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The 13 steps to create innovation in hotels

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Abstract

Innovation in entrepreneurial activity is probably one of the issues most studied by academics and most reviewed by practitioners. Innovating one's movement in the sense of making changes that bring about improvements in the running of the business through technological or other innovations seems, at present, an essential element to achieve sufficient profitability of the activity carried out. This also applies to the management of hotels and hospitality facilities. In the following pages, we have identified the 13 steps to create innovation in hotels.

Keywords: Innovation, innovation in hotels, the 13th steps towards innovation in hotels

Introduction

Innovation in hotels: introductory considerations ^[1]

Innovation in entrepreneurial activity is probably one of the issues most studied by academics and most closely examined by practitioners. Innovating one's movement in the sense of making changes that bring about improvements in the running of the business through technological or other innovations appears, at present, to be an essential element to achieve sufficient profitability of the activity carried out. Innovation, obviously considered together with investments, skills, teamwork, the search for new markets, the increase of the markets in which one operates, the improvement of existing products, identifies a necessary step for the company, whatever sector it belongs to, to prosper in profitability and financial terms.

What has been illustrated above applies to all productive economic sectors and, therefore, also to tourism. For this reason, the observations made up to this point apply to all businesses belonging to the tourism sector, including, of course, hotels. The hotel sector, in general, is not considered as the specific sector where innovation is appropriate or, better said, necessary.

This is a distorted view because, like all other economic sectors, the hotel sector must innovate its business and its product to survive. This innovation can have two purposes:

- (a) To reduce business costs
- b) To increase, improve and innovate the products and services offered to customers to build customer loyalty and to ensure that the marketing produced by the so-called "word of mouth" method, especially in this historical period when social media substantially expand the dissemination of thought through forums, pages dedicated to comments from customers of certain tourism businesses (as well as other economic sectors) can give satisfactory results in terms of income and the achievement of a balanced financial situation.

The first theoretical approach to innovation was carried out by Joseph Schumpeter, who, at 1934, in Theory of economic development, defined innovation as the introduction into the economic and social system of a new product, service, production process, market, production factor or organisational model. As the study of innovation has evolved, these elements have also been supplemented by the implementation of managerial and logistical innovations in the company and innovations in the characteristics that distinguish institutions (e.g. innovation in the company mission, in the interests involved in the company, in the contributions that the company requires and in the elements that are given to individuals in connection with the entrepreneurial structure).

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¹ To facilitate reading, I have decided not to include in the text, except in exceptional cases, the names of the scholars who have dealt with the subject under analysis since the bibliography is endless, I have opted not to indicate all the terms of the scholars in the text because this would have meant a continuous interruption of the reading of the complete sentence in which I express my thought.

It should note that innovation does not mean invention. The two terms are not synonymous. To invent means to devise, for the first time, something that did not exist before, such as a new product or a new type of production process. The term innovation means the work done to put into practice for the first time this new idea was not applied before in reality considered. It should emphasise that innovation in the company is mainly implemented to achieve higher income or create a better financial situation. Innovation is carried out by modifying, over time, the primary invention to make this idea more feasible or more profitable. Innovation, therefore, is not an immediate process that drastically changes every element of the company to transform it into something else, but rather a process, often very slow, that involves the improvement of many elements of the company which, perhaps, were not taken into consideration at all in the initial idea.

It is clear that, for an invention to turn into innovation, skills are needed, specific knowledge of the elements to be improved, the ability to interpret the company as a system and, therefore, as a set of interrelated elements that inevitably change each other when one of these elements is modified. Innovation does not come for free. Financial resources are needed to implement it because it can only achieve the improvements resulting from the intended innovation if it is implemented with prominent use of financial resources necessary for such implementation. Innovation is only possible if there are resources available for this purpose. One of the reasons hindering innovation in a company is the lack or insufficiency of usable financial resources for this purpose.

It should note that innovation in a company can increase income due to an increase in turnover (e.g. introduction of a new product) or a reduction in costs (e.g. innovation in production processes). Regardless of how such innovation is implemented, it is inevitable that such a development must positively affect its income and financial situation. If this is not the case, it must stop the innovation immediately as it hinders its growth in terms of turnover and size.

Concerning the concept of innovation, it must stress that innovation is spatially diversified, and what is innovation may already be an established reality in other companies.

Every enterprise has to promote innovation within its entrepreneurial reality either by implementing completely new inventions or creative elements that do not exist in other companies or by using inventions, ideas and creativity already widespread in other entrepreneurial realities but not yet applied in the enterprise being transformed improved. Therefore, innovation is not a unique linear concept in every business reality. Still, every enterprise, including hospitality companies, is a specific process that uniquely distinguishes the business reality of interest.

Aiming for innovation in the hotel sector does not mean hypothesising changes in processes or products in these businesses, but rather the concept mentioned above is linked to a widespread improvement in the products offered, in the production processes implemented and in the technologies used, at the level of the entire economic sector. It is clear that innovation for a hotel, as happens in all economical sectors and as we have already noted above, may represent an element already present in other businesses. This does not reduce the importance of the innovation implemented in the hotel in the question precisely because innovation does not mean something new that does not exist in any other

business but considers the improvement and transformation of the product, process, and technology analysed. This leads to thinking of innovation in a hotel that may already be present in other hospitality businesses.

Contrary to Schumpeter's thinking, this statement is currently shared by most innovation scholars and writers.

In the following pages, when we list the steps necessary to implement an overall innovation in a hotel, we will undoubtedly take elements already present in many hospitality businesses. This does not reduce the importance of innovation in a hotel that adopts, in a slow process, elements already present in other hospitality businesses. On the contrary, it could say that the more widespread an aspect of innovation is within an economic sector, the better the overall performance of the economic industry analysed will be.

Suppose, therefore, in the steps, we will analyse in the following pages. In that case, elements that are already known and already present in many hotels are mentioned; it would be a grave mistake to think these steps towards innovation are less critical. The opposite is true because if an innovative element is present in many hospitality businesses, it becomes an element they expect to find in all the hotels they stay in. Therefore, the steps towards global innovation that will analyse later are not all absolute novelties, but in part, are applied in a small or large number of hospitality businesses. On the other hand, other elements are almost non-existent in most hotels, and it is, of course, that all hotels must take note of the relevance of these innovations.

This is not the place to analyse the issue of innovation in the broadest sense. Such an analysis must be carried out in papers explicitly dealing with the subject of innovation. Our objective is different. This article aims to analyse how can implement innovation in the hotel sector to improve the economic and financial performance of the business being surveyed. However, it is not possible to talk about innovation without highlighting some fundamental concepts of this subject.

In a very synthetic way, we can recall the definitions of innovation provided by some scholars:

The OECD, defined innovation as an "implementation of a new or significantly improved product (goods or service), or process, a new marketing method, or a new organisational method in business practices, workplace organisation or external relations.

"The European Commission, in Green paper on innovation, defined innovations as "successful production, assimilation and exploitation of novelty in the economic and social spheres. It offers new solutions to problems and thus makes it possible to meet the needs of both the individual and society".

