

## **HOTEL OCCUPATION MANAGEMENT: STAYBRIDGE HOTEL CASE**

### **GESTÃO NA OCUPAÇÃO HOTELEIRA: CASO DO HOTEL STAYBRIDGE**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This article discusses the hotel management, more specifically in the administration of the occupation. The aim of this paper is to analyze the hotel guest occupation, at this time of crisis, and how the tools and strategy can help in this phase. The region chosen was the capital of São Paulo. The methodology applied on this study was based on fundamental concepts of hospitality and its vision in Brazil, to support this theme a case study of the Hotel Staybridge was highlighted. The study about the tools used in the hotel industry and its contributions for the management of this sector, especially Revenue Management. Finally, it was made also a connection between the tools and the strategy applied by the hotel related to guest occupation management. The results show that the economic factors have direct impact on the occupancy related to guest occupation, so the management by use of the Revenue Management technique is not successful alone; It only works with the other presented tools and strategies practices.

**Keywords:** Revenue management. Effectiveness. Economy.

#### **RESUMO**

Este artigo discorre sobre gestão hoteleira, mais especificamente na administração da ocupação. A região escolhida para este trabalho foi a capital paulista. Baseando-se em conceitos fundamentais da hotelaria e sua visão no Brasil, para apoiar este tema foi destacado como caso de estudo o Hotel Staybridge. Buscou estudar ferramentas utilizadas no meio hoteleiro e suas contribuições na gestão deste setor, com destaque a Revenue Management. Por fim, o artigo fez uma conexão das ferramentas com a estratégia diante da baixa ocupação. Os resultados mostram que os fatores econômicos têm impacto direto sobre a ocupação relacionada à ocupação dos hóspedes, de modo que o gerenciamento pelo uso da técnica da Gerência de Receita não é bem sucedido sozinho; só funciona com as outras ferramentas e práticas de estratégias apresentadas.

**Palavras-chave:** Gerenciamento de receitas. Efetividade. Economia.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Currently the country is going through a moment of economic instability, the result of political and economic factors. This conjuncture led the country to present a strong unemployment and consequently, a crisis that affects all sectors without distinction.

The hotel sector, an important service activity in the Brazilian economy, was also impacted by the two-year crisis, according to data provided by the Brazilian Hotel Industry Association of the State of São Paulo (2015), where the hotel occupancy rate in the Paulista capital had been the smallest of the last ten years.

In 2016, according to data provided by IBGE, the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) had retreated 3.6% and inflation was 6.29%. Foreign exchange, rising unemployment and lower average income are factors that directly affect the sector because they deal with the per capita income variable.

The objective of this paper is to analyze the hotel sector of São Paulo, having as a specific study the Hotel Staybridge, to identify economic factors that impact the occupancy rate in the hotels of São Paulo and to present the Revenue Management (RM) technique for maximizing profits in the hotel chain.

Although the aforementioned technique has emerged as a management tool in the civil aviation area, according to Ventura and Nogales (2012), this article understands and justifies its mention regarding the frequency of its use in hotels as a way to manage supply and demand. It is a managerial practice that predicts consumer demand and behavior in the micro market, optimizing the price and availability of products, seeking to maximize hotel revenue and profits. (ALENCAR, 2012). In other words, RM is selling the right product to the right customer at the right price, maximizing hotel revenue.

Given that, the present article brings interconnected contents, which provide a general understanding of the subject in question.

## 2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This theoretical framework will discuss the concepts of hospitality and its theoretical foundation on which this article is based. The objective is to gather information that can support the discussion about the positive and negative impacts on the low occupancy of the hotel sector, having as specific case the Staybridge hotel of the International Hotel Group (IHG) group, located in São Paulo - SP.

The hospitality industry is part of the service sector and is a gathering of various services provided to a large public, and thus is characterized as an intangible product. In Brazil, the official bodies that carry out the classification of the lodging means are: Mtur (Ministry of Tourism), Embratur (Brazilian Tourism Institute) and ABIH (Brazilian Association of Hotels Industry).

