controlled these functions via smartphone apps, and 14% had used voice-activated assistants such as Siri or Alexa.

The three technological solutions travellers find most interesting are digital check-in (32%), keyless door opening (23%) and adjustable lighting and temperature. Almost a quarter of respondents would not book a smart hotel at all, almost half specifically look for such accommodation, and roughly one-third are neutral and do not base their decision on this factor (www.hospitalitytech.com , 2018).

14. CASE STUDY: F&B MANAGEMENT AT KEMPINSKI HOTEL CORVINUS BUDAPEST – ÉS BISTRO

1. Introduction

Food and Beverage (F&B) management is a key component of hotel operations, contributing not only to revenue generation but also to guest satisfaction, brand positioning and the overall hotel experience. This chapter presents the F&B operations of Kempinski Hotel Corvinus Budapest, with particular emphasis on És Bistro, one of the hotel's major food and beverage outlets. The case study examines the restaurant's service concept, breakfast operations, pricing and profitability, seasonal offers, organisational structure and its role within the hotel's wider F&B portfolio.

The restaurant opens every morning at 6:00 a.m. and awaits the arrival of guests. By the time it opens, the entire buffet is already set up. The selection is so extensive that firsttime guests often do not even know where to start. If they wish to taste everything, they should plan to spend not just the usual 20–30 minutes on breakfast, but even several hours. The selection includes pastries (muffins, scones, croissants), several types of bread and rolls (brown, white, semibrown, corn, seeded buns, baguettes), hot dishes (hot dogs, sausages, ragouts, fried Cluj bacon), several kinds of cereal, homemade and industrial yogurts, honeys (linden, acacia, floral, yarrow), jams, honeycomb honey, coldsmoked and marinated fish, freshly sliced hams, salamis and cheeses prepared in front of the guests. In addition to the buffet, guests can order egg dishes, daily specials, teas and coffees freshly prepared in the kitchen from the breakfast menu.

With the exception of three egg dishes on the menu (Eggs Benedict, Eggs Florentine and boiled eggs [cooked for as many minutes as the guest requests, prepeeled and sprinkled with chives]), everything is included in the breakfast price. It is also possible to have breakfast à la carte, or to request a simple continental breakfast.

Management of F&B

Net sales revenue from catering

PVGS

Margin

Direct costs

Unit result.

2. Hospitality pricing and price application

Profit margin: a tool of traditional pricing that does not show profit, but the margin

as a percentage of the PVGS, that is, what percentage of the net purchase value is represented by the margin.

Margin

Profit margin % = $\text{PVGS} \times 100$.

Margin level: determination of the margin level in terms of the net selling price.

Margin value

Margin level % = $\text{Net sales} \times 100$.

PVGS: purchase value of goods sold

$\text{PVGS \%} + \text{Margin \%} = 100\%$.

Selling price: the price applied in the sales units

Net price = $\text{PVGS} + \text{Margin}$

Net price = $\text{PVGS} (1 + \text{profit margin} / 100)$.

Changes in the sales price, PVGS and profit margin can modify the level and weight of the margin. From an economic point of view, an increase in the margin level is beneficial, but the development of the margin mass is more important, since costs and results are covered by a positive margin mass. The margin mass depends not only on the margin level, but also on the development of sales revenue. If the margin level increases while net sales revenue decreases, the relative weight of the margin may still develop unfavourably.

Content and analysis of hospitality income

3. Typical items of hotel catering revenue:

Morning

Boarding meal

Room service

Minibar

Grouping of unit sales per sales unit, e.g.:

Restaurant

Brasserie

Drink bar

Confectionery

Night bar, etc.

Grouping of hospitality sales by operating unit:

Food

Drink.

Hotels independently determine in which catering units and in what form of service the mandatory breakfast and board meals typical of hotel catering are provided to guests.

4. Examination of the profitability of a catering unit per sales point:

Increase in PVGS level (increase in purchase prices, lack of stock, management deficiencies)

Situation assessment, factfinding

Measures to be implemented

Expected effect of the measures

Dining habits of the Kempinski hotel.

A large number of Asian guests stay in Kempinski hotels every year, so the Kempinski chain offers two Asian dishes on the breakfast menu in all its hotels; at ÉS these are congee and Chinese rice. Guests can order coffee and/or tea from the server with their breakfast. They can preorder from 22 types of freshly brewed black filter coffee, or the bartender will freshly prepare coffees such as americano, espresso, double espresso, latte macchiato, flat white or ristretto; children can ask for cocoa or hot chocolate if they wish. In addition to coffee, guests can order tea or prepare it themselves at the tea counter. The selection here is also extensive, with almost 10–12 types of looseleaf tea available. Guests can choose from black, green, mint and fruit teas, and they can pour hot water for their tea from a classic samovar. At the bar, guests can choose from freshly squeezed fruit and vegetable juices and freely take from freshly cut fruit, which is constantly prepared by the chef on duty. A speciality of the breakfast is that everything listed above, from vegetables and fruits to pastries, comes from local small producers. As soon as breakfast ends (10:30 a.m. on weekdays, 11:00 a.m. on weekends), the restaurant is transformed for the afternoon period. Morning dishes are replaced by lunch dishes, the buffet breakfast elements are removed, and once the changeover is complete, the staff quickly take their lunch break and service resumes at noon.

Breakfast specialties: at every breakfast there is a speciality called the “Wake Up Shot”. Preparing this is the task of the cooks. This is Kempinski’s signature drink, and every day a different mix of vegetables or fruits is served, designed to deliver a morning vitamin boost. In addition to containing many vitamins, the flavours harmonize perfectly and are always complemented with a special note such as chilli, ginger, lemongrass or beetroot. Another specialty at breakfast is the “Pass Around”, which means that a baker presents and offers a pastry freshly made inhouse to the guests. The last such specialty is the “Balance Your Day” selection, dishes created by dietitians and doctors to support balanced daily nutrition. These are not diet, weightloss or purely organic foods, but dishes that contain everything needed for a healthy meal. At breakfast, these dishes are marked with a green heart.

Lunch and dinner

As already mentioned, the bistro opens its doors again at 12:00 and welcomes its guests. In the restaurant, the hostess is the first to meet arriving guests and, as in the

morning, accompanies them to the table and hands them the menu and drinks list. From lunchtime onwards, the restaurant operates on an à la carte basis; everything on the menu is freshly prepared to order in the hot and cold kitchens. The kitchen operates with full staff until closing time at 11:00 p.m. However, work does not stop after the restaurant closes, as there is also a night kitchen where the staff take care of the inhouse bar and 24hour room service. Whatever the guest orders from the menu is automatically served with homebaked St. John's bread.

The kitchen

The kitchen is characterized by AustroHungarian cooperation: the dishes on the menu are created jointly by Zsolt Litauszki, creative chef of the Zsidai Group, and Roland Holzer, Executive Chef of Kempinski Hotel Corvinus Budapest. The menu is constantly changing, thanks to the Blackboard menu. The selection of wines and drinks is compiled by a specialist from the Zsidai Group together with the F&B Manager of the Kempinski Hotel.

5. Special offers and programmes at ÉS

Special offers and programmes await guests here regardless of the season. Whenever we visit the restaurant's website or step into the bistro, we will always find some attractive programme or offer. These include, for example, the summer evening Wine Dinners, the lunchtime Power Lunch, the St. Martin's Day goose menu, the Pig Feast, the Sunday Family Table offer and the winter seasonal "Hütte". The restaurant management also thinks of those guests who come in only from Fashion Street to eat, for whom the Blackboard menu supplements the main menu. The most important offers are as follows.

Wine Dinner: a complete evening's entertainment with one of Hungary's famous winemakers and the presentation of his or her wines, accompanied throughout by a accompanied by a traditional Hungarian Roma ensemble. Places are limited, as the event takes place in a separate section of the restaurant, and the programme naturally includes dinner. The main course can be chosen from a dedicated menu, while soups, salads and desserts can be freely selected from the buffet.

Power Lunch: ideal for business lunches in downtown Budapest at ÉS Bistro on weekdays between 12:00 and 15:00. This consists of a twocourse menu; guests can compose their own meal from several appetizers, main courses and desserts. The price includes mineral water, coffee or tea and free parking.

St. Martin's Day goose offers: a special goose menu available during a specific period between 7 and 20 November, which can be ordered from 3 p.m. The menu, for example, includes:

Appetizers: smoked goose breast on vegetable salad with garlic baguette; stuffed goose neck, pigeon pea salad and quince mustard.

Soup: goose ragout soup with risotto filled with its own meat.

Main courses: roasted goose leg with its own jus, apple red cabbage and potato dumplings; goose risotto with grilled foie gras.

Dessert: chestnut purée with whipped cream and Amarena cherries.

Preorder: roast goose for four people – whole roast goose with its own jus, apple red cabbage and potato dumplings, and chestnut purée with whipped cream and Amarena cherries.

Family Table: as the name suggests, the Family Table or Sunday Brunch offer is ideal for family outings. A play corner with an animator is provided for small children, separated from the restaurant, where there is live music. The price includes unlimited consumption of house wine and champagne, unlimited access to the salad and dessert buffet and unlimited ordering from a special menu card displayed on the tables. Lemonades and soft drinks are also available without limit. During the season, the offer starts on the 26th and is available every Sunday from 12:00 to 15:00; there is no à la carte service during this period.

Hütte: from the end of November until the end of the Fashion Street fair, a concept that evokes the atmosphere of a ski resort. During this time, a wooden chalet is built on the restaurant's terrace, where pancakes and special hot dogs are prepared for guests. It is also possible to drink mulled wine and other hot beverages on the terrace. Colleagues working outside wear ski goggles and warm hats to further recall the atmosphere of huts next to ski slopes.

Blackboard menu: a small card attached to the menu and drinks list on which seasonal offers are listed. The dishes on this card are always made from fruits and vegetables that are in season. The card is updated every two weeks, and no item is carried over from one period to the next.

Pig Feast: for those who have not tried it, it is hard to imagine what a real pig feast is like. The slowly roasted pig, which arrives fresh from the farm, is served with a seasonal side dish, and as the crowning glory of the meal, a Rigó Jancsi dessert is offered. This is available every day in ES Bistro, the new gastronomic centre of downtown.

6. General breakfast service structure

Manager/Supervisor: the duty manager to whom guests and staff can turn with any problems.

Hostess: responsible for checking in guests at breakfast, explaining what they can choose from and where to find items, especially for guests having breakfast here for the first time, and accompanying them to their table. If a guest whose room rate does not include breakfast arrives, the hostess informs the guest of the price and notifies the colleague in charge that this will be a paying guest.

Chef de Rang (CDR): section manager with a designated area and tables. He or she is responsible for the satisfaction and service of the guests in that area, takes their orders and enters them into the Micros system. The entire commis team works under the CDR.

Barman: squeezes the fruit juices every morning, manages the drink stock at the

buffet and prepares drink orders.

Drinks commis: takes the drinks prepared by the barman to the tables, checks the printed order slip to ensure that everything requested is on the tray, and then serves the drinks to the correct guests.

Food commis: during breakfast, takes the egg dishes and other food prepared in the hot kitchen to the appropriate tables according to the order slip.

Tray commis: brings the large service trays in from the restaurant and clears them; if there is no food runner available and the kitchen calls for service, he or she also takes out the egg dishes.

Buffetfilling commis: primarily responsible for maintaining the porcelain flow at the buffet, keeping the buffet clean and refilling the samovar. At the end of breakfast, this person puts away the porcelain and, if necessary, sets up the lunch buffet.

Service barman: handles filter coffee, folds napkins and sorts, stores and polishes the tools washed in the stewarding area.

7. General lunch/dinner service structure

In this case, the structure of the system is much simpler, as there are only the following positions.

Manager: responsible for restaurant management.

Hostess: accompanies guests to the table and hands over the menu and drinks list.

Barman: prepares the drinks ordered and entered into the system.

CDR: responsible for the tables and guests in his or her section, takes the orders and enters food and drinks into the Micros system.

General commis: keeps the back of the service bar tidy, folds napkins, maintains order, and provides everything needed on the sections or at the bar upon request. Their task is also to bring the homebaked bread and the butter sprinkled with Himalayan salt to the tables. This is served when CDR colleagues enter a new order and add bread and butter. When the food is ready in the cold or hot kitchen or at the grill counter, the commis takes the dishes to the CDR, who serves the appropriate plate to the correct guest.

8. SWOT analysis of the restaurant

The Kempinski Hotel Corvinus Budapest is the first hotel in the history of the chain to create such a unique, independently operating restaurant. A separate entrance was also built for the restaurant from Deák Ferenc Street, in the hope that not only hotel guests but primarily external guests would visit the place. The restaurant is located in the city centre, which is a very important aspect for any dining venue. At the time of its opening, and still today, the restaurant works with such a forwardlooking image that anyone who enters is simply left speechless. The restaurants operated by the Zsidai Group raise hospitality well above the competition in terms of both design and food and drink selection. The team working here from morning to night combines

kindness with high professional experience, ensuring that no guest leaves with a bad impression. ÉS Bistro places great emphasis on its presence in social media; it has a Facebook page where guests can learn about current events and prize games, and it is also present on the internet with its own website, where all information about the restaurant is available and tables can be booked online. The daily schedule of the morning and afternoon teams reflects efficient, fast and excellent work that can only be found in topcategory establishments. One of its strengths is that the restaurant uses only the best quality ingredients and even has a herb garden on the hotel roof.

Weaknesses

According to colleagues who worked here before the renovation, the restaurant became much smaller than its predecessor, so in the high season, when the hotel is full and 400–500 guests want to have breakfast, the restaurant’s capacity of 150 seats plus the terrace proves insufficient.

Opportunities

There is potential in expanding the menu, for example by adding new hamburgers. Another opportunity is to introduce special evening programmes in the interior during the winter season.

Threats

A key risk in restaurant operations is that staffing levels are often underestimated. Temporary staff from external companies are frequently employed, and they must constantly be trained. It would be more worthwhile to hire a few additional permanent employees who could consistently deliver the expected quality.

9. ÉS Deli

ÉS Deli’s concept is inspired by the New York deli genre. Here guests can enjoy coffees reminiscent of the authentic “specialty coffee” world. In addition to coffee, the selection includes gourmet sandwiches and pastries made in the ÉS Bistro kitchen. Guests can also choose fruit salad, Bircher muesli, chocolate mousse, home-made yogurt, salads and dressings. Those focusing on a healthy lifestyle can select from freshly squeezed fruit and vegetable juices. In the last hour before closing, cakes, salads and sandwiches are offered at half price. The staff working at ÉS Deli belong to ÉS Bistro, and their schedules are prepared by the same manager.

Living Room

The Living Room represents the rebirth of Budapest’s turnofthecentury café culture. Guests can slow down, enjoy rich coffee, excellent tea and mouthwatering cakes, as well as rosé champagnes. “Benediction” is a stylish, contemporary luxury à la carte brunch available every Saturday and Sunday from 9:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. This New York Citystyle breakfastlunch concept offers the best pancakes, waffles and signature Benedict dishes – the only such selection in the city – not at a fixed price, but as an à la carte brunch.

Food concept: Eggs Benedict, waffles and pancakes, fresh oysters, starter plates and brunch favourites.

Beverage concept: Hungarian and French white and rosé champagnes (including Kreinbacher and Sauska as local labels and Paul Bara from abroad), “pickmeup” style cocktails, homeroasted coffee, the finest teas and freshly pressed vegetable and fruit juices. Live music from 10:30 a.m. is provided by the resident music selector Bruce Marshal, the “music sommelier”.

Blue Fox The Bar

Blue Fox The Bar is the new star of Budapest’s nightlife. It is intimate yet full of life – a local yet cosmopolitan bar in downtown Budapest where classic cocktails are masterfully mixed while bartenders constantly experiment with new flavours. The gourmet hamburger menu and Nobu snacks combine in exciting harmony with the bar’s cocktails. In the evening, pleasant lounge music provides a background for conversations, while after dinner the rhythm picks up. A music sommelier performs every Thursday, Friday and Saturday, and on these long weekend nights the bar is open until dawn.

