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Doctoral School of Social and Human Sciences

Abstract
PhD Thesis

OPPORTUNITIES TO INCREASE THE ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE IN HOTEL BUSINESS

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CONTENTS

Chapter 1 Organizational Performance - An Evolutionary Concept

1.1 State of the art in the field of hotel business performance

Organizational performance is one of the most important variables and undoubtedly the most important indicator of an organization's success, regardless of the field of activity.

The importance of measuring performance results from its five essential attributes (Lohman et al., 2004):

➢ Monitoring: Measuring effective performance;

➢ Control: identification and attempt to reduce the difference between the planned and recorded levels of performance;

➢ Improvement: identifying opportunities to improve the current situation;

➢ Coordination: providing information for decision-making and facilitating internal and external communication;

➢ Motivation: encouraging continuous improvement of workplace behavior.

The literature on the particularities of the performance of hotel companies is relatively limited, focusing in particular on the implementation of measurement systems based on Balanced Scorecard methodology (Philips, 1999, Evans, 2005).

Performance in hotels is generated by different types of activities (accommodation services, time spent services and food services) and implicitly different cost structures and strategic guidelines (Harris and Mongiello, 2001).

Most of the studies on performance measurement in the hospitality industry are based on traditional financial indicators (Hoque K, 1999, Philips P., 1999, Anderson et al., 2000), as they characterize financial performance and its effects on global performance. The three indicators commonly used in the hotel economy (available room income, gross operating profit per available room and occupancy rate) were criticized by some specialists (Enz et al., 2001) because they are not suitable for benchmarking studies. Other studies focus on performance assessments based on indicators associated with accommodation operations (Wassenaar and Stafford, 1991) or revenue growth rate (Van Doren and Gustke, 2002). To overcome these problems, it is

recommended to use the Balanced Scorecard method in measuring hotel performance (Huckestein and Duboff, 1999, Banker et al., 2005).

Some of the authors refer to the Balanced Scorecard as a multidimensional measurement system or performance evaluation system, emphasizing the interdependencies of the perspectives involved in the concept. Other authors are focusing on the Balanced Scorecard's contribution to economic performance, which is then added to the benchmark of a performance assessment tool that is a key factor in the success of hotel companies.

The performance of hotel companies depends on the degree of integration of new information and communication technologies into decision-making processes and their activities. The development of IT technologies for the hotel industry has led to the emergence of solutions involving the use of Front-Office and Back-Office automation tools, Internet booking systems, integrated customer database management systems in a single process that allows a hotel to respond more effectively to customer needs (Van Hoof et al, 2006).

1.2. The concept of organizational performance

Organizational performance aims to take into account the overall performance of a company, its ability to meet a multitude of objectives. Such an approach is based on a concept according to which it is not possible to achieve the actual performance of an organization based on a single one-dimensional performance indicator. As a result, an organization's performance is appreciated by its many dimensions, such as its ability to offer value-added offers to its clients, its ability to motivate staff, to pay extra for those who bring capital, have contributed to the well-being of society general.

From our point of view, performance can be defined as the result of the implementation of a global strategy that enables the organization to harness internal resources and opportunities in the competitive business environment to meet all partners but also to ensure its survival both in the short term, but especially in the long run.

1.3 Evolution and stages of the Balanced Scorecard concept

It should be noted that since 1992, Kaplan and Norton have introduced in their work the Balanced Scorecard concept as a performance measurement tool used to collect and quantify in addition to the financial and value-creating activities of an intangible asset of an organization .

The Balanced Scorecard approach in the context of financial management aims at informing and evaluating potential expenditures according to their impact. If traditional budgeting generally puts more emphasis on financial performance and less on strategy, using Balanced Scorecard within organizations, forces them to align the budgeting system to the companies' strategy.

It should be noted that the Balanced Scorecard is a multifaceted management tool and its implementation in the work of organizations can successfully contribute to increasing their performance.

Chapter 2 Organization and operationalization of hotel business - a defining element in the organization's economy

2.1. General considerations regarding the organization and operation of business in hotel companies

In order to organize and run a hotel business, its strategic leadership must take into account the following features of the services it provides:

• Conditional availability - unoccupied rooms can not be stored and offered for sale in another time period;

• Limited service offer - accommodation capacity can not be changed based on short-term customer requests;

• The location of the accommodation unit - is an important element in ensuring the highest occupancy rate;

• High operating costs - lead to the accumulation of high fixed costs that require a certain level of occupancy to reach the critical point;

• Demand seasonality - requires long-term management strategies to ensure the least variation in demand.