Koc and Ceylan defined innovative capacity as "relates to the firm's capacity to engage in innovation, that is the introduction of new processes, products or ideas in the organisation".

As can be seen, the definition of innovation varies according to the scholars considered. In this work, which does not focus on innovation in general, but rather on innovation that can be introduced in hospitality businesses, and given the vastness of doctrine relating to the study of innovation, the writer has opted to refer to the concept of innovation introduced by Stanford University and currently the subject

of continuous study by all academics who are interested in this issue.

We intend to refer to the so-called Design Thinking process, which clearly illustrates the innovation process. It should note that this is by no means the only study in the field of innovation. Still, the writer believes that the concepts expressed by this analysis are the most consistent with the entrepreneurial reality of hospitality companies.

According to the study carried out by Hasso Plattner - Institute of Design at Stanford-, "design thinking is a popular topic in product development and UX and is above all a mindset. But what you probably most often see is the design thinking process, whereas one of the most known is the Stanford design thinking process consisting of five steps or modes: Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype and Test. "It is an iterative and non-linear process where you can go back and forth between the steps. Here is a short description:

Empathize

Observe, engage, watch and listen to understand people within the context you are looking at. Try to understand the way they think, why they do things and what is meaningful to them.

Define

Analyse the information gathered in the Empathize step. What do the user's needs look like? Collect insights and describe them as actionable problem statements.

Ideate

Generate different ideas by brainstorming, creating mind maps, sketching etc.

Prototype

Do prototypes on the different ideas. A prototype can be as simple as a non-interactive wireframe or a more advanced interactive one, with or without design elements. Start simple and iterate based on what you learn in the next step.

Test

Let users test the prototypes and ask them what they think about the different ones. Iterate when needed." (<https://web.stanford.edu>).

The study of the Stanford design thinking process therefore requires the correct understanding of the five terms listed above. According to Hasso Plattner - Institute of Design at Stanford - the above concepts can be summarised as follows:

Empathize

What is the Empathize mode

Empathy is the centerpiece of a human-centered design process. The Empathize mode is the work you do to understand people, within the context of your design challenge. It is your effort to understand the way they do things and why, their physical and emotional needs, how they think about world, and what is meaningful to them.

Why empathize

As a design thinker, the problems you are trying to solve are rarely your own—they are those of a particular group of people; in order to design for them, you must gain empathy for who they are and what is important to them. Observing what people do and how they interact with their

environment gives you clues about what they think and feel. It also helps you learn about what they need. By watching people, you can capture physical manifestations of their experiences – what they do and say. This will allow you to infer the intangible meaning of those experiences in order to uncover insights. These insights give you direction to create innovative solutions. The best solutions come out of the best insights into human behavior. But learning to recognize those insights is harder than you might think. Why? Because our minds automatically filter out a lot of information without our even realizing it. We need to learn to see things "with a fresh set of eyes," and empathizing is what gives us those new eyes. Engaging with people directly reveals a tremendous amount about the way they think and the values they hold. Sometimes these thoughts and values are not obvious to the people who hold them, and a good conversation can surprise both the designer and the subject by the unanticipated insights that are revealed. The stories that people tell and the things that people say they do—even if they are different from what they actually do—are strong indicators of their deeply held beliefs about the way the world is. Good designs are built on a solid understanding of these beliefs and values.

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HOW to empathize

To empathize, you: - Observe. View users and their behavior in the context of their lives. As much as possible do observations in relevant contexts in addition to interviews. Some of the most powerful realizations come from noticing a disconnect between what someone says and

what he does. Others come from a work-around someone has created which may be very surprising to you as the designer, but she may not even think to mention in conversation. - Engage. Sometimes we call this technique 'interviewing' but it should really feel more like a conversation. Prepare some questions you'd like to ask, but expect to let the conversation deviate from them. Keep the conversation only loosely bounded. Elicit stories from the people you talk to, and always ask "Why?" to uncover deeper meaning. Engagement can come through both short 'intercept' encounters and longer scheduled conversations. - Watch and Listen. Certainly you can, and should, combine observation and engagement. Ask someone to show you how they complete a task. Have them physically go through the steps, and talk you through why they are doing what they do. Ask them to vocalize what's going through their mind as they perform a task or interact with an object. Have a conversation in the context of someone's home or workplace – so many stories are embodied in artifacts. Use the environment to prompt deeper questions.

Transition: Empathize >> Define

Unpack: When you move from empathy work to drawing conclusions from that work, you need to process all the things you heard and saw in order to understand the big picture and grasp the takeaways of it all. Unpacking is a chance to start that process – sharing what you found with fellow designers and capturing the important parts in a visual form. Get all the information out of your head and onto a wall where you can start to make connections—post pictures of your user, post-its with quotes, maps of journeys or experiences—anything that captures impressions and information about your user. This is the beginning of the synthesis process, which leads into a 'Define' mode

Define

What is the Define mode

The Define mode of the design process is all about bringing clarity and focus to the design space. It is your chance, and responsibility, as a design thinker to define the challenge you are taking on, based on what you have learned about your user and about the context. After becoming an instant-expert on the subject and gaining invaluable empathy for the person you are designing for, this stage is about making sense of the widespread information you have gathered. The goal of the Define mode is to craft a meaningful and actionable problem statement – this is what we call a point-of-view. This should be a guiding statement that focuses on insights and needs of a particular user, or composite character. Insights don't often just jump in your lap; rather they emerge from a process of synthesizing information to discover connections and patterns. In a word, the Define mode is sensemaking.

Why define

The Define mode is critical to the design process because it results in your point-of-view (POV): the explicit expression of the problem you are striving to address. More importantly, your POV defines the RIGHT challenge to address, based on your new understanding of people and the problem space. It may seem counterintuitive but crafting a more narrowly focused problem statement tends to yield both greater quantity and higher quality solutions when you are generating ideas. The Define mode is also an endeavor

to synthesize your scattered findings into powerful insights. It is this synthesis of your empathy work that gives you the advantage that no one else has: discoveries that you can leverage to tackle the design challenge; that is, INSIGHT

How to define

Consider what stood out to you when talking and observing people. What patterns emerge when you look at the set? If you noticed something interesting ask yourself (and your team) why that might be. In asking why someone had a certain behavior or feeling you are making connections from that person to the larger context. Develop an understanding of the type of person you are designing for – your USER. Synthesize and select a limited set of NEEDS that you think are important to fulfill; you may in fact express a just one single salient need to address. Work to express INSIGHTS you developed through the synthesis of information you have gathered through empathy and research work. Then articulate a point-of-view by combining these three elements – user, need, and insight – as an actionable problem statement that will drive the rest of your design work. A good point-of-view is one that: - Provides focus and frames the problem - Inspires your team - Informs criteria for evaluating competing ideas - Empowers your team to make decisions independently in parallel - Captures the hearts and minds of people you meet - Saves you from the impossible task of developing concepts that are all things to all people (i.e. your problem statement should be discrete, not broad.