10. Summary

Upon arrival at the main entrance, guests are greeted by a team that makes them feel welcome and encourages them to return at any time. The hotel is open not only to inhouse guests, but also to people coming in from the street who may simply use the bathroom or sit in the lobby to listen to live music. The purpose of this research was to become familiar with the hotel, its regular guest programme and, in particular, to present the F&B department from the inside in more detail. Since ÉS Bistro is the largest F&B outlet of the hotel and holds a significant position among the citycentre dining venues, the focus was placed on this unit. Although it is a relatively new project, it can already be described as an upandcoming restaurant. At the time of opening, only 25–40 guests were served each evening, whereas today dinners for 300 guests are not uncommon. A SWOT analysis was prepared to illustrate the operation and success of the restaurant, highlighting both the opportunities and risks, as well as its strengths and weaknesses. The aim was also to present the hotel’s internal F&B outlets.

15. CASE STUDY: QUALITY MANAGEMENT AT THE BROADMOOR AND U.S. HOTEL RATING SYSTEMS

1. Introduction

In the United States, the fivestar system was started and developed by a company that one would certainly not think of first: an oil and gas company, Mobil 1. Surprisingly, it was not invented by tourism or hospitality professionals, but by Mobil 1 employees who, in connection with their work, regularly travelled across the states to maintain gas stations. During their trips, they began to write travel guides and review the accommodations where they stayed, using a fivestar system. Over time, others started to use this system and it spread quickly. To this day, it is not regulated by any single person or organization; the classification of American hotels is largely based on people's opinions.

On 30 November 1999 Mobil and Exxon merged to form ExxonMobil, one of the world's seven energy giants, the so-called "Seven Sisters", between 1940 and 1970. In terms of revenue, it can be considered the largest oil and gas company after Saudi Aramco: in 2007 it was the world's largest company by sales with 40 billion dollars in profit, and in 2019 it ranked eighth with 29 billion dollars.

Mobile Travel Guide and quality assurance

The Mobil Guide was an annual publication sharing the latest hotel and restaurant reviews and experiences based on the system developed by Mobil in 1958. It evaluated businesses on a scale of 1–5 stars according to perceived quality. In October 2009 ExxonMobil signed a contract with Forbes magazine, granting permission to use the brand, and Forbes further developed this system.

2. Hotel characteristics based on stars

One star = Economy, Budget A onestart rating does not mean that a hotel is poor or dirty or that it is in a bad location; it simply means that there is not much to do in the hotel other than sleep. These are usually familyfriendly, small properties with few rooms, often managed by the owner. They are located near affordable attractions and most of them do not have a restaurant. Furnishings are clean and simple.

Typical national chains: Econolodge, Motel 6.

Two stars = Moderate

These are small and medium-sized establishments built near moderately priced at-

tractions. They offer more services than onestar hotels, such as a telephone and TV in the bedroom; some of them have a restaurant with a limited menu and basic room service, but usually no porter service. Comfort and convenience are at a higher level than in onestar properties.

Typical national chains: Days Inn, La Quinta Inn.

Three stars = First Class

These are mediumsized facilities with spacious, well-equipped rooms. They often have a lounge and are located near business districts, shopping centres and popular attractions. A midrange restaurant offers varied breakfast and dinner. Room service, parking, a fitness centre and a swimming pool are available in some hotels.

Typical national chains: Holiday Inn, Hilton.

Four stars = Superior

These are larger, elegant buildings with a separate reception and front office department and porter service, mostly located in central areas near shopping centres. They provide aboveaverage services. The rooms are spacious and furnished with quality furniture, and there is always at least one restaurant. Room service is available almost all day; concierge and porter services, valet parking and parking facilities are provided. Several pools and special services are also available.

Typical national chains: Hyatt, Marriott.

Five stars = Deluxe

Fivestar hotels offer the highest quality with the most outstanding services. The buildings are impressive, large and spacious, and often occupy unique locations. Guests are pampered with personalised services and premiumquality restaurants. The lobby, corridors and reception are decorated with stylish, luxurious elements, as are the highquality rooms. Comfort is enhanced by several types of pools, jacuzzis, a spa department, minibars, fitness centres and 24hour room service. Concierge, valet parking and porter service are standard.

Typical national chains: The RitzCarlton, Four Seasons.

3. Forbes Travel Guide rating system

Forbes Travel Guide is the only global American hospitality organisation that rates luxury hotels, restaurants and spas. Its inspectors are professionals who work incognito and evaluate properties on the basis of around 900 criteria. The only way to achieve a five or fourstar rating, or even a recommendation, is to obtain outstanding scores in this independent inspection process. The inspectors evaluate only those establishments they have personally visited and experienced, and about which they can form a comprehensive opinion. No one can buy this rating; every star is the result of an independent process and review system.

In addition to facilities and features, the inspectors place great emphasis on the quality of service and service delivery. Their system is designed in this way because, in their view, the most lasting experience a hotel can provide comes through service – the feelings guests will later recall when they think back on their stay – so they look

for those special, lasting, even lifelong impressions.

The organisation was founded in 1958, when it first appeared as a mobile guidebook for American motorists. For more than sixty years, Forbes staff have travelled the world in order to provide guests with reliable, genuine information about the best hotels, restaurants and places to relax.

Firstclass room service

A Forbes fivestar room service pampers guests and takes care of every detail. The most critical point is taking the order, as this is when staff must be especially attentive, listening carefully and recording all wishes and special requests. The next decisive aspect is the service itself: the presentation of food and drink and the placement of the dishes are closely observed. It is important that there is a clear system to the service. Inspectors also note any extra luxury items or decorations, such as flowers or a glass of wine that is presented and poured in the room. They assess how well the waiter can create a pleasant “minirestaurant” atmosphere in the guest room.

Quality of beds

What makes a hotel bed fivestar? Above all, the exceptional quality and harmony of the mattress, bed linen and pillows. The bedding should be comfortable, light and soft, the pillows full and supportive, and the duvet silky to the touch. The arrangement of the pillows should harmonise with the room, and it is very important to have some additional decorative element – for example, a quilt with a special pattern or decorative cushions.

Typical drinks

A bar or lounge can achieve fivestar status by not simply following average rules and standard drink recipes, but by creating something new or reinventing classics. This may mean a cocktail prepared in a new way, made with a different base spirit (for example, homemade gin), with unique flavourings and a different preparation method. It may also involve a story linked to the drink or a spectacular method of preparation and serving.

Unrivalled service delivery

Employees of a hotel rated five stars by Forbes must follow strict standards, are expected to demonstrate outstanding professionalism and to treat guests with thoughtfulness, attention and care. Whether a receptionist or a waiter, staff members must almost think for the guest and always be one step – and one thought – ahead. Energetic, positive attitude is essential.

Memorable restaurant experiences

It is not enough for the food to be excellent in taste and appearance; more is expected. In addition to these aspects, it is essential that the harmony of the food, the restaurant and the service creates a lasting experience. Inspectors look for something special in both the dishes and the overall restaurant experience that evokes a pleasant memory when recalled later. This might be live music, exceptional personal attention, a unique atmosphere or even an open show kitchen.

Genuine interest

Forbes standards also specify that hotel staff must show genuine courtesy and inter-

est towards guests. Employees should always be the first to greet guests and inquire after their wellbeing.

4. Broadmoor Hotel and American Automobile Association classification system

One of the most notable accolades in the hotel industry is a fivestar rating from Forbes Travel Guide, a level achieved only by the very best properties. The Broadmoor, more than 100 years old, first received this outstanding recognition in 1960, and in 2020 it met the strict criteria for the 60th time, meaning that it has held Forbes' fivestar recognition for the longest continuous period in the world. Not only the hotel and resort, but also its spa department and all 13 restaurants, cafés and pubs on the property hold this award. The question is: what has enabled The Broadmoor to achieve and maintain this excellence for so many years?

According to the inspectors, the uniqueness and appeal of The Broadmoor are created by the excellent harmony of many components and services. Among others, they highlighted:

- the 13 restaurants with a very varied offer, ranging from a fivestar finedining restaurant to an Englishstyle pub, and including Italian and international restaurants
- the outstanding environment and design – the founders, who travelled widely, chose the best of everything from the beginning and hired top architects, artists and expert professionals

- special works of art – wherever guests go inside the hotel, they are sure to encounter remarkable pieces from Spencer and Julie Penrose's collection

- the sparkling Lakeside Pool built into Cheyenne Lake

- the pampering options of the spa department

- highly professional staff

- a cinema showing a variety of films for both adults and children, with the programme updated every two weeks.

AAA (Triple A) has developed North America's most authoritative classification and rating system, the Diamond Rating System. Instead of the usual stars used by most systems, it awards diamonds to restaurants and hotels that meet a wide range of criteria.

The American Automobile Association itself was created 118 years ago, in 1902, in Chicago, through the association of several automobile clubs. This private, nonprofit organisation currently has around 60 million members in the United States and Canada. More than 100 years after its establishment, it has a highly successful history.

Among other things, it assisted motorists and travellers by starting to produce route maps in America; the first was published in 1905. While travelling across the states, members stayed in hotels and inns and visited numerous restaurants while collecting

travel data. These establishments were listed, evaluated and described, and finally the information was published in guidebooks.

In 1915 the association was the first to introduce a permanent roadside assistance service for its members, which they could use in case of any problem affecting their car. This can still be considered the most valuable feature of membership.

From 1917 AAA participated in the fight for better roads; in that year it “won the road war” by proving that roads designed for carriages and horses were no longer suitable for passenger cars.

The association has also been partly responsible for improving road safety. In the 1920s cars appeared on the roads in everincreasing numbers and at higher speeds, and, of course, accident numbers grew rapidly. To protect motorists and pedestrians, AAA created several traffic regulations and safety systems, which began to be taught in schools.

It also made road journeys easier by providing travel calculators. Among other things, based on a car’s fuel consumption and the number of kilometres, they calculated and estimated the cost of each route and the vehicle’s fuel requirements. In addition, information was provided on the exact location and availability of petrol stations in each state.

The classification of restaurants, hotels, motels and many types of accommodation began with these early travel guides. Over the years, the current rating system was developed, incorporating all the aspects taken into account during an inspection. The most important aspects include:

- cleanliness and order
- service and hospitality
- equipment of guest rooms
- equipment of bathrooms
- quality and presentation of food
- existence and atmosphere of public areas
- safety
- overall external and internal appearance

In 1976, fortyfour years ago, The Broadmoor first received the fivediamond rating from the automobile association. Since then, the hotel’s first and most important task and goal has been to maintain this rating and, of course, to exceed guests’ expectations with its services.

The first step in maintaining the standard is a properly trained staff, which the hotel places great emphasis on. In an interview, Broadmoor’s training director Carin Armstrong explained that during a threeday training course, new employees are prepared for the importance of providing quality service and receive an overview of AAA and Forbes standards, which they must follow strictly in their work. Maintaining quality is a neverending marathon, as staff must deliver the same standard every day. The

automobile association's evaluation system places particular emphasis on cleanliness and order, as well as service and hospitality, and The Broadmoor pays special attention to these aspects.

The AAA rating guidelines are set out on about 20 pages and define the requirements for facilities. The guidelines apply to the hotel's entire exterior, public areas, guest rooms and bathrooms. Requirements include, among others, the use of luxurious materials, highquality furnishings, exceptional bed comfort, stateoftheart technology, elegant design, spacious, ornate spaces and bathrooms with decorative fixtures and heavyweight towels.

16. QUALITY MANAGEMENT AT HOTEL MOMENTS BUDAPEST

1. Introduction

Quality management is an integrated approach that directs the activities of all parts of the organization to improve quality. In the hotel industry, this is especially important, as the guest experience directly affects the hotel's reputation, revenue and competitiveness.

Quality management in the hotel industry is a complex mix of theoretical principles and practical applications designed to ensure that hotel services consistently meet or exceed customer expectations. The importance of quality management in this sector is emphasized by the direct correlation between service quality, customer satisfaction, loyalty and the overall profitability of the facility. Total quality management is the management philosophy that forms the basis of most quality-oriented management methods (for example, QFD, benchmarking, or lean procedures). Although guest-centricity always receives the most attention, joint value creation with customers, two-way communication and employee satisfaction also play an increasingly important role.

The central element of quality management is the guest. By understanding and anticipating guests' needs, preferences and expectations, hotels can adapt their services to them. Feedback mechanisms such as measuring guest satisfaction and online reviews provide invaluable insights. The foundations of this customer focus are also emphasized in Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry's (1985) SERVQUAL model, which is used to measure service quality.

The open and dynamic nature of the hotel industry as a system requires the spirit of continuous development. This ensures that hotels remain competitive and in line with the changing expectations of guests. The theory of Deming's (1986) circle of continuous improvement forms the basis of quality management, which is also relevant for the hotel industry.

The PDCA model he proposed (Plan-Do-Check-Act) - also known as the Deming cycle or the Shewhart cycle in the literature - and the OPDCA model, known as its improved version, provide a basic framework to continuously improve processes and increase the efficiency of management systems. These models help organizations achieve their goals by providing a structured methodology for identifying problems, solving them, and evaluating the effectiveness of solutions.

The PDCA cycle, often associated with the name of W. Edwards Deming, also known as the father of quality management, consists of four steps that are repeated for continuous improvement. The initial step of the cycle is Planning, which includes defining goals and planning implementation. Implementation means the practical implementation of the plan. During the Check, the effectiveness of the plan is evaluated, and the necessary changes are made in the action step in order to further optimize the process.

2. Integrated management

The active quality management practices of Hotel Moments Budapest provide an excellent example of how guest satisfaction can be placed at the center of corporate strategy. The methods used by the hotel focus not only on the maximum utilization of guests' feedback, but also on the involvement of employees and maintaining their motivation. This double-focused approach ensures that the hotel is an attractive and satisfying place not only for guests, but also for employees.

The integrated management solutions of Hotel Moments Budapest are based on three pillars: (Figure 1.)

- maximum amount of guest feedback on many channels
- open, cross-hierarchy internal communication
- dynamic, innovative and effective management and development morale

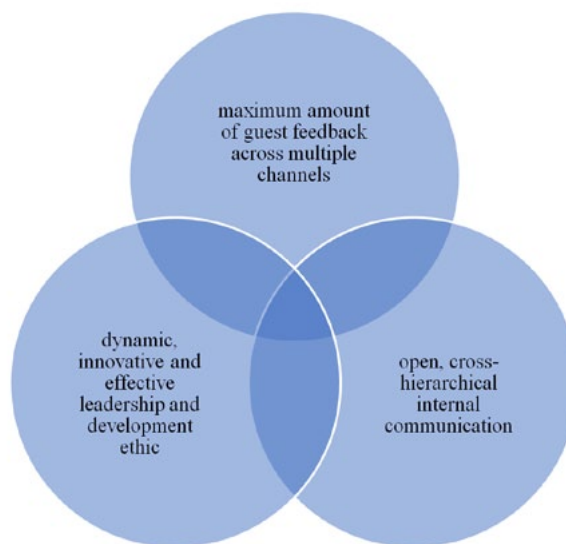


Figure 1. Integrated management solutions of Hotel Moments Budapest
Source: own compilation based on own research, 2023.

3. Quality management system

Hotel Moments Budapest's quality management system uses a multi-step approach to measuring and improving guest satisfaction. In the first step, the hotel collects guest feedback through various channels, including the Guestjoy system, which enables immediate communication and interaction with guests. In addition, the satisfaction questionnaires placed in the rooms, as well as the feedback received on online evaluation sites, are also an important source of information for the hotel.

During the processing of feedback, the hotel pays special attention to the immediate handling of any problems. Continuous training and development of employees ensures that everyone is aware of methods for increasing guest satisfaction and is able to respond effectively to feedback. This practice is beneficial not only for the guests, but also for the employees, as it provides them with the opportunity for continuous learning and development.

One of the key elements of Hotel Moments Budapest's quality management system is the strengthening of internal communication. The hotel's management is committed to creating open and hierarchical communication channels that enable a smooth flow of information between employees and management. This approach not only allows problems to be dealt with quickly, but also increases the commitment and satisfaction of employees, as they feel that their opinions matter and can contribute to the success of the hotel.

In order to further expand its quality management practices, Hotel Moments Budapest is constantly looking for new methods and technologies that can help increase guest satisfaction. As part of this, the hotel regularly evaluates and reviews quality control processes and is open to innovation and change. This proactive approach ensures that the hotel is able to adapt to market changes and maintain its competitive edge in the ever-changing tourism industry.