The lodging facilities as well as the hotels are classified by symbols (Stars), and this classification allows a standardization of the hotel establishments, the supervision and the maintenance of the quality standard.

It can be highlighted as the three main pillars of the hotel industry: lodging, catering (depending on the type of accommodation) and events. They are basically comprised of the following areas: lodging, social or public areas, administration, service areas, food and beverage (A&B) area, equipment and structure, recreation, sport and leisure (Ministry of Tourism, 2017). The range of hotel services is reaching more and more sectors around the world.

The hotel is its own lodging establishment that offers rooms with private bathroom, for imminent or temporary occupation, offering full service food, besides the services inherent to the hotel activity (CASTELLI, 1992, p.88).

According to Janeiro (1991, p. 37), “hotel is defined as an establishment that should provide good accommodation, meals, bar, laundry, tourist and general information”.

Hotel definitions show that the main product of a hotel is accommodation (which is a service), followed by other services, which may be food, leisure, tourist information, among others. The differentiation of services offered in a hotel is what will define the appeal of the company, with every hotel as its main objective accommodation, but it is in the differentiation of services in quantity and quality that will define its market.

## 2.1 The Hospitality industry in Brazil

According to Vieira da Luz (1999), in Brazil, hotel activity began in the colonial period with travelers staying in city houses, convents, large farms, and especially roadside ranches. The arrival of the Portuguese royal court in Rio de Janeiro in 1808 and, later, the opening of ports led to an increase in the flow of people, causing pension houses and inns to open their doors to travelers (see Table 1).

In the early 20th century, the scarcity of hotels led the governor of Rio de Janeiro to create Decree-Law No. 1,100 of December 23, 1907 (Planalto, 2017), which exempted from municipal taxes for seven years for the five first hotels to settle in the city. In 1908, the first major hotel in the city was inaugurated: the “Avenida”, whose structure had 220 apartments. Only from the 1930s onwards did large hotels begin to be installed. Its occupation was promoted by casinos, which operated in the same facilities.

Also according to the Ministry of Tourism, there is a counterpoint, with the ban on gambling in 1946, many hotels closed their doors. With the creation of the Brazilian Tourism Institute (EMBRATUR) and the General Tourism Fund (FUNGETUR), tax incentives returned, promoting a new rise in the branch. In the 60s and 70s, the arrival of international hotel chains began, marking a new phase of the Brazilian hotel industry.

1808	Portuguese court move to Brazil, which encourages the opening of hostels in Rio de Janeiro.
1907	First incentive law for opening hotels in Rio de Janeiro.
1946	Prohibition of gambling and closure of casinos, which makes hotels built for this purpose unfeasible.
1966	Creation of Embratur that facilitates the implementation of large hotels, including the Sudam and Sudene areas.
1990	Definitive entry of international hotel chains in the country.

Table 1 – Hospitality industry in Brazil

Source: Hotelaria e planejamento SENAC, 2007

In 1966, with the creation of Embratur, the implementation of large hotels, including the Sudam and Sudene areas, is facilitated. Finally, in 1990, international hotel chains began to enter the country. Thus, in the following subchapter we will see how the hotel industry became solid in São Paulo (Table 1).

## 2.2 The hospitality industry in the city of São Paulo

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the important factor for the hotel industry to become solid linked to tourism is immigration, being expressively essential for its growth, both due to the demands of accommodation and the experiences brought by the services

(Tourism History, 2012). The capital of São Paulo was at the center of an immigration process, beginning in 1886 the construction of the immigrant hostel, as a matter of urgency, in a temporary use building in the neighborhood of Bom Retiro, where were the other hotels built during this period.

However, the growing epidemics of influenza and smallpox that affected the region led to the construction of a definitive headquarters, inaugurated a year later, in the Brás neighborhood, with a capacity to house 4,000 people and with large spaces that took into account the need for a great epidemic control.

Coming from other countries as well as from other provinces, immigrants formed the necessary labor force for industry and agriculture. In just five years, from 1895 to 1900, the population of “Paulicéia” went from 130 thousand inhabitants to 240 thousand. Meanwhile, hotel activity grew steadily in the city. In addition to the exquisite Grande Hotel, on São Bento Street, stands next to the Sorocabana (currently Júlio Prestes) and Luz stations a set of hotels with typical architecture from the turn of the century, witnessing the intense commercial activity that flourished at the time.