Transition: Define >> Ideate

In the Define mode you determine the specific meaningful challenge to take on, and in the Ideate mode you focus on generating solutions to address that challenge. A well-scoped and -articulated point-of-view will lead you into ideation in a very natural way. In fact, it is a great litmus test of your point-of-view to see if brainstorming topics fall out your POV. A great transition step to take is to create a list of "How-Might-We...?" brainstorming topics that flow from your problem statement. These brainstorming topics typically are subsets of the entire problem, focusing on different aspects of the challenge. Then when you move into ideation you can select different topics, and try out a few to find the sweet spot of where the group can really churn out a large quantity of compelling ideas.

Ideate

What is the Ideate mode

Ideate is the mode of the design process in which you concentrate on idea generation. Mentally it represents a process of "going wide" in terms of concepts and outcomes. Ideation provides both the fuel and also the source material for building prototypes and getting innovative solutions into the hands of your users.

Why ideate

You ideate in order to transition from identifying problems to creating solutions for your users. Ideation is your chance to combine the understanding you have of the problem space and people you are designing for with your imagination to generate solution concepts. Particularly early in a design project, ideation is about pushing for a widest possible range of ideas from which you can select, not simply finding a single, best solution. The determination of the best solution will be discovered later, through user

testing and feedback. Various forms of ideation are leveraged to: - Step beyond obvious solutions and thus increase the innovation potential of your solution set - Harness the collective perspectives and strengths of your teams - Uncover unexpected areas of exploration - Create fluency (volume) and flexibility (variety) in your innovation options - Get obvious solutions out of your heads, and drive your team beyond them.

How to ideate

You ideate by combining your conscious and unconscious mind, and rational thoughts with imagination. For example, in a brainstorm you leverage the synergy of the group to reach new ideas by building on others' ideas. Adding constraints, surrounding yourself with inspiring related materials, and embracing misunderstanding all allow you to reach further than you could by simply thinking about a problem. Another ideation technique is building – that is, prototyping itself can be an ideation technique. In physically making something you come to points where decisions need to be made; this encourages new ideas to come forward. There are other ideation techniques such as bodystorming, mindmapping, and sketching. But one theme throughout all of them is deferring judgment – that is, separating the generation of ideas from the evaluation of ideas. In doing so, you give your imagination and creativity a voice, while placating your rational side in knowing that you will get to the examination of merits later.

Transition: Ideate >> Prototype

In order to avoid losing all of the innovation potential you have just generated through ideation, we recommend a process of considered selection, by which you bring multiple ideas forward into prototyping, thus maintaining your innovation potential. As a team, designate three voting criteria (we might suggest “the most likely to delight,” “the rational choice,” “the most unexpected” as potential criteria, but they're really up to you) to use to vote on three different ideas that your team generated during brainstorming. Carry the two or three ideas that receive the most votes forward into prototyping. In this way, you preserve innovation potential by carrying multiple ideas forward—a radically different approach than settling on the single idea that at least the majority of the team can agree upon

Prototype

What is the Prototype mode

The Prototype mode is the iterative generation of artifacts intended to answer questions that get you closer to your final solution. In the early stages of a project that question may be broad – such as “do my users enjoy cooking in a competitive manner?” In these early stages, you should create low-resolution prototypes that are quick and cheap to make (think minutes and cents) but can elicit useful feedback from users and colleagues. In later stages both your prototype and question may get a little more refined. For example, you may create a later stage prototype for the cooking project that aims to find out: “do my users enjoy cooking with voice commands or visual commands”. A prototype can be anything that a user can interact with – be it a wall of post-it notes, a gadget you put together, a role-playing activity, or even a storyboard. Ideally you bias toward something a user can experience. Walking someone through a scenario with a storyboard is good, but having

them role-play through a physical environment that you have created will likely bring out more emotions and responses from that person.

Why prototype To ideate and problem-solve. Build to think. To communicate. If a picture is worth a thousand words, a prototype is worth a thousand pictures. To start a conversation. Your interactions with users are often richer when centered around a conversation piece. A prototype is an opportunity to have another, directed conversation with a user. To fail quickly and cheaply. Committing as few resources as possible to each idea means less time and money invested up front. To test possibilities. Staying low-res allows you to pursue many different ideas without committing to a direction too early on. To manage the solution-building process. Identifying a variable also encourages you to break a large problem down into smaller, testable chunks

How to prototype

Start building. Even if you aren't sure what you're doing, the act of picking up some materials (post-its, tape, and found objects are a good way to start!) will be enough to get you going. Don't spend too long on one prototype. Let go before you find yourself getting too emotionally attached to any one prototype. ID a variable. Identify what's being tested with each prototype. A prototype should answer a particular question when tested. That said, don't be blind to the other tangential understanding you can gain as someone responds to a prototype. Build with the user in mind. What do you hope to test with the user? What sorts of behavior do you expect? Answering these questions will help focus your prototyping and help you receive meaningful feedback in the testing phase

Transition: Prototype >> Test

Prototype and Test are modes that you consider in tandem more than you transition between. What you are trying to test and how you are going to test that aspect are critically important to consider before you create a prototype. Examining these two modes in conjunction brings up the layers of testing a prototype. Though prototyping and testing are sometimes entirely intertwined, it is often the case that planning and executing a successful testing scenario is a considerable additional step after creating a prototype. Don't assume you can simply put a prototype in front of a user to test it; often the most informative results will be a product of careful thinking about how to test in a way that will let users give you the most natural and honest feedback.

Test

What is the Test mode

The Test mode is when you solicit feedback, about the prototypes you have created, from your users and have another opportunity to gain empathy for the people you are designing for. Testing is another opportunity to understand your user, but unlike your initial empathy mode, you have now likely done more framing of the problem and created prototypes to test. Both these things tend to focus the interaction with users, but don't reduce your “testing” work to asking whether or not people like your solution. Instead, continue to ask “Why?”, and focus on what you can learn about the person and the problem as well as your potential solutions. Ideally you can test within a real context of the user's life. For a physical object, ask people to take it with

them and use it within their normal routines. For an experience, try to create a scenario in a location that would capture the real situation. If testing a prototype in situ is not possible, frame a more realistic situation by having users take on a role or task when approaching your prototype. A rule of thumb: always prototype as if you know you're right, but test as if you know you're wrong—testing is the chance to refine your solutions and make them better.

Why test

To refine prototypes and solutions. Testing informs the next iterations of prototypes. Sometimes this means going back to the drawing board. To learn more about your user. Testing is another opportunity to build empathy through observation and engagement—it often yields unexpected insights. To refine your POV. Sometimes testing reveals that not only did you not get the solution right, but also that you failed to frame the problem correctly”(Hasso Platner – Institute of Design at Stanford - DesignThinking (<https://washington.edu>)).