2.2. Organizing a hotel company

The specific activities that are found in the big hotels are fulfilled within services and departments. The services are made up of a group of employees who carry out homogeneous or complementary activities, perform a coherent function within the hotel and act under the direction of a head of service. Regular services form a department, and all departments constitute the hotel itself.

Departments can be grouped in the front desk, where employees have direct contact with clients or back office, where employees have few direct contacts with customers, such as the accounting department. Separating departments according to specific activities is the most widespread method of organizing a hotel.

The chain of command specifies a clear relationship of each person's relationship in the organization that must be tracked through downward and ascending communication. In this way each employee knows who is subordinate to him and to whom he / she has to report the fulfillment or non-fulfillment of the tasks stipulated in the job description.

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┌─────────────────────────────┐
│      Managerial Board       │
└─────────────────────────────┘
              │
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│      General manager        │
└─────────────────────────────┘
              │
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│      Rezident manager       │
└─────────────────────────────┘
              │
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│    Housekeeping manager     │
└─────────────────────────────┘
              │
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│     Manager front office    │
└─────────────────────────────┘
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| Agent front desk | Housekeeping | Frontdoor | Usheer | Valet | Driver |
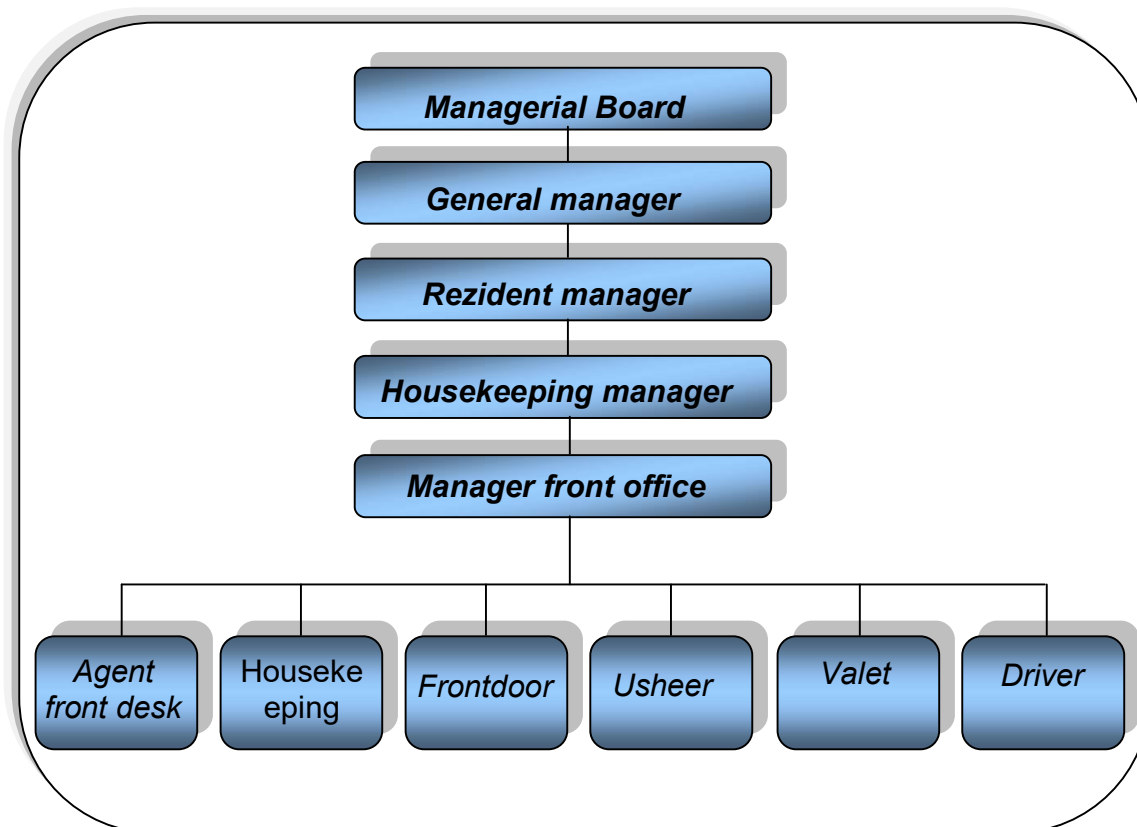
2.3. Trends in the future organization of multinational hotels networks

Trends that must be taken into account in organizing successful hotels are: visionary leadership, cultural diversity, decentralized flexible structure, customer focus, zero defects, network orientation, and real-time information.