Overall, the example of Hotel Moments Budapest shows that an integrated and well-designed quality management system is key to increasing guest and employee satisfaction. The collection of active feedback, continuous internal communication, and the training and development of employees all contribute to the creation of a hotel where both guests and employees are satisfied. This type of integrated approach not only promotes the hotel's financial success, but also contributes to the development of the tourism industry as a whole.

4. Quality and human policy successes of Hotel Moments Budapest

The success of Hotel Moments Budapest can be measured not only in excellent guest satisfaction indicators, but also in the extent to which quality management and human resource management have been integrated into the hotel's daily operations.

The hotel's outstanding results, such as one of the top three rankings among Budapest hotels on TripAdvisor or an average guest satisfaction rating of 9.4 out of ten on Booking.com, are directly related to active quality control and guest feedback management systems. These results not only increase the hotel's online visibility and attractiveness, but also contribute to attracting new guests to the hotel and retaining loyal guests.

The hotel has also achieved the same success in the field of human resources, where the low turnover rate and the long-term commitment of employees reflect workplace satisfaction and the strength of the internal community. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected the turnover rate in 2020, when it increased to 25%. This phenomenon has been common in the hotel industry, where uncertainty and workplace challenges have led to increased worker mobility. However, Hotel Moments Budapest was able to quickly stabilize the situation and significantly reduce turnover in the following years, which was coupled with a continuous increase in the number of staff. This shows that the hotel has successfully managed the crisis caused by the pandemic and has built a strong internal culture and employee loyalty. During and after the pandemic, the hotel was able to retain key employees, which is particularly challenging in the hotel industry.

Steps taken for the personal and professional development of employees, such as participation in training and continuing education opportunities, which are also supported by the Continental Group, provide employees with the opportunity to explore new career paths and advance to higher positions within the group. This focus is especially true for staff working in the front office area, where guests' first impressions are formed and where interaction with guests is most intense. The training courses are comprehensive, multidimensional and aim for the employees to provide excellence in all aspects of guest service. Hotel Moments Budapest organizes foundation training courses for newly-entered employees, which include the basics of hotel operation, effective communication with guests, and a wide range of services. These induction programs help employees understand the hotel's culture, values and commitment to guests. Professional training courses are regularly organized for the front office staff, the aim of which is to refine guest service skills, develop problem-solving skills and learn about new trends and technologies. These trainings may include complaints handling, conflict management, upselling techniques and effective use of digital booking systems. The goal is for employees to be able to respond professionally, politely and efficiently in all situations, thereby increasing guest satisfaction. During further, personalized training and development programs, their personal interests, strengths and areas to be developed are taken into account. This gives them the opportunity to grow professionally and advance to new positions within the hotel or the wider group. More experienced colleagues act as mentors to new entrants, helping them integrate into the work environment and acquire professional skills. Mentoring programs and regular exchanges of experience promote the transfer of knowledge and cohesion within the team, as well as provide employees with the opportunity to learn from each other and develop together. As part of the training programs, Hotel

Moments Budapest places great emphasis on regular feedback and evaluations. With the help of these, employees receive feedback on their performance, effectiveness and development opportunities. Based on the evaluations, they create personalized development plans that help them perform at their best and advance in their careers. These programs ensure that the hotel team is trained, motivated and well prepared, able to provide excellent service and contribute to the overall success of the hotel.

The increase in the number of employee trainings and internal promotions indicates that Hotel Moments Budapest takes employee development and career opportunities seriously. Continuous training and internal mobility promote the professional and personal development of employees, which contributes to job satisfaction and long-term commitment.

5. The basis of quality management is the controlling system

From a functional point of view, the subsystem of management, which coordinates planning, control and information provision, continuously monitors the progress of achieving the set goals, evaluates the activities of the execution levels using a step-by-step process, and, if necessary, makes proposals to modify goals and tools. Controlling therefore facilitates the solution of the coordination difficulties that more and more businesses are forced to face due to the increasing dynamics and complexity of the corporate environment and the growing differentiation of the economy.

Tasks of the controlling system

Due to the previous definition, the activity of controlling can be grouped around three major tasks. These are the following
design
control and information supply
and their coordination.

It performs its controlling tasks on three levels:

the first level is the provision of data to the owners, the owner can be anyone, so the simplest and most understandable information package and report must be prepared for him, this can be done with the help of UNIFORM – SYSTEM OF ACCOUNTS (unified hotel accounting and information system).

the second level is the provision of information to the management, this level requires the most detailed and elaborated information, since they carry out the specific management activities.

the third level is the level of employees, where it is necessary to provide customized information in the system.

6. Operating conditions and cornerstones of controlling

The design and operation of a company's controlling system is influenced by approximately the same external and internal factors as business activities in general. The operating conditions and building elements that determine the nature of the system can be grouped into the following:

a stable external environment, which means, among other things, a secure sales market, weak information flow, and does not require such intensive controlling activities. In this case, the activity of the system is "registrar" in nature, and its tasks are limited to routine tasks.

in a moderately dynamic external environment, the system shows "navigator" traits, that is, it tries to correct deviations from the strategic direction on the fly.

especially in a dynamic environment - such as our current economic environment - high-quality, "indicator" type controlling is needed. In such cases, the employees of the system directly and proactively deal with the solution of the problems, they participate to an increased extent in the preparation of strategic decisions, the intertwining of strategic planning and controlling is obvious.

In addition to all of this, important factors that shape the character and influence the basic information of controlling:

the company's profile (size of the selection of services for sale, degree of dispersion)

the organizational structure of the company (with examination of subordinate and superior relations)

the leadership ability, ability and skill, style of the main decision-making level (ownership decisions, application of management).

The cornerstones of the controlling system

In general, the controlling system is largely a company-specific system.

However, there are certain cornerstones of the system, without which no controlling would work.

These are:

management-oriented accounting (Management Accounting)

planning and control system

reporting system

the system of financial responsibility

the financial planning and control system

Activities of controlling

Controlling, which is based on decisions made in the framework of strategic planning and various plans, in chronological order - in relation to organizational units operating at different levels of the company - means the following main areas of activity

establishing norms (assigning specific tasks)

measurement of deviations from norms (performance).

analysis of deviations, preparation of correction proposals

Monetary norms can be used to express material appropriations, on the other hand,

ratios and ratios relating to profitability, liquidity, return on capital, and loans. Natural norms are understood as quantitative indicators that can be determined in natural units of measure (expenditure per working hour per unit, specific energy consumption).

An important requirement for controlling is the careful selection and demarcation of normative-bearing places, and the involvement of those who know the situation and circumstances best in these works.

The system is characterized by the fact that the norms are confronted with the facts step by step, level by level, the aggregation increases from the bottom up, and the measurement forms a connected chain that builds on each other.

Due to the appreciation of the time factor, attention must be paid to the application of urgency and accuracy in accordance with the situation with a pair of requirements (it may be possible to alternate when which should be given priority).

17. GUEST SATISFACTION MEASUREMENT AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT AT THE BROADMOOR

1. Introduction

The simplified ticket and hotel reservation options on online comparison sites, together with the flood of guest reviews, have become one of today's most influential forms of tourism marketing. I collected guest reviews of The Broadmoor from three of the most popular online booking and review sites and analysed selected comments. I also carried out a survey to assess the extent to which opinions written on the internet influence people's decisions when choosing a hotel or destination. Today's clientele typically judge standards based on the quality of services provided by the hotel; on this basis they decide whether the service is good or bad, whether they receive adequate value for money and whether this is a hotel worth spending their money on. How is The Broadmoor performing? At the time of data collection (2026), The Broadmoor had average guest ratings of: 1. Booking: 9.5/10 2. Expedia: 4.8/5 3. Tripadvisor: 4.5/5.

2. Online Travel Agent

With the digitalisation of hotel and catering services, traditional travel agencies have slowly but surely been replaced by hotelreservation websites, so-called OTAs (Online Travel Agents). While travellers once contacted accommodation providers or travel agencies directly, they now increasingly make reservations through OTAs. With the help of these booking sites, travellers can filter accommodation by many criteria – price, location, type of property, category, feedback from previous guests, etc. – and with just a few clicks select the desired date and room type and add extra services or requests if needed. At the end of the process they can also pay with a few clicks. Depending on the booking conditions, reservations can later be changed or cancelled just as easily. After their trip, guests can share their opinions with future visitors. For anyone with even minimal familiarity with websites, using OTAs can significantly shorten and simplify the process of booking accommodation.

According to a summary published in 2024 by HOTREC, the association representing hotels, restaurants and other catering establishments in the European Union and the European Economic Area, between 2021 and 2023 the share of direct bookings fell by 4 percentage points to 52%, while bookings via OTAs increased by 6 percentage points, reaching an overall share of 26%. The European market was dominated

by three OTAs based on 2024 data: Booking.com (66.4%, upward trend), Expedia (16.6%, upward trend) and HRS (9%, downward trend).

3. Research

On average, the hotel succeeds in fulfilling its mission of meeting guest expectations to the maximum and providing an experience beyond that in 83 percent of cases. However, no matter how hard the staff try to satisfy all needs and delight every guest, they do not always succeed. Since a hotel is operated by people, mistakes can occur and there will always be some negative reviews and judgements. It is therefore interesting to examine what triggers these negative comments, who is at fault in a given situation, what cause and effect relationships lead to the problem and what kind of experiences can create such a poor impression.

Analysis of the worst reviews

Out of a total of 2,811 reviews, 23 guests gave the hotel the lowest possible rating. The most frequent complaints include the petfriendly policy, high prices and an unrealistic price–value ratio; some guests also criticised the service and felt that employees were not helpful enough in solving emerging problems. Among the complaints there are both legitimate and unfounded reactions; below is one example from each group and an analysis of how the hotel staff responded.

Justified complaint:

“It pains me to write this as a lifelong visitor to this hotel and I can’t believe I’m saying this, but ‘beware of dogs at the Broadmoor hotel’. Their dog policy is non existent and to add to that they have dog owners sign a release waiver, so yes when that 150lb Rottweiler attacks your child in the coffee shop...” (Tripadvisor)

Here a returning guest complains that the hotel’s petfriendly rules give dogs too much freedom. The root cause of her complaint was that a Rottweiler attacked her child in one of the cafés and, in addition, dogs were running around unleashed and jumping at each other wherever they went. The guests did not feel safe, and when they reported this to a manager during their stay, the response was that the hotel was not responsible for the dogs, as that was the owner’s responsibility.

Reaction from the hotel:

“First and foremost, please allow me to apologize for your disappointment surrounding our pet program, which has been in place for two decades. Indeed, the holidays are a time of higher occupancy with families traveling with pets, and I am saddened to know that this overshadowed your visit. As noted, our Assistant Manager Team has been in contact via email and attempted to speak with you twice...” (Tripadvisor)

The reply begins with an apology and then accepts responsibility for the situation. It mentions that the hotel team tried to contact the guest and, in conclusion, offers fur-

ther options and personal communication to reach a compromise. These are classic, well-established steps for dealing with guest complaints and must be applied in every case, including live situations when the security department is not directly handling the problem.

Unfounded complaint:

“...this was absolutely disgusting we never had this before at the Broadmoor! The brunch buffet is now in the tower area in a big room regarding the renovation from the Lake Terrace rooms at the D rooms. First they don't tell you this when you make the reservation, second you get maybe 40% from the Lake Terrace buffet ...for example the salad bar is a joke...” (Tripadvisor)

In this complaint the guest is dissatisfied because the Sunday Brunch event was temporarily moved to the Penrose Room due to renovations, and they did not receive a discount. They also criticised all the food tasted and declared that they would definitely fire the chef. Since hotel management thoroughly investigates every complaint and relies on the opinions of several guests, it quickly becomes clear which reasons are valid and which are not. If more guests had complained about the buffet that day, the chef would probably have been consulted, but no one else criticised the food. Moreover, the Penrose Room – to which the event was moved – is one of the most beautiful and best restaurants in the hotel, with an amazing view, and it is normally not accessible to all guests. For this reason, the hotel certainly will not offer compensation. Nevertheless, as with all complaints, management responded: “Please accept our sincere apology that the Penrose Room Brunch fell short of your expectations, and from what you described, not in keeping with our reputation. With that, a private message will be sent requesting a personal follow-up, as your schedule allows.” (Tripadvisor)

Moving on to positive reviews

More than 94 percent of guests gave positive feedback and many reported a truly magical experience (Cobanoglu, 2011) these reviews are generally more detailed and balanced than complaints. According to hotel management, the staff are the factor that makes The Broadmoor exceptional. This is confirmed by the evaluations: the work, kindness and helpfulness of the staff are highlighted in almost every review and in every service area. According to many guests, the hotel employs the best people in the hospitality industry. Most feedback indicates that guests would like to return or are already planning their next visit, and they would happily recommend the hotel's services to friends in exchange for the special experience.

Some examples:

“Probably the most beautiful hotel I ever stayed at. Anyone who has a chance to visit the Broadmoor will feel like they have been carried away in a fairy tale...” (Tripadvisor)

“A very special thank you to the hotel and staff this stay meant more to me and my words cannot express the extent of my gratitude.” (Tripadvisor)

“I would describe it as the Titanic on land...” (Tripadvisor)

Managers also respond to positive feedback, thanking guests for their comments and assuring them that they look forward to welcoming them back: “We are delighted that you found our hospitality, facilities and services living up to your expectations and our traditions. Please know we truly appreciate your patronage and will look forward to your return to our Rocky Mountain home again soon.” (Tripadvisor)

Effects of consumer online reviews in decisionmaking

Word of mouth has been one of the most important elements of marketing since the beginning; today it has transformed into a new and even more powerful form known as online word of mouth. Online word of mouth is currently one of the most important forms of marketing, as we live in a digital, electronic society. Nowadays almost everyone uses the internet, more and more activities are carried out electronically in simplified ways, and as technology develops, digital methods become an everlarger part of our lives. It can be argued that most people’s decisions are influenced by online marketing and online consumer opinions, and the tourism sector is no exception.

To support this statement, I conducted a survey on the extent to which opinions read online influence consumers when choosing their destination and accommodation. The survey reveals that more than 80 percent of respondents travel, of whom almost 70 percent use online sales sites when organising their trips. Of these respondents, 61 percent are influenced by online opinions, 15 percent are only sometimes influenced, and 23 percent are not influenced by opinions at all. I also asked whether they would be interested in staying at The Broadmoor after reading online reviews. All respondents were clearly convinced by the guest reviews and would definitely visit the hotel if they had the opportunity. In addition, reading the guest reviews aroused their interest in the city of Colorado Springs and its surroundings. Thus, the survey results confirmed my statement and showed that a positive opinion can have a beneficial effect not only on the given service provider but also on the wider destination.

The role of an international workforce in the hotel

The hotel employs thousands of workers, and as it has expanded over the years, it has needed more and more staff. Today, the opportunity is open not only to locals: the hotel offers numerous programmes, including student jobs, internships, temporary and seasonal positions and training, available to applicants from all states of the USA and also to foreign students and employees. For more than ten years, the international workers’ programme has given foreign students and workers the chance to obtain an American visa, acquire internationally recognised work experience and participate in cultural exchange. This opportunity is now available in 23 countries, including both wealthier and poorer nations. Since workers come from countries with different economic, political and cultural systems, the conditions for obtaining a visa and the types of visas available differ.

The most basic conditions for filling internship positions and obtaining a J1 visa (the most common type) are:

fulltime higher education studies in tourism, hospitality or related fields
graduation in hospitality no more than one year ago
ongoing degree studies with a thesis in progress and at least one year of hospitality
experience gained outside the United States
no university degree, but five years of hospitality experience acquired outside the
United States

Employer benefits of employing an international workforce

The question may arise why it is worthwhile for the hotel to employ international workers when the team changes every six or twelve months and everyone has to be trained again and again. Clearly, the programme is not driven by pure goodwill; rather, it also reflects the hotel's interest in accessing motivated labour. Through the programme, the hotel receives good quality labour at relatively low cost. It is cheaper because the hotel pays less tax for employees on nonresident visas, and participants also pay programme fees. Compared with American wages, foreign workers earn the local minimum wage without overtime; a citizen would be paid more for the same work. Health insurance usually does not have to be paid by the hotel either, though there are exceptions – for example, New Zealand students are typically better covered and therefore receive insurance more cheaply than others.