After this brief excursus on the concept of innovation, carried out not for the sake of listing, but to help understand how can conducted innovation in businesses, whether hotel or not, it is possible to move on to the focus of our article, that is, the steps that hotels must take to implement global innovation in their business. In conclusion of these brief considerations on innovation considered a general concept, it can be stopped that, indeed, innovation is the basis for the success of a business, including, obviously, hospitality structures. Innovation allows for an improvement in organisational efficiency, in the product supplied to customers, in the production process that leads to the creation of the product to be sold, a reduction in costs, a potential increase in revenue, an increase in customer satisfaction and in the quality of the service that the customer uses. All this should lead to an increase in operating income. As has already been pointed out, it is clear that if the innovations made to the business reality do not lead to an economic and financial improvement of the company and, at the same time, to an improvement in the sustainability of the hotel business, it is advisable to interrupt the process that has been set in motion since it has no favourable effects on the management of the business reality.

The 13 steps to implement global innovation in the hotel industry

As we have already pointed out in the preceding pages, innovation does not mean being the first to invent a product or a process that did not exist before. Still, it also means spreading new ideas and new creativity applied in a few hotels to most hospitality establishments. As is the case with all other businesses, a hotel must be able to respond quickly and appropriately to changes in the external environment to survive and develop in the intense competition that now characterises all sectors. Innovation can be the key to achieving these objectives. What we are going to list in the following pages, considering the observations made previously, will not, therefore, represent creative ideas never seen on the market until now, but will identify elements, more or less widespread in hospitality structures, which it would be appropriate to have a greater diffusion among all hotels so that innovation can permeate every hospitality structure.

The list that will propose in the following pages has no order of priority. For this reason, the order of steps to implement global innovation in the hotel sector is random. The important thing to emphasise is that to enjoy global innovation, all the steps below are relevant.

Step 1: organisational innovation

Judy Siguaw points out that from a study carried out in the Marriott group, a group at the forefront of innovation, one of the first steps taken to maximise innovation in hotels was to promote management that identified high-level leaders in their various areas of competence. Finding managers with specific expertise in their intended field of management or changing managers who were not up to their tasks was a first step in innovating the management of this chain. The study conducted by Judy Siguaw showed that, unexpectedly, this innovation also resulted in more women and more minorities being promoted to senior positions. The overall result was to enable the organisation of a team of managers who were totally focused on improving the company's comprehensive management through innovation itself. The scholar mentioned above pointed out that the analysis carried out in the Marriott business group showed that "In recent years, an assessment of organisational capabilities has been added to the leadership development programme. This extension of the human capital review process goes beyond building talented managers and considers ways to develop and improve the organisation to make the most of talent.

Organisational and work design, operational structure, processes, culture and performance management are just some of the factors explored in building the organisation's potential. Senior managers, for example, can focus on the extent to which the existing organisational structure facilitates performance and encourages future high performance. Tools are provided for these managers to ask a series of questions about the organisation and how it is structured so that managers can determine whether the current design is the right one for a business unit and help them evaluate the pros and cons of various ways of organising work. While organisational design issues are examined at higher levels, junior managers also assess organisational capability on the process and work design issues. Overall, Marriott's efforts to build future leaders through leadership development have been sustained, refined and taken to the next level to the next level of organisational capability improvement."(Judy Siguaw 2003).

As part of the study mentioned above, the attempt to create teams, in particular self-managed cleaning teams, was also highlighted as an innovative element. Each team managed the place to be cleaned, the cleaning times, the products to be used and the coordination with the other cleaning teams in the hotel. This innovative change also had positive effects at the company level.

Another element of organisational innovation implemented by the group mentioned above and analysed in the study conducted by Judy Siguaw was sabbatical work. Within the group investigated, it could see that a paid sabbatical leave of 90 days was mandatory for general managers and staff with five years of work in the same hotel. This sabbatical was not regarded as a holiday or work break, but as a sabbatical, i.e. a period in which people could, in peace and relaxation, think about how they could improve hotel

management. The above study showed that sabbaticals paid off because staff returning from leave brought with them new ideas and innovative elements that always led to improvements in the overall management of the hotel in the months that followed.

Another organisational innovation that can lead to an improvement in the performance of the hospitality establishment is the regular organisation of meetings between staff at all levels where everyone has to give their opinion on potential improvements that can make in the hotel. The best ideas do not always come from senior management. It is possible that a junior member of staff, who lives face to face with the customer, may have ideas that, in turn, perhaps modified or supplemented, can innovate the service provided to guests staying at the hotel. The sharing of ideas and points of view can be critical in identifying new steps towards innovation in the service to be offered to customers. Identifying the so-called best practices is not the output but the consequence of the set of ideas and creativity that can come from the mind of any employee of the business structure. It should also note that sometimes it is the customer himself who unwittingly initiates a process of innovation. The request, for example, of a particular service that no one had thought of, maybe a step towards the diffusion of that service to all customers. Innovation does not always follow logical paths. The essential circumstance is that open minds pick up on signals from anyone who comes into contact with the hotel. This is how innovation can flourish and self-increase in any hotel as in any other type of business.

Step 2: making the hotel smart

The current historical period is characterised by a high degree of computerisation and digitalisation in all areas of people's lives. This is true in the private sphere of every individual, but it is particularly noticeable in entrepreneurial activity.

In the context of hospitality structures, there is no doubt that the use of new information and communication technologies can be the key to successful management in terms of economic and financial performance. The elements that cannot be lacking in a smart hotel are, without a doubt, the availability of broadband internet, the implementation of smart devices, and the spread of information and communication technologies to all the services offered to customers. With regard to the service provided to the customer, computerising and digitalising the hotel's activities can be winning elements if this operation helps the customer to better manage the product they need. Making the hotel smart therefore means ensuring that the hotel is computerised and digitalised in every service it provides to the customer so that the customer can act autonomously. However, this must be carefully considered in the overall concept of hotel service. In hospitality establishments, many of the services offered to customers can be computerised and digitalised so that the customer feels completely autonomous both in the choice and the timing of the choice. However, this consideration represents a double-edged knife. In fact, computerisation and digitalisation must only be implemented and proposed to the customer as a potential option that the customer can choose. It must not in any way represent an imposition, since many customers measure the quality of service also by considering the interpersonal relationship that there is with hotel employees. The

circumstance of being able to have services not through computerisation and digitalisation of a process but through an interpersonal relationship with hotel employees can be a decisive element in the choice of the hotel itself. Making the hotel smart is therefore certainly a step towards innovation, but one must be very careful that the customer is in step with this innovative element. In fact, it can happen that too much computerisation and digitalisation is perceived by customers as a distancing from the 'human' element of hotel employees who could provide a similar service to the computerised one. There is a widespread opinion that the world's population has an extremely high computer culture and is very comfortable in an environment where everything is digitised. Nothing could be further from the truth. Many people, including a large number of senior executives and managers, prefer to ask for and obtain a certain service from a hotel employee rather than to organise the service themselves electronically. This is also due to a psychological element related to the perception of service quality. Obtaining a service through a phone call to the reception desk and a conversation with the concierge may, for many people, appear more satisfying than typing a series of keys on the phone. The service one gets may be the same but the form in which it is obtained has a completely different feel to it which may or may not be appreciated. In order for innovation to bring benefits to the company, it is therefore highly advisable that the computerisation of customer services is only one option that the customer will or will not choose. It should be noted that this applies even if the technological services offered are characterised by intuitive use. Part of the clientele prefers an interpersonal relationship with people and this is something that must be kept in mind when deciding to make the hotel smart.