Considering cultural diversity, this means that a multinational hotel network must respond to the challenges of intercultural interactions through their managers' cognitive, motivational and behavioral abilities.

Today's information technology influences all the components of a hotel business, from corporate strategies to organizational structure. Information technology should allow

organizations to respond more quickly to market needs and ensure that customer demands are met quickly and correctly. Information technology must also provide accurate information at the right time and for the right people.

2.4. Careers and opportunities in the hospitality industry

Having a specialization in hotel management offers, in many cases, the opportunity to start a career as a manager assistant in the hospitality industry. The way of promoting a multinational hotel network is through a training program coordinated by human resources managers based on a system used in all existing subsidiaries. Only employees who are highly trained for a certain level are given the chance to promote. As they climb up the hierarchical scale, their responsibilities and their rewards increase proportionately.

There are many attractive careers in a hotel such as:

- ➢ Assistant Manager in Reservation Department;
- ➢ Manager in the booking department;
- ➢ Manager in the room department;
- ➢ Resident Manager;
- ➢ General manager;
- ➢ Regional Manager.

Chapter 3 Measuring the performance of hotel companies

The global hotel industry is at a time of redefining the brand identity strategies of multinational hotel chains, being confronted with the need to make significant changes in the capital structure. In this context, measuring hotel organization performance has a major impact on budget planning processes and resource allocation, formulating employee motivation strategies, and improving customer service.

Methodological approaches to measuring the performance of hotel companies

The performance measurement system is based, according to Moreira, on the following six main indicators: *the use of the most appropriate resources, their quality, time, flexibility, productivity and capacity for innovation.*

Clearly defined objectives must be transformed into tangible actions, and then the critical factors for success are identified, and ultimately the measurement of environmental performance indicators that ensure the development and competitiveness of the company.

According to the Sink & Tuttle study, the Performance Assessment Model states that the basis of the performance of an organizational system is a complex set of interdependent criteria, of which the most relevant are: effectiveness, efficiency, quality, productivity, quality of life at that post, innovation and profitability.

According to Andrade, Tachizawa and Carvalho, the hotel performance management model is based on corporate strategy, performance indicators, benchmarking, process, organizational configuration, information technology, human resources, and evaluation criteria .

Performance evaluation of multinational hotel companies through the Balanced Scorecard method

It is known that a large number of "hotel chains" and "independent" hotels have adopted the Balanced Scorecard as the most successful performance management tool that focuses on the links between financial and non-financial measures and the strategic guidelines of the organization .

In the case of hotel management, performance indicators can be tracked from the following perspectives:

- Financial Perspective;

- Customer Perspective;
- Efficiency overall;
- Perspective of staff.

The financial perspective includes wage costs, annual profit per room, food costs on sales of these products, the percentage of wage increases, profit from organizing events, etc. The key question defining this perspective is: How do we meet the financial expectations of stakeholders? In the present case, how to better meet customer needs and how the hotel company will get more profit.

The customer perspective can be tracked by the number of feedbacks, the number of complaints, the response rate, etc. The key question that defines this perspective is: How do our customers see us?

Efficiency can be tracked using parameters such as occupancy rate, number of guests per employee, double room occupancy rate, sales conversion rate of marketing campaigns, Internet bookings, etc.

From a staff perspective, efficiency can be improved by tracking indicators such as staff fluctuations, skills, etc. The recruitment and training of staff must be done with great care that the competence of the staff is at the highest level of the expectations of the clients, making them loyal.

Particularities of the Balanced Scorecard Dimensions in the Hospitality Industry

The four dimensions resisted the test of time and only recently the main hotel chains introduced the 5th and 6th dimensions.