The hotel is not responsible for students' food and accommodation; although it provides some initial help, everyone is largely left to manage on their own, which would be less problematic if it were possible to rent an apartment without a large deposit. However, because international workers are not citizens and often do not have a credit history, landlords regard them as less reliable and demand high upfront payments. By employing noncitizens, the hotel bears less responsibility, since these workers do not have full citizenship rights. Of course, they still have basic rights, which are taken very seriously in the USA, but the hotel is not, for example, responsible for a girl who was hit by a car on her way to work (she was walking because no transport is provided for students), or for another girl who was assaulted by a stranger on her way to work. They can also state that any violation of the rules will result in immediate dismissal and invalidation of the visa.

It is also widely known that many European or Asian workers have a different work ethic compared with some American workers. As mentioned earlier, employees come from poorer countries as well, such as African states, Jamaica, the Philippines or Vietnam. These workers usually come primarily for the money; since the hotel offers a lot of overtime, they work many hours and, when off shift, sometimes earn extra income by giving colleagues lifts to work. Many send their earnings home to support their families. Local staff are also aware that many international workers are willing to take on any "dirty" work in exchange for overtime, such as additional cleaning. Among foreign employees, the hotel has even acquired a nickname: "the modern slavery" – yet most still appreciate the opportunity to work there.

Experiences of other workers

I was curious how others felt about the hotel, their time spent there and their experiences, so I asked some of my colleagues to share their opinions. Here are some of their responses:

“Broadmoor gave me an incredible opportunity, because I was able to see inside the operation of a fivestar, fivediamond hotel. In addition, I was lucky enough to work as a hostess in the hotel’s only finedining restaurant. Expectations were high, I won’t deny that my working hours were stressful, and there was no one to train me properly, so at the beginning it was really a deep dive. The hotel has a great reputation for a reason, because the service they provide is truly unique and highquality.” (B. Anett)

“That was nice. Sean Zimkas was also very responsive to my emails, and the human resources staff were always available if I had any questions during my stay. Throughout the training they tried to familiarise us with Broadmoor’s standards. Basically, I felt good; in the end the uncertainty bothered me, and because of that I could say that I did not like how they handled the situation, but everything happened so suddenly and they did not want to cause panic, so I understand why they did not say anything and then took a big step and sent everyone home. What they should change is to show more than superficial interest in students and value them more, but this may not be feasible, because if someone goes abroad for six months – for example as a Hungarian – they might not be taken entirely seriously. Personally, I would also solve transportation for interns, because there have been several accidents and assaults; I think they could operate a lowcost bus shuttling students between the different housing areas and The Broadmoor.” (A. Barbara)

“I only worked at the hotel for a few weeks because of the epidemic situation, after which it had to close and all international employees were dismissed. It is clear that no one could have expected the situation and it caught everyone by surprise, but I believe that a company of this size should provide direct and clear communication to all employees about the possible termination of their work, even in difficult circumstances – especially when people’s stay in the country is linked to their employment. This was completely missing from the hotel’s side. In my experience The Broadmoor helps its employees and is kind to them, but clear and direct communication had already been a weak point even before the crisis created by the pandemic.” (T. Bettina)

Due to economic shutdowns, restrictions and state regulations caused by the coronavirus, The Broadmoor could not continue operations from 18 March 2020. Holders of J1 visas were dismissed with immediate effect, their legal relationship ended and their internships were considered completed. The hotel suspended the programme until 2021.

3. Summary

While writing this material, it became clear that the historical development of The Broadmoor affects both its clientele and its employees. Following the vision of Spencer Penrose, the hotel preserves tradition in its approach to guests. For more than

100 years, its goals have been hospitality, exceptional service and accommodation, and a high level of commitment, motivating employees and attracting guests. The Broadmoor has been a pioneer in many areas over the decades, breaking records among hotels and within tourism.

Although The Broadmoor has always been a luxury property, it took a great deal of work and experience to develop it to its present state and to add the extras that make it truly special, unique and distinctive compared with other hotels. Beyond its historic charm, the secret lies in its staff: many guest reviews reveal that nowhere else have they experienced such an open, honest welcome and such helpfulness and warmth from employees. Staff can only be honest and happy if the employer provides an environment where they feel good and enjoy their work.

To truly appreciate the value of the hotel, one must know its history and recognise that history has a decisive influence on tourism. Although American history is relatively short compared with European history, The Broadmoor still plays a prominent role in it, and its creation owes much to European culture.

18. REGULAR GUEST PROGRAM AT THE INTERCONTINENTAL AND CORINTHIA HOTELS

1. Introduction

In today's world almost every service company offers some form of loyalty or frequentguest programme, and hotels are no exception. InterContinental and Corinthia both operate loyalty schemes that enable returning guests to enjoy numerous benefits during their stay. At InterContinental two programmes – IHG Rewards Club and the Ambassador Programme – and at Corinthia one programme – Discovery – offer various advantages to regular guests. IHG Rewards Club is the IHG hotel group's own frequentguest programme, in which participants can collect points at all hotels in the chain. Joining the programme is free, and points are credited to the card according to the amount spent; these points can later be used for room reservations or purchases.

2. InterContinental Budapest's regular guest programme – Ambassador

The programme has four levels, and progression depends on points earned or nights spent. The membership levels and associated benefits at InterContinental Budapest are as follows (www.ihg.com , 2020):

Club Level

Discounted room rates, priority checkin, free late checkout (2 p.m.), free online newspaper in several languages.

Gold Level

Discounted room rates, priority checkin, free late checkout (2 p.m.), free online newspaper in several languages, welcome amenity with a drink voucher for the hotel bar or 400 points credited to the card.

Platinum Level

Discounted room rates, priority checkin, free late checkout (2 p.m.), free online newspaper in several languages, welcome amenity with a drink voucher for the hotel bar or 600 points on the card, guaranteed room reservation 72 hours before arrival, complimentary upgrade to the next room category (subject to availability on arrival).

Spire Level

Discounted room rates, priority checkin, early checkin from 10:00 a.m. (subject to

room availability), free late checkout (2 p.m.), free online newspaper in several languages, welcome amenity with a drink voucher for the hotel bar or 600 points on the card, guaranteed room reservation 72 hours before arrival, complimentary upgrade to the next room category (subject to availability on arrival).

Membership costs USD 200 for one year, and the frequentguest card can be used up to 50 times at any InterContinental hotel. By joining the programme, guests automatically receive IHG Rewards Club membership and are immediately placed at Gold level. Ambassador and IHG Rewards Club levels are always aligned. When joining and when renewing membership, guests receive a complimentary weekend-night voucher redeemable at one of the InterContinental hotels.

The levels of the Ambassador Programme are: Gold Ambassador, Platinum Ambassador and Spire Ambassador. Progression is based on nights spent and points earned. The benefits of these three Ambassador levels are identical (ihg.com, 2020): discounted room rates, guaranteed room reservation 72 hours before arrival, priority checkin, late checkout (4 p.m.), fresh fruit platter or selection of cakes and mineral water on arrival, guaranteed upgrade to a higher room category and one complimentary movie during the stay.

The fourth level of the Ambassador Programme is Royal Ambassador. This level is accessible only by invitation from senior management. The number of Royal Ambassadors is limited, so admission depends on the activity of current members. The benefits for Royal Ambassador members are as follows: guaranteed room reservation 24 hours before arrival, priority checkin, late checkout (4 p.m.), fresh fruit platter, sweet or savoury cake selection and mineral water on arrival, guaranteed upgrade by two room categories including Club Lounge access, free minibar and one complimentary movie during the stay.

3. Corinthia hotels – Discovery frequentguest programme

This programme is used not only by the Corinthia chain, but also by several other large hotel groups. In Hungary, guests can enjoy the benefits at both Corinthia and Kempinski hotels. Joining the programme is free, and guests move up to higher levels based on the number of nights they spend. The levels and associated benefits are as follows (www.discoveryloyalty.com, 2020).

Gold Level

Discounted rates, free online newspaper in several languages, complimentary mineral water.

Platinum Level

Discounted rates, free online newspaper in several languages, complimentary mineral water, late checkout (3 p.m.), upgrade to the next room category (subject to availability on arrival), guaranteed room reservation 48 hours before arrival, special room preparation and a Platinumlevel Local Experience.

Black Level

Discounted rates, free online newspaper in several languages, complimentary min-

eral water, early checkin (9 a.m.), late checkout (4 p.m.), upgrade by two room categories (subject to availability on arrival), guaranteed room reservation 24 hours before arrival, special room preparation and a Blacklevel Local Experience.

The Local Experience is a programme of destinationspecific experiences designed to make the guest's stay even more memorable, special and exciting. Programme members can choose from different experiences depending on their level, and the offers vary by hotel.

At Corinthia Budapest, guests can currently choose from the following experiences (www.discoveryloyalty.com):

Exclusive Gemstone Shopping Experience, A Moment of Tranquility by ESPA (50 min.), Madách Theater Tour and Show (Black Level), Lamborghini Motoring Under the Stars, A Moment of Tranquility by ESPA (80 min.), Time Together in our Royal Spa.

Guests must indicate which experience they wish to use before arrival. Thanks to these regularguest programmes, stays become more personalised and meaningful; guests can enjoy additional experiences and return home even more satisfied. For hotels, such programmes are extremely important and useful, as they help to increase the number of returning guests and strengthen longterm loyalty.

19. CASE STUDY: PRICE DIFFERENTIATION AT HOTEL PANDA

1. Introduction

Pricing plays an extremely complex role which, although largely hidden from guests, has a major impact on their overall impression of the hotel, on revenue and on the satisfaction of owners and employees. When determining appropriate room rates, countless factors must be taken into account and then constantly reviewed and adjusted to current market developments in order to maximise profit. To offer a hotel product at a fair and competitive price, it is necessary to know not only guests' needs and the quality of services offered, but also the prices and pricing of all services, thereby maximising both guest experience and income.

Efficient hotel operation is based on a strong position in the tourism market. Therefore, in order to set appropriate prices, each hotel must have a well-designed marketing plan that provides a comprehensive picture of the role it plays or intends to play in the market. When determining prices, both external and internal factors must be taken into account so that the property operates as efficiently as possible.

External factors:

- political and economic situation in the sending and receiving countries
- guest expectations
- demand for the services provided
- competitors' services and pricing strategy
- commissions paid to intermediaries and OTAs
- legislation and regulations affecting pricing policy

Internal factors:

- hotel category
- range of services
- fixed costs
- expected sales volume.

Strategic pricing:

In longterm price formation, it must be ensured that prices are cost-oriented, take competitors' pricing into account and adapt flexibly to changes in demand. When setting rates, it is essential that they be acceptable to the market, cover hotel costs, provide the expected profit for owners, create opportunities for future developments and, last but not least, allow fair financial recognition of employees.

To achieve maximum profit, the hotel must adapt to changing demand. Within tactical pricing policy, price differentiation can be used to compensate for fluctuations to a certain extent, meaning that different prices are applied for the same service at different times, depending on demand. Different prices may be offered to different target groups, and different prices can be communicated through various sales channels. Some rates are public – these can be found on direct and OTA booking interfaces – while others appear only in contracts and must be treated as confidential by the sales department.

Room rates primarily include the accommodation fee, but several components may be built into the price, such as breakfast, halfboard, bathroom amenities, minibar or inroom extras. When designing packages, in addition to the gross room rate, various services are added – for example, wine tastings or wellness treatments. Pricing may aim at selling additional services or promoting them during periods of lower revenue.

Prices can be divided into two main groups: fixed and flexible. Fixed prices are those applied in contracts; flexible prices are demand-driven rates used primarily in online sales and managed according to guidelines laid down in the hotel's pricing policy to achieve the highest possible revenue. To increase occupancy, hotels often use so-called nonrefundable rates, where rooms are sold at a lower price if the guest pays 50 or 100 percent of the reservation in advance; such bookings cannot be changed or cancelled without penalty. Regardless of the strategy used, the most important requirement is that pricing be transparent to all colleagues, ensuring clear and consistent communication to guests.

2. Analysis of the market situation of Hotel Panda

To examine Hotel Panda's market position, three and four-star hotels in Budapest located in the inner city and offering similar products and services at similar prices to a comparable customer group (business and leisure travellers) were considered.

Hotel Panda's competitors are the following properties. For meaningful comparison, basic factors must be examined: number of rooms, number of function rooms and maximum capacity of the main ballroom. In addition, the quantity and quality of services provided by the hotels are important in the analysis. Less tangible factors such as the surrounding environment, public areas, the atmosphere of the restaurant and, of course, staff behaviour also significantly influence guest satisfaction.

Table 1.
Comparison of hotels

Hotel name	Number of rooms	Number of function rooms	Maximum capacity of the ballroom (person)
Hotel Liget	139	2	60
Hotel Panda	100	4	100
Radisson SAS Peace Hotel	247	5	220
Hotel Benczur	161	6	200

Source: own compilation

However, comparison based solely on the number of rooms and eventhall capacity is not sufficient to assess the hotel's market position.

SWOT analysis:

For forwardlooking and careful planning it is essential that hotel management realistically assess the property's possibilities. Several analytical methods have been developed for this purpose, one of which is SWOT analysis. The result is a table that helps to critically evaluate the hotel's situation.

Strengths

Favourable location in the heart of the downtown business district
Shopping and entertainment options nearby
Good transport connections and easy access
New building, constructed only a few months ago
Bright event and meeting rooms
Highquality businesscentre services
Large underground garage
Young, flexible and helpful staff.

Weaknesses

No panoramic location or views
Noisy environment due to heavy traffic
Not suitable for very large events
Not suitable for large groups
No presidential suite.

Opportunities

Growth in business tourism
Increasing the number of meeting rooms at the expense of other guest areas
Increasing the number of suites

Threats

Fivestar hotels in a stronger competitive position

Involvement of regional destinations in the business tourism market
Intense price competition.

Location

Hotel Panda is located 3.6 km from Keleti Railway Station and 19 km from Budapest Ferenc Liszt International Airport, which corresponds to about a 25minute drive. The hotel is close to Deák Ferenc tér, the interchange station of metro lines 1, 2 and 3; it can be reached on foot in approximately five minutes. Due to its central location, public transport connections are excellent.

3. Price differentiation

FIT Rate (FI)

Bookings at rack rate without any discount; only reservations at the full public price are included here.

FIT Discount Rate (FD)

All individual guests who receive a discount from the rack rate (roomonly reservations without additional services).

Corporate Full (CF)

Employees of companies that have signed a corporate contract with the hotel. Companies guaranteeing a certain number of room nights are entitled to use reduced rates.

Corporate Preferred (CP)

Bookings made by travel agencies when reserving for their own corporate clients.

Corporate Local (CL)

Companies that have signed a direct contract with the hotel guaranteeing a minimum number of room nights; this rate is usually valid only at the local property.

Corporate Group (CG)

Groups of employees from contracted companies who stay at the hotel but hold their event elsewhere.

One Shot Non Tour (NT)

Groups of more than ten people staying at the hotel for nonbusiness purposes. They pay a group rate and usually visit the hotel only once, for example to attend a sports event or concert. Reservations are made directly.

Tour IT/Packages (TP) – Package (PK) All guests booking a package, i.e. they use

additional services beyond the room (for example breakfast).

Individual Wholesaler (IW)

Il reservations made by wholesalers (travel agencies or tour operators). Guests usually choose the trip from a catalogue and receive a voucher.

Travel Industry Discount (TI)

Discounted rates for employees of travel agencies or airlines with a valid ID.

Tour Operator One Shot (TO)

Groups brought by a tour operator, travel agency or wholesaler, valid for a single stay.

Tour Series (TS)

Group bookings by tour operators, travel agencies or wholesalers specifying arrival and departure dates for series of groups at different times.

Meeting (MT)

Company Meeting Corporate (MC) – groups of company employees covered by a corporate contract who not only use accommodation but also organise events in the hotel.

Convention Congress (CC)

Groups whose events may be held inside or outside the hotel.

Incentive (IN)

Groups of company employees staying at the hotel as a reward for their performance.

According to the origin of the reservation

For individual bookings

Guest/Company Direct (GD)

The guest or their company books directly with the hotel; no commission is payable.

These bookings represent the largest share.

Travel Agency (TA)

Bookings by travel agencies, tour operators or wholesalers, for which commission is payable. After direct bookings, they represent the secondlargest share.

WalkIn (WI)

Guests who arrive at the hotel without prior reservation; they account for around 1–2 percent of all arrivals.