If, on the other hand, we are talking about innovation through the computerisation and digitalisation of the services that the hotel needs to manage the hotel itself (e.g. bookings, invoicing, etc.), it is clear that, in any case, making the hotel as smart as possible improves the management of the hotel structure by reducing costs resulting from improved management efficiency considered from a technical point of view.

Step 3: Setting up an organisational figure to help customers with IT problems

Virtually all hotels are now equipped with devices that enable customers to use computers in their rooms. In more innovative hotels, it has been noted that the provision of an organisational figure within the hotel to help customers with computer problems is particularly appreciated by those who use the services of the hospitality structure. It often happens, especially in business hotels, that customers work in their rooms with their computers and find themselves in difficulty for some reason. The circumstance of being able to count on a competent person who intervenes promptly when the customer has a problem with the computer is an element that is particularly appreciated by those who stay in the hospitality structure. In medium-sized to large hotels, there is usually always a person who also carries out computer support tasks in addition to other tasks. The innovation is to make this person's work customer service. Again, the innovation is to make available what is already available in the hotel. From the interviews conducted with hotel guests in preparation for writing this article, it could be seen that this hotel's IT support service is particularly appreciated by

business people and people staying in hotels for work purposes. Such a service makes less sense in a hotel, for example, a seasonal hotel used for the summer or winter holidays, although if there is an IT expert in the hotel who perhaps also carries out other tasks, the advice is to make this service available to customers as well. Sometimes even this particular clientele may have problems with the computer that is now ubiquitous. The circumstance of solving computer problems immediately, even within the hotel, is undoubtedly a welcome element for customers, who perceive a considerable increase in the service provided by the hospitality structure.

Step 4: Check-in and check-out service

The check-in and check-out service is generally a sore point in hotel management. The identification of rigid timetables for check-in and check-out can create problems for customers who perceive a reduction in the quality of service offered by the hotel, the point of having to wait for a specific time to be able to carry out one of the two operations mentioned above. An innovative element that it would be desirable to see spread as widely as possible among hospitality establishments is the possibility of checking in or checking out at any time, 24 hours a day. It is easy to understand the repercussions of this decision on the management of human resources destined to implement the operations under consideration. Being able to check-in or check out 24 hours a day means having staff trained to carry out these operations 24 hours a day. There is no doubt that this is not easy and it certainly has repercussions on the management of the reception staff. In some hotels, this innovation has been successfully introduced, leading to an increase in customers' perception of service quality and praise from customers for this management innovation. Even if, especially in small businesses, it can do everything, the difficulties are certainly more significant. The main objective of company managers should be to study the organisation of human resources to cover the twenty hours with at least one person capable of carrying out the check-in and check out operations.

Interviews carried out with hotel managers, unprepared for this article, showed that this innovation is becoming more and more widespread, even though it may create problems in personnel management and initially cause a slight increase in human resources costs. However, if managers understand the importance of this innovative solution, the study of the shifts and the people's skills assigned to reception lead to finding optimal solutions to avoid cost increases and guarantee a 24-hour check-in and check-out service. Undoubtedly, this is an innovative element that it is hoped will become increasingly widespread in all hospitality establishments.

Step 5: Organisation of services to the person usable at any time of the day

One element is the prior organisation of personal services that can use at any time of day. Think, for example, of the importance of being able to count on the use of a babysitter or the call of a person who can keep an elderly or disabled person company. These elements may seem of secondary importance, and their relevance depends on the type of hotel being analysed. Generally speaking, for example, in a business hotel, these services are less relevant because the people staying at the hotel are there for business reasons and

therefore are unlikely to have children, elderly or disabled guests. It is more likely that such services can be highly appreciated by the clientele of a hotel used for holidays or relaxation. Consider, for example, a hotel with a spa. Dealing with children or elderly or disabled people may prevent the potential customer from opting for a holiday. On the other hand, the hotel offers the possibility of counting, 24 hours a day, on referrals providing personal services to children, the elderly or the disabled, the situation changes radically.

Other personal services whose organisation would involve innovation in the service rendered to the client may be beauty services and in-room hairdressing. Also, in this case, the global product's innovation is not exceptionally high. As already pointed out several times, innovation does not mean upsetting what a company does but improving management through large and small innovations. It should bear in mind that small innovation is often a driving force for other significant innovations that increase the overall degree of innovation in the hotel business.

It is easy to understand how the organisation of such activities requires time to assess the people who should take care of the fragile subjects for whom they would have complete responsibility for several hours. However, it is undeniable that would well spend this time, and this innovation would lead to an increase in the quality of the service provided by the hotel that the customer would directly perceive. As the only cost to the hotel would be the time taken to identify the right people to call in case of need, it is clear that this innovation would not only lead to a reduction in costs but also to a potential increase in turnover as many customers would choose the hotel for this innovative service provided 24 hours a day.

Step 6: Being smart about lighting

The title of this section may seem strange or at least uncommon. At first glance, hotel lighting appears to have nothing to do with the concept of innovation. On the contrary, the introduction of innovative technology in the field of hospitality lighting identifies an element that, on the one hand, can considerably reduce company costs and, on the other hand, can represent an element of comfort for the client who will perceive an increase in the quality of the service offered by the hotel. There are hotels in which the lighting of public areas, rooms and the exterior of the hotel do not provide an element that will remain in the customer's mind or, on the contrary, may provide a factor that will remain indelibly in the customer's mind in a negative sense. This is, for example, due to the uncomfortable and inadequate lighting in the room. Indeed, the use of wireless LED lighting system is necessary for innovation to distinguish a hotel. At present, most hotels use this technology. However, many hotels are far from applying this innovation, which would bring considerable economic benefits to the hotel itself. The wireless LED lamps are controlled by Android or IOS devices and are based on energy-efficient and energy-saving LED bulbs. Each wireless LED bulb to the integrated wireless module controls the lights by a device connected to the wi-fi router. This type of bulb can provide all shades of white and various colours while reducing energy consumption considerably. The use of this technology and offering the customer the possibility of having a very wide range of light colours to choose from in the room can be managed in a

way that helps the customer in their daily routine. The use of a timer to switch the light on and off certainly provides the customer with a service that can be greatly appreciated. The automatic reduction of light intensity when the television is switched on is a tiny element that increases the quality of the service provided to customers. It can use an app on smartphones to create voice-activated services. This step towards innovation is not as important as the other elements discussed in this part of the article, but innovation is made up of significant efforts and small steps. Being smart about lighting certainly falls within the small steps of innovation. Still, when added to all the other measures that the hotel can take, they help implement constant innovation in hotel management and the service provided to the customer. Being smart about lighting, for example, in the work areas or the part of the rooms intended for potential work use (e.g. tables and desks), can be the difference between an innovative hotel and a hotel where innovation still has many steps to go before it can be considered sufficient. Innovation is a process that cannot have an end. Being smart in lighting can be seen as a step towards the global innovation that all hotels should strive for.