As a result of recent environmental concerns, the Hilton Hotel has added the size of the 5th "Green" in the last few years. In addition, the ACCOR group, a major global hotel industry player (Novotel, Sofitel, Ibis, Etap, Mercure, Motel 6, etc.), added the 6th dimension apart from the "Green Dimension" and Growth and Development Dimension.

Balanced Scorecard's "green" performance approach aims to solve sustainability issues in an integrative manner, considering that corporate performance improves the three dimensions of sustainability: economic, social, and environmental.

Analysis of the most relevant performance indicators in the hospitality industry

In the last decades, the hotel industry has seen significant growth as a result of the diversification of customer needs and the demand for improved services. To make a

multidimensional analysis of the most relevant key performance indicators in the hospitality industry, we found it appropriate to group them into the following clusters:

➢ Income, represented by key performance indicators reflecting sales results, costs and profit;

➢ Reservations, which include key performance indicators used to monitor and optimize added value by the means of reservation used;

➢ The occupancy rate, which reflects the volume of clients in relation to the guest rooms available over different time intervals;

➢ Services, which group key performance indicators related to the availability and use of hotel services;

➢ Feedback from customers, which contributes to the analysis and optimization of the hotel's guests with a view to ensuring a high level of loyalty.

Next, I will list ten of the most representative performance indicators specific to the hotel industry.

➢ Gross operating profit per available room (GOPPAR)

➢ Revenue per available room (RevPAR)

➢ Online reservations

➢ Rooms occupied by means of reservations

➢ Guests per employee (specific to the hospitality industry)

➢ Rooms with maintenance problems

➢ The occupancy of the rooms

➢ Average duration of accommodation in the hotel

➢ Positive Feedback from Customers

➢ Customers' perception of cleanliness.

Chapter 4 Performance-enhancing opportunities based on the assessment of the skills of employees of hotels belonging to multinational networks

The main purpose of the research is to evaluate the competencies of employees in four hotels (Mariott, Radisson Blu, Ramada and Golden Tulip). The research tool is an on-line questionnaire, based on three cultural dimensions, which decisively influence the performance of the hotels analyzed:

➤ Relational skills (how the hotel employees relate to different categories of stakeholders);

➤ Decisional abilities (which are the factors influencing the decisions of hotel employees included in the sample of research);

➤ Cognitive skills (which are the factors influencing the thinking of hotel employees included in the sample of research).

Relational abilities

Oriented towards tasks ←—————————→ Oriented towards costumers

Explicit communication ←—————————→ Implicit communication

Individualism ←—————————→ Group oriented

Decisional abilities

Risk taking oriented ←—————————→ Risk avoidance oriented

Oriented towards control ←—————————→ Oriented towards flexibility

Big distance to power ←—————————→ Small distance to power

Cognitive abilities

Analytical thinking ←—————————→ Exploratory thinking

Oriented towards data ←—————————→ Creative thinking

Simple thinking ←—————————→ Complex thinking

Based on a process of extrapolation of the answers to the 30 questions of the questionnaire, we determined the representative set of responses for each of the hotels, which we included in the online questionnaire posted on the website www.countrynavigator. com.

The assessment of the cultural profiles of the employees of the four hotels included in the sample of research is done through a validated tool in practice - the Country Navigator platform, which integrates statistical tools to position responses on the scale of nine relevant cultural dimensions.

After the results were processed separately for each hotel, the inference engine of the Country Navigator on-line cultural intelligence platform generated the following four cultural

profiles of employees of the Romanian offices within the multinational hotel networks Mariott, Radisson Blu, Ramada and Golden Tulip.

Cultural profile for Marriot employees

Relating - How I relate to others		
TASK	●	RELATIONSHIP
EXPLICIT	●	IMPLICIT
INDIVIDUAL	●	GROUP

Regulating - How I make decisions		
RISK TAKING	●	RISK AVOIDING
TIGHT	●	LOOSE
SHARED	●	CONCENTRATED

Reasoning - How I think		
LINEAR	●	CIRCULAR
FACTS	●	THINKING
SIMPLE	●	COMPLEX

Cultural profile for Radisson Blu employees

Relating - How I relate to others		
TASK	●	RELATIONSHIP
EXPLICIT	●	IMPLICIT
INDIVIDUAL	●	GROUP