Airline Direct (AD)

Bookings from airline reservation offices that order directly from the hotel by phone or fax; this method also represents around 1 percent of reservations.

For group bookings

Group Company Direct (GC)

Group bookings made directly by a company with the hotel.

Wholesaler (WH)

Bookings arriving through a wholesaler. The hotel rooms and services are sold in packages to travel agencies (for example TUI, Neckermann).

Tour Operator (TO)

Reservations made by a tour operator on behalf of a group with specific arrival and departure dates; the agency bundles elements such as hotel and travel into a package and sells it directly to customers.

Meeting Planner (MP)

Group bookings through a conference and event organisation office.

Travel Agent Group (TG) Group bookings through a travel agency for events and meetings held in hotels.

4. Sales channel

In tourism, products and services are distributed through sales channels that deliver them from producer to consumer and provide service elements. In this context, sales channels mean the method of booking – the way in which the guest reaches the hotel. Sales can be direct, relying on an existing client base, or indirect, using an expanding sales network. Computer reservation systems (CRS) are the most popular and preferred tools today. With the share of internet bookings continuously increasing, it is essential to maintain and update the hotel's website regularly.

The hotel's most important sales partners are professional tourism organisers, travel agents and travel agencies. At least half of bookings are made by telephone – the events segment primarily uses this method, as event details are easiest to discuss this way. Corporate clients also tend to book by phone, while travel agencies still often prefer fax.

Direct reservations

Reservations taken by Hotel Panda's sales and reservations department. This channel is mainly used by individual guests and travel agencies. Bookings received by phone, fax or email are entered into the Fidelio system by staff.

GDS bookings: all reservations made by airlines or travel agencies through the GDS (Global Distribution System).

Online bookings: reservations sent via the official Hotel Panda booking page or via email.

20. CASE STUDY: THE USE AND PERCEIVED IMPACT OF SMART TECHNOLOGIES IN BUDAPEST HOTELS

1. Introduction

The tourism industry is undergoing major changes due to the continuous development of technology. Various technological tools are transforming service processes, and both service providers and users must adapt. Industry 4.0 solutions have also brought radical changes to the hotel industry through the emergence of smart hotels.

Guests can now check in from anywhere; the application sends a notification as soon as the room is ready. If they arrive early, they can make themselves comfortable in the lobby and take advantage of superfast WiFi. There is no queuing, no waiting and no onsite checkin at the front desk – everything can be managed through a single application. With this solution, guests can enjoy a highly private hotel experience that is still unique in the world. Using the app, the room key is already in their pocket before arrival: they simply walk up to the door and use their phone as the key.

What makes a room smart? Essentially, it is in perfect sync with the guest's smartphone. The hotel sends a notification as soon as cleaning is finished, and guests can even set the room temperature remotely. It is a priceless feeling to return on a hot summer evening in Budapest to a pleasantly cooled room, or to preheat it in winter. Guests can also order breakfast or a taxi via the application. If they prefer to talk to someone, customer service is available by phone 24 hours a day. If they worry that their phone could run out of power, chargers in the lobby and other public areas provide a solution.

2. Research

The research was conducted in 140 hotels in Budapest. Based on the responses, 52.9% of managers believe that smart tourism technologies greatly increase the sales of accommodation services and the revenue derived from them, while a further 23.5% think they contribute partially to growth. According to 61.1%, smart technology significantly supports the sale of other services and products, and 20.3% believe it helps only to a limited extent.

It is important to note that not all middle and senior managers have a complete overview of costs. According to 25.5%, these technologies reduce costs, while 21.6% believe that smart solutions significantly increase accommodation costs. One reason is that these technologies are expensive to purchase and implement; at the same time, some executives pointed out that over the longer term the total cost of running the property can be reduced by smart technologies.

A total of 39.9% think that intelligent solutions significantly increase employee productivity, while 20.9% see only a slight contribution. According to 39.2% of accommodation managers, smart solutions help significantly reduce the number of employees, whereas 19% see this effect as minor. In terms of service quality, 43.1% believe that smart solutions in tourism substantially improve quality, while 28.1% see only a small but positive impact. According to 43.1%, technology significantly increases guest satisfaction; 24.2% believe that only a modest increase is attributable to these solutions.

A total of 56.9% consider that intelligent solutions significantly speed up business processes, whereas 19.6% think that processes are accelerated only slightly. The majority of managers (64.1%) believe that smart solutions greatly reduce the time spent on tasks. More positive feedback might have been expected on this topic, because integrated systems – such as twoway channel managers and pricing tools – take a considerable burden off managers' shoulders and speed up workflows. Compared with previous years, hotels now sell their services through more channels, and dynamic pricing in Budapest means that room rates can change daily or even hourly. Updating prices manually on each channel would be extremely timeconsuming, and various smart technologies offer a solution to this problem. However, these systems are typically used only in certain departments, which are represented in relatively small numbers in the sample.

Altogether 49% of respondents think that the introduction of smart technologies represents a competitive advantage for accommodations, while 18.3% believe that it provides only a partial advantage in the market. According to 43.8%, intelligent solutions make a significant contribution to energy efficiency; 19.6% consider this effect moderate. In terms of reliability, only 30.1% believe that these solutions are completely reliable, and 25.5% still harbour doubts. A total of 58.2% think that smart solutions have a significant positive impact on the accommodation's image, and 41.8% say that these technologies contribute strongly to the personalisation of services.

Some 23.5% of respondents have no concrete experience with the application of smart technologies at their property, and 16.3% believe that implementation would be difficult in their accommodation. Likewise, 16.3% report that the introduction of smart solutions went smoothly at their property. From the arithmetic means it can be seen that most topics show positive values, meaning that managers have a favourable attitude towards smart tourism solutions in these areas. In some aspects, however, the mean is negative and the attitude accordingly unfavourable. If the mean falls

between 0 and 1, we speak of a minor effect; between 1 and 2, a medium effect; and between 2 and 3, a strong effect.

Based on the data, the most significant effect is time saving ($\bar{x} = 2.24$), followed by enhancement of the property's image ($\bar{x} = 2.08$), and close behind, promotion of accommodation sales ($\bar{x} = 2.07$). Smart technologies exert only a moderate effect on the acceleration of business processes ($\bar{x} = 1.93$), followed by the securing of competitive advantage. On average, managers also attribute a moderately positive impact to smart tourism technologies in terms of energy efficiency, followed by an increase in other revenues ($\bar{x} = 1.54$) and higher guest satisfaction ($\bar{x} = 1.52$). According to hotel managers, intelligent solutions have a positive but limited impact on business. For costs, a small negative effect is visible, while for staff numbers a negative but mediumstrength effect appears. These negative values can also be interpreted in reverse: smart technologies tend to reduce staff numbers and can also contribute to cost reductions.

In the next part of the survey, the use of smart tourism technologies in managers' own accommodations and their knowledge of them were examined. The majority of respondents (72) are fully familiar with "selfcheckin" but do not use it in their own property. The main reason is that they want to meet guests personally and provide information face to face. Similarly, 77 respondents know about "selfcheckout" and 76 managers are aware of keyless systems that allow entry with a QR code, but, as before, they do not plan to introduce these services in their own establishments.

Magnetic key cards are used in 140 leading hotels, highspeed internet access is provided in 122, and offers are available via wireless internet in 150. According to 63 respondents, rooms contain interactive televisions; another 42 plan to introduce similar technology within five years. In most hotels, managers are aware of payTV systems, but do not plan to install them. Some managers intend to implement internetbased television, while another 69 know about this technology but do not plan to apply it. Voice control has appeared as a novel technology: 60 respondents know about it but do not plan to introduce it.

Although inroom game consoles could generate extra revenue, the majority of respondents do not use and do not plan to introduce this service. Providing computers or laptops for guests is also not typical and is generally not planned. New products and services, however, are emerging in this category that are more practical than placing a computer or laptop in each room. Nowadays, tablets and smartphones can be provided, and these are in much higher demand among accommodation managers. Nevertheless, questions arise about responsibility for damage and the extent of guest liability if such a device is broken.

Regarding sportsrelated services, 69.6% of businesses are aware of available products and opportunities but do not plan to introduce them. A total of 45.1% of accommodations offer cashless payment (instant transfer, QRcode payment). Some 52.9% of

managers stated that they operate a loyalty programme.

Based on the responses, companies mainly focus on mobile communication: 68% of managers reported that they typically use this method for communication with employees and between departments. For 62.9% of properties, mobile booking is available, and 56.9% allow guests to pay by mobile phone. Cloudbased services are also widespread in hotels: in 68% of cases, bookings are processed using cloudbased systems, and in 49.7% the entire checkin and checkout process is managed in the cloud. For 61.4% of accommodations, guest data are also stored in cloud systems. Around 40.5% of hotels use cloudbased services to record and monitor food stocks, and 43.8% do the same for beverages. A total of 54.2% purchase raw materials and products needed for services through cloudbased solutions.

Artificial intelligence is a relatively new area in accommodation services and has not yet become widespread, but promising initiatives are emerging. Some 48.4% of properties have introduced virtualconsultation options, and 48.4% have implemented selfcheckin kiosks. A total of 46.4% use chatbots on their websites.

3. Smart technologies

PMS – Property Management System

A (hotel) Property Management System, or PMS, is a hotelmanagement system. Traditionally it is a computer platform that enables hotels to handle administrative workflows easily and efficiently, such as managing reservations and guest checkin and checkout. These hotel software solutions replace old, paperbased, timeconsuming methods.

In recent decades this technology has developed significantly and now goes far beyond digitising frontdesk processes. Through various integrations, PMS software enables hotel staff to manage – within a single system – not only frontoffice and basic reservation tasks but also management functions (hotel management, reporting and businessplan monitoring), F&B (restaurant and bar departments), housekeeping and maintenance, spa and wellness and other optional departments. In Hungary, widely used PMS solutions include HostWare, SabeeApp and Flexys.

Previously, the use of such software was optional and mainly justified in medium and largesized hotels. However, following the establishment of the National Tourism Data Supply Centre (NTAK) on 1 January 2020, all commercial accommodation providers in Hungary are now required to use a PMS.

RFID and BLE technology

RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) and BLE (Bluetooth Low Energy) technologies play a decisive role in hotel security because keycard or mobilephone door opening for rooms is based on these technologies, which are intended to replace traditional metal keys.

The development of RFID technology is linked to the ASSA ABLOY (formerly VingCard) group. In 1974 locksmith Tor Sørnes learned that his favourite singer had been attacked by an intruder in her hotel room. Wanting to help, he set out to invent a security system in which each guest would receive a unique key. His invention changed the lock industry forever.

Key cards based on RFID are practical for several reasons. Guests do not need to leave a metal key at reception during the day, and if a card is lost it can be replaced easily. Cards can be reprogrammed in seconds, and their dooropening authorisation can be withdrawn at any time. If a card falls into unauthorised hands, it is normally impossible to tell at a glance which room it opens, as the cards are usually plain or display only a logo, reducing the risk of unauthorised entry. If unauthorised entry, theft or vandalism is suspected, the lock mechanism can be used to retrieve information on when, and with which card, the room was accessed (guest card or staff card).

When BLE technology is used, a plastic card is no longer needed: users can open compatible locks using the Bluetooth connection of their smartphone, whether in a hotel room, office or smart home. All of the advantages mentioned above remain, and the likelihood of guests leaving the opening device behind is reduced, as people generally take better care of their own phone than of a plastic card. At the same time, questions arise about what happens if the phone battery is drained or the device is lost. This has been considered in the development phase: locks that can be opened via BLE can also be opened using the previous RFIDbased key cards.

Mobile applications

Alongside the rise of smartphones, mobile applications have spread rapidly, essentially putting a computer into guests' pockets. All major OTAs, such as Booking.com, Expedia and HRS, have app versions. Booking.com and Expedia have also developed adminside applications (Pulse and Partner Central) that enable hotel operators to manage reservations on the go.

Artificial intelligence and chatbots

Almost everyone has heard the terms “artificial intelligence” and “chatbot”, but relatively few people fully understand them, and there is a common misconception that these technologies necessarily involve physical robots, as seen in science fiction.

Artificial Intelligence (AI): in essence, the theory and development of computer systems capable of performing tasks that generally require human intelligence – for example visual perception, speech recognition, decisionmaking and translation between languages.

Chatbot: a computer programme designed to simulate conversation with human users, especially via the internet.

A chatbot is therefore a technological solution that uses artificial intelligence to communicate with users. Ideally, users do not notice that they are conversing with a nonhuman agent. According to forecasts, a large proportion of major companies use chatbots, and many already do so in Hungary. There are multiple programmes that

even nonexperts can use to launch simple but effective chatbot versions. Their main advantage is that, as online customerservice tools, they can provide accurate answers to almost all questions and give immediate, correct information about prices and services without using human resources.

Internet of Things (IoT)

The Internet of Things is the interconnection of everyday objects equipped with computing devices via the internet, enabling them to send and receive data. More simply, IoT connects objects that have memory and internet connectivity through the World Wide Web. On the one hand, their use enhances user experience (e.g. smart watches, smart glasses); on the other, it enables machinetomachine (M2M) communication. In a hotel this technology can, for example, connect and bring under a single platform the control of climate, lighting and multimedia devices, and it can also enable door opening with a mobile phone.

Virtual and augmented reality – VR & AR

Virtual Reality (VR) is a computergenerated threedimensional simulation of an environment that appears realistic or can be interacted with using special equipment such as a headset or sensorequipped gloves.

Augmented Reality (AR) is a technology that overlays computergenerated images onto the user's view of the real world, combining them into a single image.

These technologies first spread in the entertainment industry, but the tourism sector soon recognised their potential. VR allows travellers to take a virtual tour of destinations – for example a beach or a specific hotel – before deciding where to go. AR is similarly popular. Its greatest advantage is that it can be implemented relatively cheaply yet is highly spectacular. It requires little equipment beyond a tablet or smartphone, an internet connection and an appropriate application.

Robots – science fiction or an answer to labour shortages?

Robotics is increasingly discussed in connection with tourism; robot concierges, robot airport staff and robot chefs have all appeared. This phenomenon is partly driven by changing travel habits, as demand for selfservice solutions is increasing. The main advantage of robots is that they can work at the same pace for 24 hours, even though they cannot replace human assistance in every situation.

Artificial intelligence has a history of more than half a century. Development has not been linear: after early promising results, researchers ran into technical and resource constraints, leading to periods when work slowed or stopped – the so-called “AI winters”. Today, AI is prominent in manufacturing, often described as the fourth industrial revolution: modern machines are controlled by digital brains, collect vast amounts of data about themselves and their environment through sensors and, being networkconnected, can transmit this information anywhere. Critics of AI have long predicted that robots will take over part or all of human work.

4. Summary

Intelligent technology in tourism is still in its infancy in the hotel sector. High investment and installation costs, as well as the price of the products themselves, remain major deterrents for many properties. Nonetheless, a significant share of responses shows that hotel managers have a positive view of smart technology and see potential business benefits. As a result, guests are increasingly likely to find in hotels the technologies they are already used to at home, making both their stay and the operation of the business easier. It is therefore essential for hotels to keep up with the latest trends and technologies and to apply the most appropriate solutions in their operations.

21. CASE STUDY: SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES AND GREEN HOTEL MANAGEMENT

1. Introduction

The number of green hotels in the capital is increasing year by year, and the volume of green procurement and public procurement is also growing with them. Green practices have mostly been adopted by larger hotel chains, which dominate roughly three-quarters of the greenhotel market; among them, the Accor group stands out with its Planet 21 programme. In 1993, the Association of Hungarian Hotels and Restaurants launched initiatives to encourage domestic hotels to protect the environment. The work began with a series of articles in a trade journal, recognising that environmental protection cannot be effective through management decisions alone, but only if environmental awareness becomes part of the attitude of a broad range of employees.

The Association's environmental section was created and a programme package entitled "Do not disturb" was completed, containing detailed guidelines on energy and water conservation, waste management, reduction and recycling, and guest information. On this basis, hotels could form their own environmental teams and start work according to their possibilities. The Association announced the first "Green Hotel" tender in 1994 and has published a new call every two years since then. Successful applicants receive the right to display the "Green Hotel" logo for two years.

Applications are assessed by a threemember jury and scored according to strict criteria; the "podium" winners are then announced. For about ten years, separate categories have existed for hotels belonging to domestic and international chains and for independent hotels. Over time the tenders have been refined and tightened, as many laws and regulations have come into force which hotels must comply with, and meeting these requirements has become a basic condition for applications to be evaluated.