However, the flow of immigrants had just begun. In 1905, the first Syrian and Lebanese landed in Sao Paulo. More than 50,000 Syrians arrived in the following decades. In 1908, the first 165 Japanese families arrived. Years later, mainly after World War II, more than 500,000 arrived. By 1914, the state already had 1.8 million immigrants, of which 845,000 were Italians. The stimulus to industrialization in Brazil, caused by the First World War, generated a great development stimulus in the region (HERMANN, 2007).

The resources obtained from the export of coffee raised the chimneys of the first industries of São Paulo. The industrial activity designed a new urban and economic profile in the city, which required the expansion of all the city's infrastructure, including in the hotel sector. This scenario has also led to the emergence of luxury hotels, designed to house the great coffee barons and emerging industrialists (VAINFAS, 2007).

Since then, the city of São Paulo has been developing and becoming a superlative metropolis, including the diversity of styles and cultures. São Paulo is the state that concentrates the largest number of lodging, with opening of several hotels, spread over all regions. With its importance there are representatives of workers of the category in the state capital, we have the workers union in hotels, apartment hotels, motels, flats, restaurants, bars, coffee shops and similar of São Paulo and region (SINTORESP).

According to the Survey of Hosting Services (PSH) 2016, conducted by IBGE in agreement with the Ministry of Tourism, that year there were 31,300 lodging establishments in the country, with 1 million housing units (suites, rooms, chalets) and 2.4 million beds, among large establishments, that is, with 50 or more housing units, with São Paulo showing its participation in 18.8%.

The major events in the capital certainly contribute to the increase of the hotel industry, being São Paulo the Brazilian state that hosts more events. There are about 800 fairs, exhibitions and congresses, as well as concerts and sporting events, contributing significantly to the hotel accommodation services to stay active and competitive.

The city offers everything from budget hotels to luxury hotels, depending on the need of the visitor. Thus, the following subchapter will explain the hotel and tourism market in the state capital.

### **2.3 The hospitaly industry market**

According to KOTLER; KELLER (2006), market is the place where people exchange products and services with others, considering the availability of the existing offer and the demand for the good or service offered, being the existence of the market associated with three

basic premises: that there is need, that there is a desire to satisfy it and there is purchasing power.

Regarding the tourism market, the flows of new experiences, experiences and knowledge continue to grow, encouraging it in several regions. To understand the market one must understand the people who make up the market, considering their diversifications.

As for Chias (2007), the heterogeneity of the people who make up the demand is one of the factors that drives the tourist market and always opens doors for new business opportunities. Thus, there are four basic elements that make up the tourism market, namely: demand, supply, geographic space and market operators, which are totally interconnected.

Being the demand side represented by the potential consumers of goods and services, the supply side is composed by the offered tourism products, which make up the geographic space, a physical base where the supply and demand meeting occurs, and the market operators that are facilitating companies and institutions, whose function is to soften the interrelationship between demand and supply.

The World Tourism Organization (WTO, 1995, p.1) defines as tourism activity “that activity developed by people during their travels and stays in different places and their usual surroundings, for a consecutive period of less than one year for the purpose of business or others”. The WTO (1995) also says that any displacement outside the place of residence for more than 24 hours and less than 60 days, motivated by non-economic issues, can be understood as tourism.

Nonetheless, the hotel industry is a market segment linked to tourism which encompasses leisure and business, offering accommodation services. It can be considered that the terms “means of lodging” and “hospitality” are synonymous, as both refer to the set of buildings that develop the trade of reception and lodging for the purpose of serving tourists and visitors in general. In the early 19th century, in line with the strengthening of industrial capitalism, the hotel industry had its own segmentation with the first dedicated business organizations, followed by the expansion of industries, the growth of the tourism market and economic development.

The hotel segment is a valuable ally for the economic health of cities, considering its ability to move resources and create jobs, thus being one of the pillars of basic tourism activity.