Regulating - How I make decisions		
RISK TAKING	●	RISK AVOIDING
TIGHT	●	LOOSE
SHARED	●	CONCENTRATED

Reasoning - How I think		
LINEAR	●	CIRCULAR
FACTS	●	THINKING
SIMPLE	●	COMPLEX

Cultural profile for Ramada employees

Relating - How I relate to others		
TASK	●	RELATIONSHIP
EXPLICIT	●	IMPLICIT
INDIVIDUAL	●	GROUP

Regulating - How I make decisions		
RISK TAKING	●	RISK AVOIDING
TIGHT	●	LOOSE
SHARED	●	CONCENTRATED

Reasoning - How I think		
LINEAR	●	CIRCULAR
FACTS	●	THINKING
SIMPLE	●	COMPLEX

Cultural profile for Golden Tulip employees

Relating - How I relate to others		
TASK	●	RELATIONSHIP
EXPLICIT	●	IMPLICIT
INDIVIDUAL	●	GROUP

Regulating - How I make decisions		
RISK TAKING	●	RISK AVOIDING
TIGHT	●	LOOSE
SHARED	●	CONCENTRATED

Reasoning - How I think		
LINEAR	●	CIRCULAR
FACTS	●	THINKING
SIMPLE	●	COMPLEX

Chapter 5 Determining the performance of a hotel belonging to a multinational network through image analysis perceived by customers

5.1 Overview of the Radisson Blu Hotel Bucharest

RADISSON BLU is a world-class network of hotels that has its headquarters in the US, a guarantee for the quality of luxury hotel business. RADISSON BLU hotels are especially designed for business people and are successful on a global scale because they have several strategic advantages: high level of demand and reliability, commitment, sense of responsibility and staff upgrading.

5.2 Research on the perception of RADISSON BLU Bucharest customers about their image

The quantitative research we conducted at the RADISSON BLU Bucharest Hotel considered the testing and validation of the objectives and hypotheses formulated through appropriate statistical tools and methods.

The purpose of the research carried out by the RADISSON BLU guests was to study the image of this hotel, the evolutionary phase of its image, the way in which this image influences the attitude of the tourists towards the RADISSON BLU Hotel and, implicit, its performances from the perspective of the clients , but also the opinions, opinions, suggestions and criticisms of the tourists regarding the quality of the services offered.

A. Main Goals

1. Knowing the general impression of the RADISSON BLU Hotel among the target audience;
2. Establishing the knowledge of RADISSON BLU;
3. Determine the extent to which the image is viewed as favorable or unfavorable and its impact on the hotel's performance;
4. Determining the intensity of the hotel image;
5. Identifying the evolutionary phase of the image: growth, maturity or aging phase;

6. Determining the characteristics of the image: content, formation and evolution, precision, specificity;

7. Knowledge of the hotel's appreciation of the luxury tourism market in Romania;

8. Identify customer dissatisfaction, recommendations and suggestions regarding RADISSON BLU hotel services.

B. Secondary goals

1. Differentiating the image intensity by customer segments according to the segmentation criteria;

2. Positioning RADISSON BLU Hotel's offer on the luxury tourism market in Romania;

3. Knowing the satisfaction of the services provided to tourists;

4. Determining the perception of tourists regarding the staff's performance, hotel rates.

Concerning the RADISSON BLU image, we have formulated the following assumptions:

1. The image of RADISSON BLU is in the creation phase.

2. The image of RADISSON BLU Hotel among the tourists is favorable.

3. The image of RADISSON BLU is different in consumer segments depending on: socio-professional categories, income, age, sex, country of origin.

Interpretation of research results and formulation of conclusions

The research aimed at studying the image of RADISSON BLU Bucharest, based on the processing of qualitative information on the options, preferences, motivations of the tourists accommodated in this hotel.

Following the questioning of the 100 Romanian and foreign clients of RADISSON BLU Bucharest, we made the following conclusions:

- The RADISSON BLU Bucharest hotel sample is made up of 88% of foreign tourists and 12% of Romanian tourists. The main countries of origin of foreign tourists are: England, France, Benelux, Switzerland, Israel, Germany, USA, Italy.

- The largest proportion of men, 74%, is 26% of the female.