Step 7: Innovative room service

Room service is an indispensable element to stop the trend towards continuous innovation in hotels. This service is present in many hotels in different ways. Hotel management must fully understand that room service must be considered an indispensable element to move towards global innovation in business management. Concerning room service for lunch and dinner, in particular, studies carried out in recent years have shown that the customer who uses this service is not looking for a particularly elaborate menu or delicious food that can only be found in restaurants with three Michelin stars but wishes to dine in a comfort zone. This information is essential for the manager to understand how to manage this service. In some hotels, instead of offering a particularly structured and composite menu, what has been called comfort food is offered, i.e. a basic menu consisting of a few foods, perhaps typical of the area, which contain a reduced set of particularly appetising and tasteful products that practically all the customers appreciate. This element may seem irrelevant.

On the contrary, however, it is of considerable importance because the customer, as often happens with small things that increase the quality of service, sees this service as an element, first of all, to be used very often and, secondly, as a particularly pleasant service because it is different from the usual menu offered by restaurants. Sometimes the simplicity of the food wins out over a menu of highly high-quality food at an equally high cost. It should note that hotel management has pointed out that the introduction of this method of room service for lunch and dinner also increases the possibility of having free seats in the restaurant which can be sold to people outside the hotel who, if the tables were fully occupied, could not be sold. This is particularly true for business hotels where customers stay in the hotel most nights of the month. The circumstance of being able to count on comfort food that differs from the usual restaurant menu is particularly appreciated because, unlike those who go to a restaurant occasionally and perhaps to coincide with particular festivities, the clients of a business hotel almost always eat in a restaurant. The circumstance of being able to count on comfort food that, while of high quality, is not

reminiscent of structured restaurant menus is particularly appreciated by those who, especially in the evening, consider it particularly pleasing to be able to eat in their room and to be able to use a service that, while offering excellent and varied food, is different from the typical structure of a menu in a high-end restaurant such as those generally found in business hotels. These room service considerations represent only a fraction of the innovation that can be introduced in the hotel industry. However, as noted above, innovation is made up of small and significant steps. This small step can help move forward in constructing the innovation puzzle, which has the characteristic of never-ending innovation.

Step 8: sweet cuddles

Innovation also involves making small elements reminiscent of sweet cuddles available to the customer. This, too, is one of the small steps of innovation, but together with the many other small steps mentioned so far, it improves the hotel's profit and financial situation. Every guest likes to be the object of small acts of kindness that make a stay in a hotel a pleasure. These include, for example, arranging for towels to be put on the bed in the evening. Coming home to find on the bed two swans forming a heart, a tiny duckling, a small bear, or another animal created from towels is a pleasure for any hotel guest. Suppose this small gesture is accompanied by some chocolates or sweets around the animal created with the towels or on the pillows. In that case, the customer's perceived quality of service will soar. One might ask whether creating these compositions can be defined as innovation. The answer is undoubtedly positive. In a hospitality structure, innovation means increasing the quality of the service perceived by the customer to build customer loyalty and ensure that the indirect marketing expressed on social networks or among friends can create a considerable economic return. Another sweet cuddle and have the customer's favourite newspaper found on the room's door handle in the morning. In this case, the real innovation would be to ask the customer, the night before, which newspaper they would like to find in the morning to satisfy the tastes of those staying at the hotel. Just the fact that can find any newspaper is a positive thing that creates innovation, since in many hotels this step has not yet been taken. But the real innovation would be to ask the guest in advance which newspaper they want so that I can find the newspaper the individual guest wants. There is no doubt that this service involves using some of the front office's time. Still, the positive consequences on the customer's perception of the quality of the service certainly outweigh the cost of the time spent on this service.

Other sweet cuddle concerns amenities. Amenities are those products that are left available to the customer in the bathroom. Small bars of soap, shower gel, bonnets, etc., are typical amenities that all customers go to in guest bathrooms. If amenities are made up of these three elements, they certainly cannot be included in the concept of innovation, as they are now widespread. Innovation means making amenities a unique piece that customers find in their bathrooms. It is almost an experience that leaves its mark because of the friendliness and usefulness of the amenities. First of all, the packaging is critical. If the customer finds the products on the washbasin, they will have a very different feeling than if they find a package in the bathroom that is pleasing to the eye, perhaps containing the same

products. The quantity and quality of the products included in this pack is an economic decision, as the collection and the products cost money.

However, it should note that an attractive package with many products that are difficult to identify among the amenities of a traditional hotel greatly impresses the customer and significantly increases the perception of the hotel's service quality. Also, in this case, the cost of having excellent amenities will be compensated in the more or less near future by the indirect marketing that the customer will do for the hotel. The decision on the amount of this cost can only be left to the management, which must, however, consider the practically inevitable return that can obtain in the short term from new clients arriving at the hospitality facility following the positive opinions expressed by clients who have already used the hotel's services.

Step 9: providing clients with rooms of various sizes for holding business meetings, featuring technological and comfort zone elements that can help them to carry out better the activity for which the room is rented

Talking about this issue may seem inappropriate when dealing with innovation. Virtually all hotels that accommodate business people or people who carry out their activities in several places need to stay overnight in the hotel and provide office rooms that can use at customers' request. The real innovation is not in having these rooms of varying sizes available to customers, which we can now consider to be the norm in almost all business hotels, but in the features these rooms must-have. For example, innovation means making the rooms isolated from the hotel's noise, which can, sometimes considerably, create problems for the concentration of those working in the room. Innovation also means making the room smart so that the customer can find everything he needs to hold a meeting using the most advanced IT tools on the market. There is no doubt that this entails a cost. But even in this case, the cost of upgrading these meeting or seminar rooms will be offset by increased future revenue from increased use of the rooms. Indeed, customers attach great importance to the IT and other tools that can find in these office rooms. A room characterised by the total absence of tools that are generally used daily in meetings is destined not to be requested by customers and, indeed, it can be assumed that this lack may cause the hotel to lose customers since the guest who needs particular IT tools will stay in a hospitality structure that guarantees the presence in the meeting rooms of these tools that the customer considers indispensable. The structuring of these rooms for seminars, small conferences or business meetings must be carried out by a specialist with specific skills in the field of IT and digitalisation. Only the presence of advanced and new tools will attract customers and make the room popular. Knowing that the room is only equipped with outdated and not state-of-the-art elements will lead to the client having meetings in another location, more suited to his technical needs.

It should note that this circumstance is accompanied, practically always, by a change of hotel in which to stay, since no one sleeps in a hotel and organises business meetings in another structure to take advantage of better-equipped workrooms. This point is therefore of significant importance. Innovation in this field is technological: only technologically advanced study rooms will be used by customers. Only then will the customer who needs these

rooms stay overnight in that hotel. In this specific case, innovation means not losing the customer. In this historical phase of the exceptional competition, there is no doubt that this consideration must be taken into account by the company's management.