The title of "Eternal Green Hotel" can be awarded if a hotel has placed on the podium (1st, 2nd or 3rd) in its category at least three times since 1993. Evergreen hotels no longer need to submit a full application, but in each tender cycle they are expected to provide a short, illustrated list of environmental measures introduced in recent years.

2. Research

In Budapest, the number of hotel beds, rooms and catering units has increased very dynamically compared with 2020–21. Based on these data, one might conclude that developing quality tourism is essential for the capital. However, surveys show that only about 10 percent of tourists visiting Budapest have heard of green hotels (Figure 1).

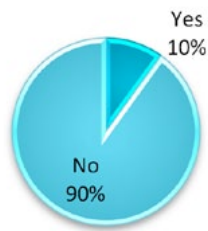


Figure 1. Distribution of respondents who know and do not know green hotels

Tourists aged 18–25 and over 40 are more likely to know about green hotels and understand what the underlying principles mean. The high, roughly 60 percent share among younger respondents indicates that generations Y and Z already think in a much more environmentally conscious way than older age groups (Figure 2).

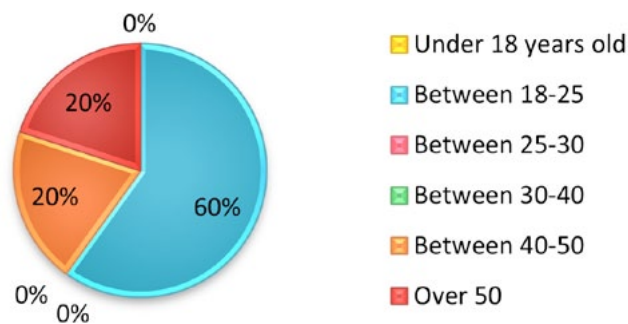


Figure 2. Age distribution of respondents who know at least one green hotel

When asked why they choose nonenvironmentally friendly accommodation, visitors to Budapest most often cited the best price–value ratio. It was striking that around 90 percent of respondents regarded the appearance of green hotels as mainly a marketing ploy (Figure 3).

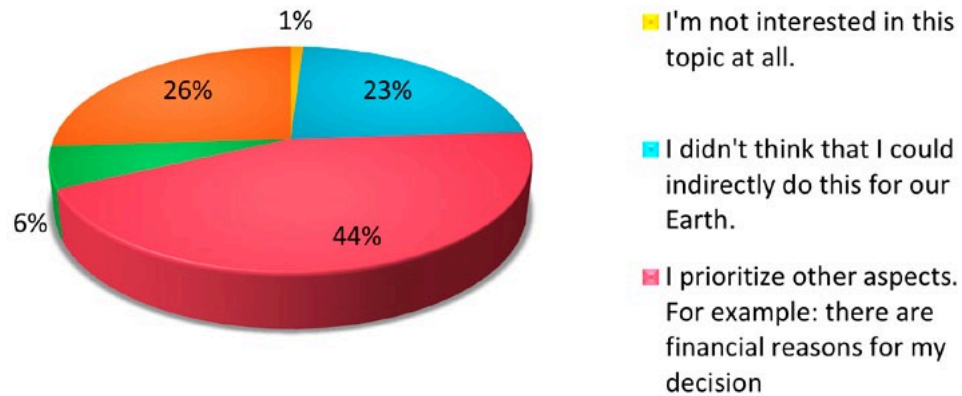


Figure 3. Reasons given by respondents for not considering environmental friendliness when choosing accommodation

3.The role of ecolabels in green procurement

The Green Hotel label is an ecolabel that supports the development of “responsible hotels, responsible tourism”. The implementation of environmental measures can be facilitated by various environmental management tools such as environmental management systems, ecolabels and the purchase of environmentally friendly products. The Environmental Management System (EMS) was developed to improve companies’ market competitiveness and is based on the ISO 14000 family of standards.

In the European Union, in addition to the ISO 14000 standards, the EMAS regulation has been in force since 1993 as the environmental management and audit scheme for member states. EMAS (EcoManagement and Audit Scheme) is known as an environmental management and certification system whose aim is to support the assessment and improvement of environmental performance and to inform the public. It is a voluntary EUwide system based on fullscale environmental assessments and impact evaluations, requiring continuous improvement and the prevention of environmental stress. EMAS is an EU regulation, directly applicable in all member states, and is built on principles such as pollution prevention, compliance with environmental legislation and continuous improvement of environmental performance.

In Hungary, EMAS is applied according to Government Decree 74/2003 (V. 28.), as amended several times. Under this legislation, the National Inspectorate for Environmental Protection, Nature Conservation and Water Management registers, supervises, suspends and, where necessary, cancels organisations in cooperation with the local environmental inspectorate. In practice, this certification is primarily recommended for companies whose parent company is located in EU member states.

The Hungarian ecolabel for products and services was introduced in 1993 to support environmental protection. The “Don’t Disturb” programme package mentioned earlier included detailed aspects of energy and water conservation, waste management, reduction, recycling and guest information, thereby helping hotels to set up their own environmental teams. In the same year, the Ministry of Environment and Regional Development established the Environmentally Friendly Product Public Benefit Company to coordinate and operate a national certification system. Its aim was to strengthen environmental responsibility, inform consumers about certified products and encourage distributors to purchase environmentally friendly goods.

This qualification and certification system made it possible to avoid self-certification, meaning that manufacturers and distributors could no longer simply label their products as environmentally friendly without independent verification. The legal basis of the system is laid down in national regulations, and the Ministry of Environment and Water, assisted by the Environmentally Friendly Product Nonprofit Ltd., performs certification and other tasks related to the use of the trademark. The ecolabel can be awarded through a tender for almost any product or service, apart from food, drink and medicines.

Use of the label can bring many advantages: environmentally friendly technologies can reduce ownership costs, cause less environmental damage and increase the market turnover of products bearing the distinctive mark. According to surveys, in 2017 a total of 53 companies held the Environmentally Friendly Product certification for 349 products. Ecolabels encourage entrepreneurs to pay greater attention to environmental, social, cultural and economic sustainability requirements and to behave responsibly towards their environment. They distinguish products and services that meet environmental, social and economic standards at a higher level than required by law, enable consumers to choose certified products consciously and can provide a competitive advantage to companies that produce and sell them.

4. Green purchases in hotels

Ecolabels are particularly important from the perspective of green procurement. Within the Accor hotel group, purchasing is organised centrally, so individual hotels do not need to handle this separately. During central procurement, environmental certificates are requested for all goods, meaning that the group works only with environmentally friendly products; for green purchasing, the hotel company also prefers local producers, as set out in the Planet 21 programme.

The Mercure hotel in Budapest, part of the chain, uses environmentally friendly products in its daily operations, not only for cleaning but also for office supplies. The general manager highlighted the importance of a “green office” and pays special attention to this. Offices are decorated with various plants that help bind harmful

substances, improve air humidity and positively influence employees' wellbeing and mood. To reduce carbondioxide emissions from office equipment, devices such as computers and printers are switched off when not in use.

As a result of hotel operations, a total of about 216,290 kg of carbon dioxide is emitted into the air annually, roughly half of which comes from electrical equipment. Rooms incorporate ecodesign elements and environmentally friendly fittings; carpets are flameresistant and contain a 70:30 cotton blend, and rooms are furnished with wooden furniture.

Large international hotel chains seek to implement CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) objectives through projects integrated into their brand standards. Environmental and climate protection are only one part of this; the chains' commitments also address issues such as condemning child exploitation, cooperating with local communities and avoiding overfished species in hotel restaurants. Accor's Planet 21 programme and IHG's Green Engage system have both become recognised corporate trademarks in this field.

For example, Novotel hotels use beds made from FSCcertified wood and bed linen derived from recycled plastic bottles; cleaning products and bathroom soaps are also sourced from environmentally friendly suppliers. IHG's Green Engage programme is divided into four levels. The first level, mandatory for all 5,500 hotels in the group, involves planning energyefficiency efforts such as monitoring energy costs and installing energysaving lighting. Hotels that reach the second level begin to see the benefits of sustainability and, for example, incorporate sustainable procurement into their daily processes. At the third level, sustainable building management and energy management are required, while levelfour hotels have managed to reduce their energy consumption by around 25 percent through modern, carefully planned measures.

The programme includes a webbased platform where hotels can monitor and report their energy, water and waste, calculate their carbon footprint, access recommendations for becoming "greener", evaluate return on investment and involve guests in achieving sustainability goals.

Accor group efforts focus on using healthy, highquality ingredients from local producers in restaurants and on reducing food waste. Planet 21 promotes ecofriendly products; by 2015, some 85 percent of Accor hotels were using environmentally friendly products, including green cleaning agents, wall paints and flooring, while also seeking to reduce water consumption. According to surveys, an average Accor hotel uses around 15,000 cubic metres of water per year, 86 percent of which is consumed in the kitchen. Compared with 2011, Accor hotels reduced water use by about 15 percent by 2015. In 2015, 91 percent of hotels collected and recycled batteries and fluorescent lamps, 73 percent collected and recycled paper and cardboard, and overall 85 percent recycled their own waste.

Through the “Plant for the Planet” initiative, Accor has committed to a largescale reforestation project. The basic principle is that guests who agree to reuse towels help save half of the associated washing costs, and the money saved is invested in planting saplings. The campaign is summed up by the rule “five reused towels = one tree”. In 2015, 60 percent of hotels participated in this reforestation project, and Accor has planted around two million tree seedlings with support from the United Nations.

5. Return on green investment

Mercure’s green investment project began on 22 September 2014, and the necessary technology was installed in a little over two months; from 1 December of that year the hotel was able to use its newly installed renewableenergy systems. An important factor in the decision was that the project received support under the New Széchenyi Plan, with 50 percent of the investment cost covered by a nonrefundable grant and the remaining 50 percent financed from own resources.

The investment comprised eight solar collectors with a total surface area of 20.5 m² and two 720litre storage tanks, as well as a 160 kW pellet boiler and a 5,000litre buffer tank.

Investment costs were as follows:

Installation of solarcollector system: HUF 5,076,860

Installation of biomassbased heating: HUF 26,173,700

Total investment cost: HUF 31,558,560

The annual capacity of the solar collectors is 16,350 kWh, sufficient to produce around 350,000 litres of domestic hot water. The hotel’s annual energy demand for hotwater production is around 25,550 kWh, corresponding to approximately 547,000 litres of hot water. From the ratio of the annual energy produced by the solar collectors to the total demand it can be calculated that the collectors cover about 64 percent of the domestic hotwater requirement. Using previous years’ data, the hotel’s annual electricity consumption is 149,254 kWh, so the solar collectors produce close to 11 percent of total electricity use.

The pellet boiler was specifically chosen to cover the entire heating demand of the hotel. As a result, heating energy is now supplied entirely from renewable sources and the boiler can generate 100 percent of the heat required, allowing the hotel to eliminate districtheating fees. Annual heating demand is about 740,000 MJ. Dividing this value by the calorific value of the pellets (18 MJ/kg) shows that roughly 41,111 kg of pellets are needed per year; at a net price of HUF 40 per kilogram, this corresponds to material costs of HUF 1,644,444 per year.

The savings from the renewableenergy systems are as follows. For the solar collectors, electricity costs without the system would be 149,254 kWh multiplied by the unit price (HUF 35.125/kWh), i.e. HUF 5,242,547. With the collectors, 16,350 kWh

of “free” energy is produced annually; subtracting this from total consumption and multiplying by the unit price gives a reduced electricity bill of HUF 4,668,183, so the annual saving amounts to HUF 574,364.

For heating, the hotel previously paid an annual basic district heating fee of HUF 1,232,961 and a heat energy charge of HUF 2,557,440, totalling HUF 3,790,401. If the pellet costs are subtracted from this amount, the saving is HUF 2,145,957 per year.

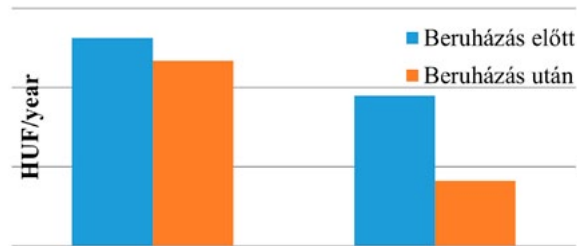


Figure 4. Energy costs before and after the investment (own compilation)

It is clear from the figure that a substantial cost reduction was achieved, particularly in heating: electricity costs fell by about 11 percent and heating costs by nearly 57 percent, yielding an overall reduction of more than 30 percent in total energy expenses.

Using static payback, the return period is calculated as investment cost divided by annual savings. The results are shown below.

Table 1. Payback of investments (own compilation)

	Solar collector	Pellet boiler
Investment (HUF)	5 076 860	26 173 700
Savings (HUF/year)	574 364	2 145 957
Static return (year)	8,84	12,19

The solar collector system therefore pays for itself in roughly 8 years and 10 months, while the biomass heating system has a payback time of about 12 years and 3 months. Considering that 50 percent of the investment cost was covered by subsidies, the effective payback period is even more favourable and may be roughly half these values.

In an interview, the general manager stated that they were fully satisfied with the performance of the new equipment and the scale of the energy cost reduction. No unexpected problems or extra costs arose during installation or operation, and the technologies did not generate additional expenses in other areas of the hotel; the machines require no special maintenance and no extra staff. Before the investment, the building's energy rating already exceeded basic requirements (“B”), and after implementation it improved to “A+”.

6. Green public procurement

Point 6 of the National Cooperation Programme, published on 22 May 2010, defines green public procurement as taking environmental aspects into account when purchasing products, services and construction works. It envisages a green public procurement system that favours domestic enterprises and a series of state and community measures that put society and the economy on a sustainable development path while integrating environmental aspects into national development policy.

In October 2010 a call was launched under the New Hungary Development Plan (KEOP) for a complex promotional campaign to increase awareness and recognition of the Hungarian Environmentally Friendly Product and EU ecolabel systems. In connection with this, the Environmentally Friendly Product Nonprofit Ltd. published guidance on environmental labelling and green public procurement.

The National Action Plan for green public procurement began by “greening” centralised public tenders; environmental aspects are then gradually introduced into all public procurements. Legislation on centralised public procurement makes it possible to require that designated product categories be procured in an environmentally friendly manner so that organisations subject to, or voluntarily joining, centralised procedures can enforce environmental considerations when purchasing these products.

In addition to regulating mandatory cases and preparing the materials needed for implementation, the Action Plan places great emphasis on ensuring the proper flow of information through the creation of a knowledge base, training of specialists and preparation of practical guidance. Its mediumterm objective – aligned with EU goals – was that by 2011, at least 50 percent of public procurement should be carried out as green public procurement.

In practice, roughly half of potential green investments in the Budapest hotel sector are not taken up at all. No hotel indicated that it fully applies environmental aspects in public procurement, although managers of newly built hotels gave relatively good ratings regarding their own situation (Figure 5).

Mennyire tekinthet? közbeszerzésünk „zöldnek”, azaz pl. a részszerzőpontok kialakításánál Ön szerint mennyiben veszik figyelembe az ajánlatkérők a környezetvédelmi szempontokat? Pontozza 1-5-ig terjedő skálán! (1- egyáltalán nem érvényesül; 5- teljes mértékben figyelembe veszik)

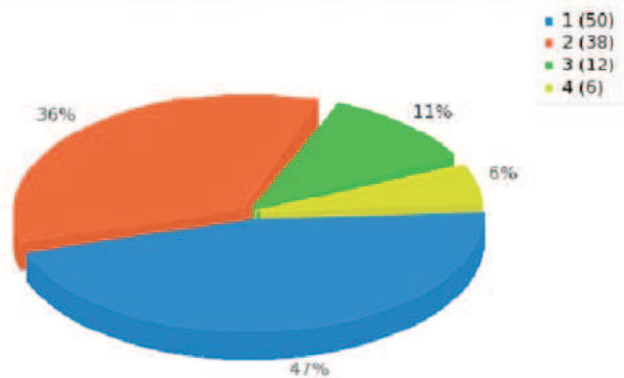


Figure 5. Situation of Hungarian green public procurement in the hotel industry

When asked why they did not participate in state tenders, most hotel managers replied that they had never heard of such opportunities. In terms of green procurement, the most important investment areas identified were energysaving light bulbs, energyefficient boilers, thermalinsulation systems and renewableenergy sources.