- Most of the tourists who choose RADISSON BLU are 31 to 40 years of age, followed by those aged 41 to 50, falling into the socio-professional category of business people and private entrepreneurs.

- The highest share of foreign clients coming to the RADISSON BLU hotel is owned by people with an average income that is above the average monthly income per capita in the economically developed countries, and in the case of Romanian tourists, the persons with an income monthly average of over 5,000 RON.

- RADISSON BLU Hotel is considered by the interviewed customers to belong to the luxury tourism offer in Bucharest.

- Respondents thought the RADISSON BLU hotel enjoys a high reputation.

- The vast majority of respondents chose RADISSON BLU because of their reputation, followed by those who bought packages of services through travel agencies. The percentage of tourists who were influenced by promotional actions in making the decision to choose RADISSON BLU is quite low (17%), which should lead to an increase in the promotional activities of the hotel.

- Although the hotel does not have a very old presence on the hotel services market in the capital of Romania, it has already formed a stable clientele.

- The vast majority of respondents believe that the prices charged by RADISSON BLU correspond to the services provided by RADISSON BLU (45%). These are especially foreign tourists who can compare the quality of the services offered by RADISSON BLU and those in their countries of origin.

- 77% of respondents agreed with the statement that the services provided at RADISSON BLU are in line with their expectations. This is considered to be a strong point for RADISSON BLU Bucharest Hotel.

- With regard to the analyzed attributes, RADISSON BLU's strengths are represented by the exterior appearance, the kindness of the staff, the location and the diversity of services, these being the most appreciated attributes by the interviewees.

- The RADISSON BLU hotel services were best appreciated among respondents, along with business services, while food services, despite having low ratings, do not negatively impact the hotel's image, due to its great importance small business people give this aspect. There must always be concerns on the part of the hotel management regarding the increase of the quality of the insured services, the diversification of the existing ones and their personalization at different segments of the consumers.

Chapter 6 Designing a conceptual model for increasing hotel economic performance by introducing online booking systems

6.1 Modeling processes to maximize hotel revenue through online booking systems

In order to model the hotel revenue maximization processes, we will use two commonly used methods in operational research, namely linear programming and networking theory.

Designing the mathematical model to maximize a hotel's revenue and, implicitly, increase its performance will be based on the assumption that online booking systems favor the transparency of customer demand information, classified by date of arrival, duration of stay, room type.

We presented two mathematical methods that model the opportunities for increasing a hotel's performance based on revenue maximization (linear programming and network flow method) lead to the same results, thus validating the projected model. The main advantage of this mathematical model is its ability to personalize the specificities of each hotel's activities, generating a mix of optimal room allocation to maximize revenue and, implicitly, increase performance.

6.2 Implications of the dimensions associated with the performance of on-line IT systems to increase the economic efficiency of hotel activities and occupancy rates

Within this subchapter, we intend to identify by means of appropriate statistical methods (ANOVA, linear regressions) the contribution of the analysis dimensions associated with the online booking system performance to the increase of the economic efficiency of the hotel activities and the occupancy of the rooms.

The analysis dimensions associated with the performance of online reservation systems are represented by:

- Operational dimension, aimed at automating the management of information on online reservation activities and assignment of cameras according to customer requests;

- The strategic dimension, reflecting how IT technologies support the strategic knowledge transfer management processes for online reservations between the Back Office and the hotel's Front Office.

The results of linear regression analysis demonstrate that the most important predictor, both of increasing the economic efficiency of hotel activities and of increasing the occupancy of the rooms, was the strategic dimension associated with the effects of online reservation systems deployment.

6.3. Conclusions, managerial implications and future research directions for the correlation study

The results of this quantitative research provide useful support in decision-making by hotel managers who have deployed online reservation systems to deeply understand the implications of their operational and strategic dimensions for increasing the efficiency of economic activities through increasing employment of the rooms.

The main future research direction we are considering is the coordination of comparative studies on the effects of implementing online booking systems in hotels in different countries; the main objective of intercultural studies will focus on identifying the differences in performances recorded by various hotels following the implementation of on-line reservation systems through benchmarking studies where we will link the analysis dimensions specific to intercultural management models with the two dimensions of performance analysis of online reservation systems (operational and strategic).

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