Step 10: organising small excursions in the area for micro-groups for which the hotel liaises with specialised agencies.

Both in business hotels and hospitality establishments intended for holidays and holidays, sometimes a part of the clientele or any accompanying persons not directly linked to the work carried out by the client who has booked a room in a business hotel, would appreciate being able to take small tours in the area to see the landscape or works of art that are particularly appreciated. It is not a question of organising tours lasting several days, but instead of creating entertainment opportunities that last a few hours and allow those interested to see interesting artistic or scenic elements close to the hotel. Often the companions of business people staying at business hotels or people who have chosen the hotel for a holiday would like to see the area around the hotel, especially if there are architectural, artistic or scenic features in the vicinity of the hotel. Suppose the hotel dedicates some time to people with the right skills for this role, to liaise with smart specialised agencies that can guarantee the organisation of small tours in just a few hours. In that case, the customer's perception of the quality of the service increases considerably. Organising such a service requires considerable working and mental flexibility for those involved in this role. Even in this case, the hotel would certainly not see much of an increase in turnover, but customer loyalty and perception of service quality would be significantly affected. A circumstance that, indirectly, acts as a lever for future income and revenue. This step, although microscopic, is also a step towards global innovation in hotel service. The hotel can only benefit enormously from this, immediately and soon, through the indirect marketing action that satisfied customers will carry out through the various channels available to them. It should also note that these services frequently act as a driving force for using other optional benefits the hotel offers. Therefore, from this point of view, such small innovative elements can drive and develop overall corporate innovation, albeit in small steps. Also, in this case, therefore, we can speak of innovation of the service offered to the customer even if, a superficial analysis, may not highlight the relevance of small steps towards the global innovation of the activity of the hospitality structure when, instead, these small steps are precisely the key to the implementation of innovation by the hotel and, consequently, identify valuable tools to improve the overall performance of the hotel structure.

Step 11: In-room services available to customers

By now, in all hotels, there are small services available to guests who wish to take advantage of what the hotel has organised. Virtually all hotels of all categories have minibars in every room. Introducing this appliance is undoubtedly not an innovation, as it is already present in all hotels. However, one can speak of innovation concerning the organisation of the contents of the mini-fridge. Often in minibars, one finds products of poor quality and in minimal quantities. The size of the minibar means that it is not possible to provide a full range of food and drink products.

However, the choice of minibar content is strategic. At this point, the question arises whether this topic is part of the concept of innovation. In the writer's opinion, if time is spent on the choice of minibar content. This choice is certainly influenced by the type of hotel considered. A typical business hotel is unlikely to offer accommodation for children. Therefore, in this hotel category, it makes little sense to include products specifically dedicated to small guests. The situation is different in a hotel intended for holidays, especially for families. In this case, the presence in the minibar of items specifically designed for children will be an attraction for young guests who will insist on using these goods. Numerous studies have shown that people on holiday are more willing to spend more than their usual standard. Therefore, this validates the assertion that careful analysis of the product mix in the minibar can create innovation.

And it should note that in business hotels, the product mix often consists entirely of small bottles of spirits. This circumstance sometimes limits the use of the minibar by the customer because not all business customers like this product. Even in the presence of people staying overnight for business reasons, finding sweet or savoury food products in the minibar to use as a treat or, sometimes, because they haven't had time to eat, is something that the guest particularly likes. Organising the minibar is, therefore, a real art. And as such, it can be considered a step in the innovation of hotel management.

Within the scope of the services made available to guests in the rooms, reference can also be made to the possibility of guaranteeing in each room the presence of a water heater, tea bags and instant coffee. In four- or five-star hotels, it is known that at any time, you can ask for room service to get a coffee or tea. In these hotels, it would therefore seem unnecessary or almost counterproductive to ensure the presence of the above. Nothing is more wrong. Even in multi-star hotels, which are used by business people who only come to the hotel to sleep or work, it is sometimes particularly welcome to have tea or coffee in the room without using room service from the bar. It is up to the hotel to decide whether this element benefits the clientele or is counterproductive to the level of quality provided by the hotel. Based on conversations with customers of multi-star hotels, the writer can stop that many customers expressed the opinion that they would have liked a water heater and freeze-dried tea and coffee bags in their room. Of course, each of these customers could use the room service and the exploitation of the appliance that is the subject of our analysis would not be motivated by economic problems of the cost of room service. All the guests who filled in the questionnaire highlighted that they would have liked this room service for convenience and because, sometimes, the need to have a coffee or tea can arise at night when the bar service is closed. So this, too, is a step towards global innovation in hotel management. Indeed it cannot count among the great moments of innovation, but, despite this, it adds a small piece to the puzzle of hotel innovation, a puzzle which, as highlighted above, has the characteristic of never-ending.

Step 12: Towards a barrier-free hotel

Innovation in hotels also means setting the goal of creating a barrier-free environment. As you can easily understand, if you don't put yourself to this objective, your hotel may have

multiple points where access for the disabled is impeded. Of course, there is nothing to prevent the hotel from being built architecturally, with every element meeting the taste of the architect and the hotel owner. The presence of central stairs in the lobby, the construction of staggered floors through steps in the hall and the hotel restaurant, rooms structured so that a person walking can circulate perfectly with an adjoining bathroom characterised by the proximity of each element present in the room (shower close to the toilet, toilet very close to the bidet, washbasin behind the door with little room to move, etc.). All this can create an environment that is beautiful to look at and pleasant to be in. A restaurant or a hall staggered by a few steps can make a marvellous architectural interplay that no one is going to question. Innovation does not mean preventing the construction of such hotels and limiting the creativity of the architect and the hotel owner. Innovation means creating all this together with some key elements that allow each hotel room to be used by a disabled person who needs special aids to move around. The innovative challenge lies in identifying all the means necessary to ensure that the tools for eliminating architectural barriers coexist with architectural structures, which, at least apparently, would not allow use and exploitation by a disabled person. For example, creating slides that will enable wheelchair users to move from one staggered floor to another or creating technical tools to overcome all architectural barriers in hotels is true innovation. Creativity in this field is infinite. The solutions are manifold. True innovation can have taken place in a hotel when every room in the hotel is entirely usable by everyone, regardless of their mobility.

Regarding bathrooms and rooms, it is difficult for a standard room and a standard toilet to be used by a disabled person using a wheelchair. This is why innovation in hotels means having at least 3 or 4 rooms specially created for potential disabled guests. Innovation does not mean sacrificing the architectural beauty of anything, and it can build every hotel structure with creativity and flashes of true genius. Innovation means making a terrace with 20 steps and many columns accessible to a disabled person through architectural solutions that not only do not spoil the entire work of art but, if carried out with creativity, can even improve the entire place where, without these interventions, a disabled person could never arrive. Innovation also means meeting special customers' unique needs, of which disabled people are only a fraction. Many customers have specific personal needs. Innovation means creating a place where potential limitations are transformed into strengths.

Step 13: Innovation through environmental sustainability of the hotel business.