The case demonstrates that sustainable hotel management extends beyond individual environmental measures and requires the integration of energy and water efficiency, waste reduction, responsible procurement, employee engagement and guest communication into everyday operations. Green investments can generate both environmental and economic benefits, particularly when their impacts are systematically monitored and evaluated. At the same time, sustainability claims must be supported by credible certification, transparent data and measurable performance in order to avoid perceptions of greenwashing. Contemporary hotel sustainability therefore increasingly requires a broader ESG-oriented approach that combines environmental responsibility with social and managerial considerations.

22. CASE STUDY: COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT AT THE INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL

1. Introduction

If a guest's problem remains beneath the surface, it is neither communicated nor resolved. This generates further negative feelings, because the guest receives no compensation and feels that nothing would change even if the issue were raised. A seemingly easier solution is to stay silent and simply forget about the experience. Next time, however, the guest will choose another hotel in the hope of avoiding unpleasant situations.

From the hotel's perspective, a better outcome would be to know about the problem, because if it is not addressed, it cannot be prevented in future. In the worst case, no one talks about a problem that has existed for a long time, as if it did not exist at all, while guests continue to experience it.

2. The InterContinental's Complaint Management Training Guide

"Promises Kept" states:

96% of satisfied guests never visit the hotel with the intention of reporting a pleasant stay.

For every guest who actually complains, there are around twentyfive others who do not bother to do so; at least six of these twentysix guests do not return.

54–70% of guests who complain return if their problem is solved; the faster the solution, the higher the return rate – in some cases up to 95%.

Based on guestsurvey responses, the most important factor for guests is sensitivity to their needs.

9% of guests are lost due to competition and 14% due to dissatisfaction with the product.

67% of guests are lost because of poor service and an indifferent attitude on the part of staff.

Profit chain

Because the topic of this research relates to human behaviour, it is important to show what staff behaviour depends on and how it contributes to the profit and development of a fivestar hotel. The ServiceProfit Chain diagram in the Guest Courtesy and "At Your Side" training materials illustrates this relationship.

It makes a great difference how management approaches staff, specific situations and problems. Management must ensure that employees enjoy working at the hotel. Many tools can support this: teambuilding events, training that helps professional development, rewards, gifts and benefits all contribute to staff doing their work with maximum dedication. Employees' workplace experience determines how satisfied they are with the place where they spend eight hours a day, five days a week; they should not feel that their work is undervalued.

If the hotel fails to provide adequate working conditions, employees' behaviour will change. Attitudes to work are different when, for example, staff know they receive at least one hot meal per day and have appropriate sanitary facilities. If these conditions are lacking or other deficiencies arise, work will be done with less enthusiasm, less thoroughly or even carelessly. Without proper motivation to perform at their best, the guest will notice. A receptionist who does not feel comfortable will not smile naturally, will not speak kindly and will not make the guest feel special.

Guests are much more satisfied with hotel services if all attention is focused on them, all staff members approach them politely and kindly and are ready to help in case of problems. A guest will return if they felt completely comfortable, if their needs were met and they did not have negative experiences. They will become loyal to the brand, trusting that they will have a good experience on every stay – and this loyalty ultimately leads the hotel to profit.

3. The customer is right

The principle that “the customer is always right” has been known since the early 1900s, associated with Henry Gordon Selfridge. All hotel employees work to meet guests' needs. Expectations are fully met if guests feel satisfied during their stay – before, during and after. If, for any reason, a guest feels that they have not received the expected service, they will be dissatisfied and may complain.

Every person is different: everyone has their own personality, experiences, background, feelings and value system, and thus different expectations. At first glance, staff cannot know each guest's needs and goals during their stay. When something is not to the guest's liking, it is not the staff member's role to correct or confront them or, in the worst case, get into an argument. Of course, the cause of the problem must always be clarified and its source and outcome checked; if the problem is real, it should be resolved as soon as possible.

Sometimes a guest complains about a service, but an internal check shows that everything is functioning properly and in line with hotel standards. The guest may still feel dissatisfied and believe they deserve more. In such cases, staff can offer compensation depending on the severity of the issue, for example a personalised amenity in the room or dinner at the hotel's expense. For the guest, the exact form of compensa-

tion is less important than the fact that staff show understanding and do their best to meet expectations.

4. Complaint handling process

Attentiveness and care are essential. The first step in complaint handling is to identify the problem. As mentioned earlier, most guests do not actively ask for help when something goes wrong, so hotel staff must pay attention to details and nonverbal signals such as facial expressions, eye contact, tone of voice, posture, clothing and gestures. A sad, frustrated or disappointed expression clearly indicates that something is wrong.

A guest who is angry or nervous may drum their fingers, have dilated pupils, blink frequently, keep their lips tightly closed or bite them, speak louder or faster than usual. If staff notice such signs, they should approach the guest according to the situation. A simple question like “Can I help you with anything?” is a good starting point.

To encourage the guest to open up, a more personal introduction may help: “Good afternoon, may I help you with something? My name is Katalin, I work in this department. If you need anything, I will be more than happy to assist you.”

Providing a name and role builds trust and gives the guest a sense of security. Mistrust is also indicated when guests give short, evasive answers or make hints without clearly stating the problem.

The second step in problem management is listening. Staff must listen carefully to the guest’s account of the situation. Active listening means much more than hearing the words: every detail should be followed closely, and brief notes can be taken – with an explanation to the guest – to help in solving the problem later. Staff should be able to summarise and reflect back what has been said, in their own words and including both content and emotion. This confirms that they have understood correctly and helps avoid misunderstandings.

When guests feel that staff genuinely care about their situation and want to help, they are more likely to clarify and expand on their thoughts. Reframing and reflecting do not mean that staff agree with everything said; rather, these techniques help them understand the guest’s perspective. Summarising the main points at the end of the conversation shows that the message has been understood and provides an opportunity to steer the discussion to new areas or bring it to a close.

The goal is always understanding. Staff should maintain eye contact, avoiding distractions, and turn their body, arms and feet towards the guest. Other tasks should be put aside during such a conversation; continuing to work while speaking gives the impression of inattention. It is also best to avoid holding such discussions in crowded areas, where noise and other people can disrupt communication; moving to a quieter,

more private location is advisable.

The next step is to show the guest that their problem is understood. Compassion here means empathy: imagining oneself in the guest's situation without losing one's own perspective. It requires full focus on the other person, without taking on their feelings as one's own.

Inappropriate reactions include:

trying to "fix" immediately ("Now what you need to do is...")
giving direct advice ("I think you should...")
asking intrusive questions ("How exactly did this happen?")
explaining away the situation ("He only said that because...")
correcting the guest ("It didn't happen like that.")
moralising ("You can learn from this.")
consoling in a superficial way ("It wasn't your fault.")
blaming a third party ("That rude person should never have done this to you.")
competing with one's own story ("Then listen to this, you've never heard anything like it...")
chatting about oneself ("This reminds me of when...")
judging ("If you hadn't been so rude...")
pitying ("Oh, you poor thing, it must have been terrible.")

After demonstrating understanding, a brief apology should follow. Staff must apologise for the inconvenience in every case, regardless of whether the hotel was directly at fault. Even if a technical fault beyond staff control caused the issue, it is still necessary to express regret.

Finally comes implementation of the solution. The faster the action, the more satisfied the guest will be. Staff can offer the guest a choice between possible solutions so that the guest feels involved in the decision and their expectations are more likely to be met. Agreement should be reached by asking followup questions and adjusting options according to the guest's reactions. All colleagues involved in the matter should be informed, and help can be requested from other departments to speed up the process.

If the problem cannot be resolved immediately or fully, fair compensation should be offered. The level of compensation depends on the hotel's responsibility and the extent of the negative impact on the guest. Sometimes a serious staff mistake goes unnoticed by the guest and has little effect on their stay; in other cases, a small error causes great discomfort. Each situation is unique, and the guest's attitude and reaction largely determine the appropriate level of compensation.

If immediate action is not possible, the guest should be informed about the next steps: who will be contacted, which departments or managers will be involved and when an update can be expected. If more time is needed than originally stated, the guest

must not be left waiting; they should be proactively informed of the delay. Finally, it is important to check whether the proposed solution is satisfactory for the guest.

5. Research

Interviews are a frequently used method of primary research and information gathering. They consist of preprepared questions and aim to explore personal, confidential inner feelings and thoughts. For this reason, a relationship of trust between interviewer and interviewee is essential. In this study, interviewees were colleagues with an existing workplace relationship, who trusted the interviewer and were willing to talk about their experiences.

The aim was to learn about people's own experiences, feelings and opinions, which were needed for the research. Therefore, the interviewees were colleagues working at the InterContinental with several years of hotel experience: the housekeeping dispatcher, floor housekeepers and room attendants.

Possible formats include:

personal interviews – direct, faceto face conversations where eye contact and body language provide additional information

telephone interviews – realtime discussions without direct visual contact, typically with shorter questions

computermediated interviews – conducted via email, with no realtime interaction, saving time and eliminating the need to transcribe responses

From a structural standpoint, interviews can be:

fully structured – essentially written questionnaires read aloud

semistructured – based on an interview guide listing topics and questions, which can be reworded, supplemented or omitted, creating an open atmosphere

narrative – where the interviewer has only a starting topic and questions follow the respondent's narrative.

The advantage of interviews as a socialscience method is that certain phenomena and relationships can be explored more deeply and comprehensively through personal experiences and feelings. Their disadvantage is the potential influence of the interviewer and the lower reliability due to subjectivity.

Results

The study's interviews were conducted with colleagues from the InterContinental's housekeeping department: the dispatcher, floor housekeepers and maids. The interview consisted of five questions focusing on communication with guests and problemsolving during daily work. Semistructured, individual interviews were used, both in person and via email, allowing busy colleagues to respond calmly and without time pressure.

The questions were:

How long have you been working in the hotel industry? How experienced do you feel in your current job?

How often and in what form do you communicate with guests? What do you need to pay attention to when communicating with them?

Has a guest ever come to you with a complaint that you had to solve? What did you do?

What are the most common sources of problems?

How do you think these could be improved or prevented?

A room attendant's answers:

"I have been working at the hotel as a room attendant for five years. It took me about a year to learn everything properly. Since then, I know the hotel and the rooms inside out."

"I often meet guests in the corridors. I smile and greet them according to the time of day. When I need to take over an occupied room, sometimes the guest is inside. In that case, I apologise for disturbing them and ask if they are satisfied with the room. I always try to be polite and kind."

"Once there was a problem at checkin. The guest had requested a nonsmoking room but was assigned a room where people had smoked and the smell of tobacco was noticeable. He came to me, very upset, and said he would not stay in a smelly room. I listened patiently, apologised and escorted him to reception, where he was reassigned to a nonsmoking room."

"The most common problems are malfunctioning technical equipment such as safes that do not close, or missing items like towels, shower gel or tea. Guests also often ask where the restaurant or wellness area is."

"TVs, air conditioners and safes should be checked and replaced more often. More room and bathroom amenities should be stocked. When guests ask where to find the restaurant, I explain the way and accompany them if they wish."

The responses and the interviewer's own experience make it clear that becoming an accomplished hotel professional requires more than textbooks and good grades; hands-on experience is essential, especially for understanding guests, their behaviour and needs. Each department and position has different daily tasks, but one common goal: maximising guest satisfaction.

Housekeeping staff communicate less with guests than frontoffice employees, yet they must show the same attentiveness, kindness and courtesy. In corridors and rooms, body language is important: correct posture, friendly facial expressions and a genuine smile. After greeting, staff should pay attention to the guest's nonverbal cues to see whether there are questions or problems.

When entering rooms, great care is needed not to disturb the guest's peace; door signs help guests communicate their preferences. If the guest allows entry, they have the opportunity to voice complaints or problems, and staff should then follow the established problemmanagement rules. Technical issues are often reported in these situations; both maids and housekeepers must inform guests whom they will contact and what steps will be taken to resolve the issue. With appropriate communication and adherence to protocol, staff can improve problematic situations and prevent them from escalating.

6. Summary

In conclusion, communication with guests plays a crucial role in ensuring that they are satisfied and happy. Guests feel content when they receive services that meet or exceed their expectations. Professional practice clearly shows that, with due attention, the specific features of verbal and nonverbal communication can be mastered, and that this knowledge improves problemsolving skills.

In hotels, both in general interactions and in complainthandling situations, following protocol rules is equally important, as this can positively influence guests' opinions of the property.

23. PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT AND PROTOCOL STANDARDS AT INTERCONTINENTAL HOTELS GROUP

1. Introduction

Hotel etiquette is a set of rules for staying in a hotel, covering the correct way to book, check in and check out, as well as appropriate behaviour. A general requirement is that the guest should feel attention, willingness to serve, interest, care and appreciation for choosing the hotel. Only a small part of communication is verbal; in addition to spoken words, guests receive information from tone of voice, pitch and volume, as well as nonverbal signals. Surprise, boredom or joy can often be read clearly from gestures, posture and facial expressions. Behaviour is therefore both the conscious management of communication and the conduct displayed in relationships.

The appearance and behaviour of employees are not private matters but fundamental professional requirements. They influence the guest's impressions in a positive or negative direction, and guests share their opinions with many people. Negative impressions spread quickly and may deter a significant number of potential guests from the hotel.

Hotel etiquette, decorum, protocol basics

Greeting and address

According to hotel etiquette, staff should greet whenever they enter or when a guest approaches. In general, the employee closest to the guest greets them according to the time of day, preferably in the guest's own language, with kindness, a smile and eye contact. This is not only a polite gesture but also a way of acknowledging the guest's presence.

Appearance

Guests' first impressions are strongly influenced by employees' appearance. This applies both to personal hygiene and to clothing. A neat, clean, wellgroomed look is expected; in most hotels, staff wear uniform outfits that create a good impression. In addition to the uniform, employees take care of their shoes, which must be comfortable yet elegant and in good condition. Name badges are often required so that a more personal and trusting relationship can be established between employees and guests.

Posture

Staff should exude confidence and professionalism while avoiding attitudes that are too rigid or too relaxed. Leaning on counters or walls, shrugging shoulders or keeping hands in pockets is not permitted, as these signals convey disinterest.

Other conduct

Polite speech and disciplined behaviour are important. Staff must speak clearly and articulately, and their messages should always be concise and to the point. Guests appreciate being addressed by name; where this is not possible, polite forms of address such as “sir” or “madam” are appropriate. Hotel employees should not initiate a handshake, but if a guest offers their hand, it would be disrespectful to refuse it. Staff may not smoke in guest areas, especially at the reception desk, and should cover their mouth with a clean handkerchief and turn away from guests when yawning or sneezing.

Telephone use

Employees may not make private calls on telephones located in guest areas. Work calls should be answered as quickly as possible – ideally by the third ring – followed by an appropriate greeting that identifies the hotel and the department. If a call is accidentally disconnected, the person who initiated the call should attempt to reconnect.

2. Complaints handling at the hotel

Guests are of crucial importance in a hotel’s life, as the hotel’s income is derived from them. The primary interest of any hotel is guest satisfaction: the more guests stay and use services, the higher the revenue. Satisfied guests are happy to return to the same hotel or others in the chain and may become regulars; if they share positive experiences with friends and acquaintances, the hotel benefits from positive word-of-mouth.

A dissatisfied guest who finds something objectionable can act in two ways:

- a) Not communicating the objection to staff: in this case, the complaint remains unknown within the hotel. The guest leaves dissatisfied, does not book again (possibly avoiding the entire chain) and shares negative experiences with others, generating negative word-of-mouth.
- b) Making a complaint at the hotel: complaints should always be treated positively, because they prevent the previous scenario and draw attention to potential errors. The way staff handle the complaint can significantly influence the guest’s feelings and opinion.

Guest complaint

When a guest complains, it is the duty of the receptionist or concierge to respond or, if they cannot solve the problem alone, to seek help from a supervisor. Assistance should be provided as quickly as possible, as guest satisfaction is essential.