The final step we will consider in this paper concerns setting environmental sustainability goals and activities to achieve them.

Sustainability is a particularly topical issue from both a doctrinal and an operational point of view, and this is not the place to go into it in depth. In this article, we only wish to highlight how a hotel can also innovate in this field.

To summarise as much as possible the issue of environmental sustainability in a hotel, there are three areas in which can take action:

1. Reducing energy consumption. We have already discussed this in step II, and we refer the reader to step II for any considerations on this issue.

2. Reducing food waste
3. Reducing water waste.

To drastically reduce food waste pre-purchase, post-purchase, pre-consumption, post-sale, it is necessary that those who manage food products implement this basic strategy.

1. Improve warehouse management
2. Monitor the consumption of various goods and raw materials daily
3. Monitor the correctness of portion weights and, first and foremost, carry out a careful study of the standard portion to be considered as a reference, which must not be too large for the needs of the average customer
4. Present food in reduced quantities and organise buffets so that there is time to put together finished dishes only when necessary.

All this requires a cost analysis and specific planning, without which it is not possible, intuitively, to reduce food waste.

As it occurs in all other businesses and even in households, food waste in hospitality businesses can only be achieved by a cultural dissemination operation regarding the disastrous economic and socio-environmental consequences of food waste. Hanging posters in restaurant kitchens or homes and advocating waste reduction seems pointless and ineffective.

Only the dissemination of a culture of sustainability, including reducing food waste, will be able to have a positive effect on the Issue we are studying. The lever of the negative economic impact on the financial reporting of a hotel or other company can undoubtedly facilitate the development of widespread training among employees to understand the harmful consequences that food waste has on the company's accounts. However, this must be accompanied by culture and awareness-raising beyond the purely economic impact of food waste. Highlighting the social, environmental and ethical consequences of food waste should complement the illustration of the adverse effects on the hotels and hospitality businesses frequently use an abnormal amount of water compared to the standard needs of their guests and the hotel. As we will see later, this wastage occurs both directly and indirectly.

Direct wastage of water can be attributable either to the hotel or to the hotel guests. The hotel may cause wastewater when more water is used in the kitchen than is needed. This occurs, for example, when taps are left running with very strong jets for hours even though water use is only intermittent (e.g. washing raw materials) or when very strong jets of water are used to wash dishes when less water would be sufficient to achieve the intended purpose.

In general, at the hotel level, water wastage occurs when more water is used than is needed for cleaning purposes. However, it should be noted that the wastage mentioned above is generally kept under control by management for mainly economic reasons. High consumption of water turns into a high cost for purchasing this element, with easily understandable consequences in terms of company profitability. Managers, therefore, generally implement strict protocols to minimise such waste.

Direct water wastage can be attributable not only to hotel employees but also to customers. For psychological reasons that have been extensively studied in sociology and

psychology, a person staying in a hotel, unless they have an ingrained culture of sustainability, tends to behave in a way that they would never do at home. The typical case is the taking of long showers for hours with an obvious enormous waste of water. The direct waste of water by customers generally comes down to the problem of personal hygiene, which is carried out abnormally compared to regular home habits.

The highest water waste is indirect and is linked to the customers' desire to change sheets and all towels daily. This habit has no place in everyday household life as, in general, changes are not made every day. In a hotel, however, the customer's attitude towards changing sheets and towels changes completely. The customer experiences the daily change of these elements as an essential feature of the hotel's service quality. The request to change bathrobes and towels several times a day is prevalent. Such behaviour causes an abnormal waste of water for the continuous washing of sheets and towels. This results in an exorbitant cost to the hotel and an unnecessary waste of water. However, the hotel, realising that the customer links this behaviour to the quality of the service offered, does not place limits on the changes required, with the result that, from an economic-business point of view, costs rise and, from a sustainability point of view, we helplessly witness an absurd and unnecessary waste of water.

This indirect waste of water (as the customer does not use water directly but consumes it through unnecessary washing of clean goods) can only be reduced by the widespread dissemination of a culture of sustainability that makes the individual understand the consequences of the acts they undertake.

Reducing food and water waste in a hotel can be the subject of profound management innovation. Some of the potential actions that can take to implement this innovation are the dissemination of signs in the kitchen highlighting the consequences of food wastage, both at the level of the hotel situation and at the level of the problem in the world as a whole, the specific control of purchases and supplies of raw materials, the use of innovative methods of controlling the amount of food placed in each portion, the study of the perfect piece that on the one hand is not too small but on the other does not make the customer dissatisfied, the analysis of food preservation methods, the control with strict protocols of water consumption for cleaning, the implementation of awareness of customers of the consequences of unnecessary water consumption (caused by frequent extreme changes of linen), etc.

Innovation in this field has only one limit: the creativity of the management. The implementation of actions related to sustainability has no limits. The only problem that can undermine a company's entire sustainability policy is not believing in it or perceiving it as a secondary issue.

Suppose management and the entire hotel staff are imbued with a culture of sustainability. In that case, they will promote actions to improve sustainability in a broader sense and encourage the implementation of similar activities outside of work.

Innovation in this field is therefore open to an unlimited range of actions. The implementation of such a policy will only depend on the will of the management and the hotel staff.

Innovation could also mean making the guest understand how important it is for the hotel to improve sustainability by

reducing energy, water and food waste. An action already widespread in the cruise industry is to make a half-hour film that illustrates the operations carried out within the hospitality structure to reduce waste in general and to reuse, in a sustainable manner, the trash that is inevitably created by the structure itself. The film should be made available for viewing on television in each room so that the customer can see what is being done in this area. Wide distribution in the room should be made so that the client is encouraged to watch the film. It should note that this action could have three practical consequences:

- a) make the client understand the effort of the structure in the environmental field
 - b) Spreading the culture of sustainability so that the individual client also participates in this effort to improve the sustainability of the hospitality structure.
 - c) ensure that the client, permeated by the culture of sustainability, can also implement actions to reduce energy, food and water waste outside the hospitality structure.
- So far, the dissemination of these videos is generally limited to the cruise sector. However, every hotel could promote an innovative action by spreading this practice which is helpful and pleasant. Watching this film helps us understand many aspects of the work of the hotel in which we are staying that we could not even imagine existed. Spreading this practice in hotels could be an essential step in innovation which, if done well, could lead to valuable results outside the hotel.

Conclusions

The 13 steps towards innovation outlined above represent how every hotel can innovate without disrupting its business management. Of course, this list is not exhaustive because, as has already been pointed out, innovation has no limits. There is no doubt, however, that if a hotel were to succeed in implementing all of the XIII steps outlined above in a short period, innovation in that hospitality structure would be a great leap forward, beneficial both to the environment and the community in general and to the company's income and financial situation.

As has already been pointed out, if the implementation of such innovations only leads to an increase in costs without achieving a return in terms of income and finances, the company's management would have to be modified again, since such results would indirectly show that the innovation implemented is not excellent or does not conform to the hotel situation that customers want. In this case, the implemented actions should be stopped immediately. Otherwise, the economic and financial condition of the hotel will deteriorate.

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