If the hotel's and the guest's views differ regarding the complaint, the following options are available:

preparing a written record of the complaint
turning to a Conciliation Board
writing in the “Buyers’ Book” (complaints book)
contacting the National Consumer Protection Authority for advice and information
as a last resort, taking the matter to court

Guest satisfaction

Although legal steps are possible in the case of an unsatisfied guest, it is always best to resolve the problem so that the guest leaves satisfied. Staff in positions where communication with guests is central must be particularly competent, as they handle the widest variety of guest types. Frontoffice staff encounter guest complaints most frequently, since they have the most contact with guests and are the first point of reference. The Front Office Manager leads the reception and can be contacted for assistance at any time.

Over the years, hotels have recognised that it is important not only to handle complaints quickly and accurately but also with courtesy, and therefore make use of multiple tools:

Guest satisfaction questionnaire

Typically compiled by the marketing department and later analysed, the questionnaire is placed in guest areas. Reception staff are responsible for drawing guests’ attention to it, usually at the end of their stay. The form is concise and to the point and contains only a limited number of questions.

Guest book

Often located in the lobby, the guest book allows guests to express their opinions freely in writing.

Guest page on the hotel website

The hotel’s website should allow guests to share opinions and experiences publicly. Positive comments can inspire confidence in potential guests and encourage them to book; photos can also be uploaded and are particularly eye-catching.

Guest relations position

Some highercategory hotels employ a guest relations manager. Their role is to maintain contact with guests, especially in person, provide useful information and help with complaint handling.

Mystery shopping

Highercategory hotels may also use mystery shopping. In this case, an external company is commissioned to send an undercover guest who stays at the hotel incognito. Their task is to evaluate the hotel services and staff performance from a guest’s perspective and to report their observations to the client, providing valuable insights into hotel operations.

3. Appearance and dress code at the InterContinental Budapest Hotel

“The personal appearance of each employee is one of the defining elements of promoting InterContinental hotel standards.” The hotel expects everyone to dress appropriately during working hours and to feel comfortable at work. Personal appearance is part of nonverbal communication and reflects the quality of service. When guests enter and see elegant, sophisticated staff in uniform, they receive a positive first impression.

Shoes

Shoes must be black or a uniform colour, clean, undamaged and in good condition. For women, heels should not exceed 5 cm and shoes must be closed at the front and fully or partly at the back. Heel height must match the business environment and safety standards; lower heels are recommended for employees who stand all day. Boots, sandals, slippers, sports shoes and open-toed shoes are not permitted in guest areas. Heavy sports socks are also prohibited. Safety shoes are mandatory in designated departments; open-toed footwear is allowed only in kitchen areas if required by local standards.

Name badge

The name badge must be worn on the upper left part of the uniform during working hours.

Tattoos

Tattoos must be covered and not visible to guests.

Hairstyle

Hairstyles should reflect a professional business appearance. Extreme styles, lengths or colours – such as multicoloured hair or partly shaved heads – are not allowed. If hair is dyed, the colour should be natural and conservative. Long hair must not cover the face and should be tied or pinned up. Employees working in F&B may not have hair below the collar line or falling into the face and must wear protective caps when handling food.

For men: hair must be neat and combed, not extending below the collar line or falling over the face. Neatly trimmed moustaches are allowed; beards are generally not permitted unless expressly authorised. Without a moustache or beard, employees must shave daily. Sideburns must not extend below the earlobe and should be in a traditional style. Facial hair is not allowed for employees serving food and drinks.

For women: hair must be neat and combed. Hair accessories such as clips and bands must be simple, traditional and not overly conspicuous. Excessive decoration is not permitted; accessories should be compact and discreet.

Makeup and cosmetics

For men: makeup and nail polish are not permitted; nails must be clean, short and wellgroomed.

For women: makeup should be natural, in traditional colours and moderate in quantity. False eyelashes are not allowed. All cosmetics must be elegant, discreet and suitable for a business environment; bold colours and excessive use of eye shadow, lipstick or foundation are not accepted. Nails must be clean, wellgroomed and of appropriate length. In F&B departments, nail polish is not allowed; in other departments, discreet, solid colours may be used, but polish must not be chipped or decorated with patterns or stones.

Jewellery

Only modest, traditional fashion jewellery is allowed. Women may wear earrings only in the ear lobes; earrings must be simple and appropriate for a professional business environment. Large, dangling earrings are not permitted; a maximum of two earrings may be worn in each lobe, one of which should be a stud. Men may not wear necklaces or earrings. No other visible body jewellery may be worn, including tongue piercings; removable piercings must be taken out during working hours.

Badges

Pins, badges or other items that are inconsistent with a professional appearance or may offend guests or colleagues may not be worn at work.

Rings, watches, bracelets

For hygiene and safety reasons, rings, bracelets and watches must not be worn in jobs involving food preparation or operation of machinery and electrical equipment. A maximum of two rings may be worn per hand, in traditional styles. Ankle chains are not permitted.

Caps

In designated departments, staff must wear protective caps in addition to the uniform. Any other headwear may be worn only with written permission from the Hotel Director and the Director of Human Resources.

Eyeglasses

Eyeglasses and sunglasses with conspicuous frames or bright colours are not allowed. Sunglasses and tinted glasses may not be worn indoors, except with special permission – for example, at outdoor events or for medical reasons. Use of sunglasses must be authorised by the department head and is limited to justified cases.

Personal hygiene

Particular attention must be paid to daily personal hygiene. Staff should keep breath fresheners at hand if needed; chewing gum is not allowed while on duty. Employees handling food and drink must wash their hands whenever they return to the work area, especially after using the restroom, but also in other situations. Discreet cologne and perfume are allowed, but strong, overpowering scents should be avoided.

Dress code

Uniformed employees

Department managers provide detailed information about uniform components, including items supplied by the hotel and those staff must provide themselves. Uniforms must be worn as intended: for example, shirt sleeves may not be rolled up and buttons must be fastened appropriately. Belts should be worn at the waist or between waist and hips, not below, and underwear must never be visible. Staff are responsible for keeping uniforms clean and in good condition and for having suitable uniforms for each working day. Work clothes may not be replaced with other clothing. If a uniform does not meet InterContinental Hotels Group appearance standards, the employee may be sent home to change and must make up lost working hours.

The only permitted decoration on the uniform is the name badge on the left side or other hotelapproved pins. If shirts are worn tucked in, belts must be worn. Appropriate socks must always be worn: for women, black or skincoloured tights without patterns; for men, black socks. No items should hang out of pockets, as this detracts from the professional appearance. In case of termination of employment, uniforms must be returned at checkout.

Nonuniformed employees

Clothing of nonuniformed employees must also follow a professional business style.

For men: white or pastel shirts, ties and suits are appropriate. Employees not working in operational areas may wear trousers with a matching sports jacket.

For women: dresses or business suits, skirts or trousers with matching blouses and jackets. Jackets or suit tops must be worn in guest areas. Sleeveless tops may not be worn without a jacket. Loose jeans, casual or khakistyle trousers and similar items are not considered business attire. Trousers should fit well and cover the upper part of the shoe without being so long as to interfere with walking. Dresses and skirts must not be more than 7 cm above the knee; tights or stockings must always be worn. Long skirts are allowed but may not reach below the ankles.

Business wear does not include shorts, Bermuda shorts, flared skirts, extreme mini-skirts, bootcut trousers, jeans, leather, velvet, fur, crocheted and other nonbusiness materials, or leisure and evening wear with cutouts, excessively short lengths, exposed midriffs or hips, sleeveless tops or very tight clothing. Appropriate hosiery must be worn at all times.

Professional protocol in hospitality contributes to a consistent guest experience by establishing clear expectations for employee communication, conduct and appearance. The InterContinental case demonstrates how brand standards can translate service values into everyday behavioural guidelines. However, such standards should be understood as context-specific and periodically reviewed to reflect changing guest expectations, corporate culture, legal requirements and contemporary principles of professional inclusion. Effective hotel protocol is therefore not merely a set of formal rules, but a practical framework for supporting service consistency, trust and brand identity.

24. DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATION SITUATIONS IN THE 22 BOUTIQUE HOTEL

1. Introduction

Communication is key in the hotel industry, so connecting with guests is extremely important for developing and strengthening the hotel brand. Properly designed communication strategies are essential for conveying guest experiences, because positive feedback and attentive listening to wishes and needs are crucial for building loyalty to the hotel. Creating loyalty helps increase bookings and, consequently, business and hotel revenue.

Hotel staff must develop personalised communication with guests to create positive customer experiences. Guests expect unique experiences, fast and easy booking and a sense of security; modern hotel technology supports both business operations and daily activities.

This is why communication is so important in the hotel sector. Effective communication begins with listening to colleagues' opinions and ideas. Hotel staff are in direct contact with guests and can provide feedback that helps improve services. When employees receive constructive feedback from superiors and their views are respected, they feel more engaged, productive and valued.

Staff must also be able to communicate effectively with guests, especially when handling complaints, which should be resolved calmly and professionally. Body language reflects how employees relate to guests; staff should be friendly and smiling, signalling that guest requests are fully heard. Training is therefore vital for developing communication skills.

Since the goal is to adapt as fully as possible to the guest, hotel staff must do everything they can to understand needs and obtain the necessary information even before arrival. Different guest types require different information. For example, business travellers who spend most of their time in meetings can benefit from recommendations for local restaurants and cafés, making their stay easier. Advances in hotel technology have made accessing the information needed for good communication – and for avoiding negative experiences – much simpler.

Social networks are also useful tools for establishing closer, better communication. Through platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Messenger and other applications,

guests can access information more quickly. Authentic content and timely answers improve the guest experience. With the development of the internet and the rise of social media, people have shifted from traditional methods to more modern modes of communication. Instead of relying solely on phone and email, hotels increasingly need platforms to manage and exchange messages; automated messaging significantly shortens response times.

Given the large number of international guests who do not speak the local language, effective communication can be more challenging. It is the hotel's responsibility to ensure that booking engines and the hotel website are multilingual, helping to reduce guests' questions and concerns. Successful communication with guests directly supports longterm success: higher satisfaction and enjoyment lead to stronger business results and more bookings.

2. Types of hotel communication

Hotel communication can be classified in several ways:

- indirect (by phone, email)
- direct (face to face)
- oral (by phone, in person)
- written (email, postal letter)
- verbal (spoken words)
- nonverbal (body language, facial expressions, gestures)
- formal (businessstyle)
- informal (personal)
- vertical (guest at a higher hierarchical level)
- horizontal (equal level)
- realtime (facetoface, online chat)
- nonrealtime (post, SMS, email).

In most cases, communication between guest and hotel begins with the reservation and continues until departure – sometimes even after the stay. A hotel employee must communicate effectively in all situations, and strong presentation skills are important. With proper practice, even naturally talkative people can improve, but the ability to communicate clearly and politely is one of the most important expectations in this field. Staff must be familiar with the different communication types used in the hotel and with their specific content and form.

Oral communication

Oral communication happens quickly, leaving less time for reflection, but offering immediate answers. Facetoface communication allows instant information exchange, makes it easier to clarify, and provides direct responses to questions. It also offers

nonverbal feedback, enabling staff to interpret the guest's mood. First impressions matter greatly; they shape sympathy or antipathy, although these feelings can change over time.

Active listening is essential: staff must listen carefully to the guest's complaint and process what they hear in order to provide appropriate help. Telephone communication is a routine part of hotel life and enables quick responses and contact. A common risk is insufficient preparation; particular attention must be paid to tone and emphasis, as the voice is the only "visible" element for the caller.

Written communication

Before the guest's arrival, communication is primarily written. Written forms leave a record and allow information to be stored and archived. This type of communication is slower; the other party must be given time to respond, and both sides have more time to consider their wording.

Typical tools of written communication include:

email

SMS

website content and forms

fax

postal letters.

Body language and nonverbal communication

In communication, people use not only words but also nonverbal elements such as posture, gestures, facial expressions and tone of voice. These tools help convey messages more effectively, and when body language and verbal communication are consistent, staff appear more authentic. Nonverbal cues can make it easier to recognise and address a guest's emotional state, and thus to handle situations more sensitively.

3. Research

During the research, indepth interviews were conducted with three employees of the 22 Boutique Hotel: two from the front office and one from the restaurant. Including staff from several departments proved useful, as each area has different experiences and perspectives, making the interviews more varied and interesting.

How long have you been working at 22 Boutique Hotel?

All respondents had been working at the hotel for about five months, having joined shortly after its opening. Although their time at the company is relatively short, they answered the questions thoughtfully and, based on their experience so far, proved to be suitable interview subjects.

How do you find working with people? What positive and negative experiences have you had so far?

Frontoffice staff described working with people as constantly changing. There are

better and worse days; much depends on the period and on guests' moods, behaviour and the kind of relationship that develops during their stay.

The restaurant employee gave a similar answer but highlighted that most guests arrive in a positive mood or at least leave in better spirits after their meal. According to this interviewee, this is because guests eat in a cosy, attractive environment, and people are usually more relaxed and less problematic when they have eaten well. Of course, there are exceptions in both departments.

Has the emergence of the virus changed guests' attitudes and behaviour towards employees?

Based on the responses, the coronavirus outbreak has clearly changed guests' attitudes in a more negative or cautious direction. Many people are more distant and fearful of infection, leading to more negative feedback. Guests prefer card payments and seek minimal contact with hotel and restaurant staff, even though employees wear masks and follow health regulations.

Have there been situations where the guest was dissatisfied? How were they handled, and how often do guests tip when satisfied?

Frontoffice staff reported multiple cases of guest dissatisfaction. In many cases, the reason was understandable: for example, a receptionist forgot to hand over the air-conditioning remote control, which caused a problem later, or the television did not work properly. There were also situations where the guest requested a singlebed room in the reservation but demanded a doublebed room on arrival. Fortunately, these issues were resolved quickly and without major conflict.

The restaurant employee shared similar experiences. Guests sometimes complained about food they did not like or found too cold. These problems were usually resolved swiftly by replacing the dish or making adjustments. During the five-month period, there was only one guest with whom the conflict could not be resolved; this guest left upset after eating and paying.

Regarding tipping, all interviewees reported that some guests show their satisfaction by tipping, while others do not tip even if they are happy with the service. Tipping depends entirely on individual habits and culture.

How important is proper communication and behaviour towards guests? Does it affect guest satisfaction?

All respondents answered with an unambiguous "yes". The initial assumption of the research was that guests would rather stay in a smaller, lower-category property with friendly, attentive staff than in a more expensive, higher-category hotel with cold, distant service – because good staff behaviour can offset certain material shortcomings. Interviewees confirmed this and shared guest comments, such as how staff kindness and helpfulness during a problem made a strong positive impression. In another case, a guest loved the chef's cooking and developed a friendly relationship with the restaurant team as a returning guest.

What methods could make guests' stays even more memorable, and where do you see shortcomings in the hotel?

Responses were mixed, but several ideas emerged regarding what is important in hotel operations and what influences guests. Suggestions included improving staff's

professional knowledge and encouraging them to communicate more proactively with guests.

Another idea was to place a guest book at reception so that the hotel could receive more personal feedback. Interviewees also mentioned that online reviews on booking sites should be answered more regularly, as guests might otherwise feel that their comments are not taken into account.

The interviewbased research was considered useful, because it allowed the topic to be examined from multiple perspectives and gave insight into personal experiences and stories.

4. Summary

Based on interviews with employees of the 22 Boutique Hotel and personal experience, it can be concluded that much depends on staff attitudes. Employees can strongly influence guests' opinions of the accommodation, either positively or negatively, regardless of the hotel's physical appearance or technical features. In many cases, the hospitality of staff in a small, familyrun hotel is more attractive than the cool, distant behaviour sometimes found in modern chain hotels.

It is also important to employ welltrained and experienced professionals, as professional competence and correct communication with guests are essential to building a strong image. At the same time, success largely depends on the quality of hotel management.

A good hotel manager must combine several qualities:

Leadership skills

The manager must be able to shape and communicate the hotel's goals and strategy, and inspire and motivate the team to achieve shared objectives.

Business acumen

They must manage the hotel's finances and resources effectively and make sound business decisions.

Guest orientation

They must demonstrate and maintain a strong commitment to highquality services and guest experiences.

Flexibility and adaptability

They must respond flexibly to changing conditions and market trends, adjusting strategies when needed.

Communication skills

Excellent communication skills are needed to interact effectively with staff, guests and other stakeholders.

Hotel management is a diverse field involving many tasks and activities. A successful hotel manager must unite these qualities – leadership, business sense, guest focus, flexibility and strong communication – to manage and develop the hotel effectively.

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