In light of the above, it can be seen that the hotel activity has expanded in the world and in Brazil in gradual proportions and is currently at an extremely important growth level, moving sectors of the economy, producing income and employability for the local population, which makes it a potential segment alongside tourism.

## **2.4 Occupancy rate strategy**

According to Chandler (1962), "Strategy is the determination of the basic long-term objectives of a company, the adoption of appropriate actions and obtaining resources to achieve those goals."

For the hotel industry, increased supply, stagnant demand, and costs pressured by inflation make maintaining a satisfactory occupancy rate a challenge, and then we can identify some strategies applied in the sector.

Promoting product improvements in years of crisis may be a viable option for hotels, refurbishing and implementing improvements taking advantage of lower occupancy, especially in projects that have a reinvestment reserve fund, thus not having a significant loss of revenue, in anticipation that the crisis should not be permanent and when demand grows again some hotels will be more prepared and competitive, as change may be necessary and innovative and generates positive results.

Maintaining hotel visibility is also considered an important factor, as brands that remain active in customer recall will suffer less during the crisis, and be more prepared for the post-

crisis period, meaning being present on different platforms and on different channels, investing in different media and approaches.

As strategy is a way to pursue profitability, hotels mix sales via Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) and direct sales, partnerships help capillarity in the market, as well as partnering with restaurants, cultural attractions, museums, theaters and cinemas may be an option.

The intense focus on sales, the search for new audiences and the diversification and flexibility of the segment can be used as strategies at this time, offering weekend or wedding packages, student packages, participants of scientific events, best age and monthly rates, taking advantage to make use of relationship marketing, seeking the dissemination of the company and customer loyalty.

Hotels with event space can have an advantage, as many companies often book hotels for congresses, seminars and retreats. This is a good way to have movement guaranteed for a good period of time. In addition to having the hotel full in low season, it is possible to win a new audience. Business guests, if they like the service and what the place offers, tend to come back or recommend their establishment.

Given this, in a scenario of so many uncertainties, there is a certainty: in a period of crisis, those who improve their management and can see opportunities will survive, because it must be believed that the crisis is fleeting, not the business. After all, crisis is synonymous with opportunity.

## **2.5 Revenue Management technique**

According to Ventura and Nogales (2012), also known as Yield Management (YM) or in Portuguese called Revenue Management, Revenue Management (RM) is a management technique originating from the United States with the deregulation of the aviation industry in the late 1990s. 70, effectively emerging in business in the 1980s with American Airlines.

With the increasing competitiveness among aviation companies, the technological sophistication linked to the insertion of new companies called Low Cost and with reduced operating costs and new distribution channels offered by the Global Distribution System (GDSs), There was a need to improve sales tools to obtain better results and remain competitive in the market (VENTURA; NOGALES, 2012).

According to Oliveira and Ferraz (2008), the main objective of airlines to use this tool was to improve revenue by applying pricing strategy, seat inventory control, competition study and product differentiation.

Airlines in the United States were the first to understand that the "supply and demand" principle could be used to maximize their revenues. With aggressive new competitors entering the market, low-cost companies attacked established companies and invaded each other's territory, while rates fell as the struggle intensified (CROSS, 1998).

Hotel companies, in addition to distributing their products through distribution channels, also distribute them to commercial departments that need to use sales techniques to maximize sales. (VENTURA; NOGALES, 2012).

The access to technology provided the improvement of demand control and forecasting systems (MORAES, 2010). As occupancy (demand) and supply (room availability) increase, the value of the rates decreases, making them promotional. Rates should fall when supply exceeds demand and rise when the opposite is perceived.

RM or YM should be used in the strategic process of dynamic pricing, applied to the structuring of rate levels related to the availability or occupation of each housing unit (UH). The key is the ability to monitor reserves and develop reliable forecasts (GU; CANEEN, 1998).

In this context, RM is a strategic management component that should be incorporated into senior management; without it there are no conscious and consistent results, says VENTURA (2012). Thus, the complexity of maximizing results, investing in the ability to make

accurate forecasts of demand, gives the company relevant competitive advantages and ultimately improves market performance.

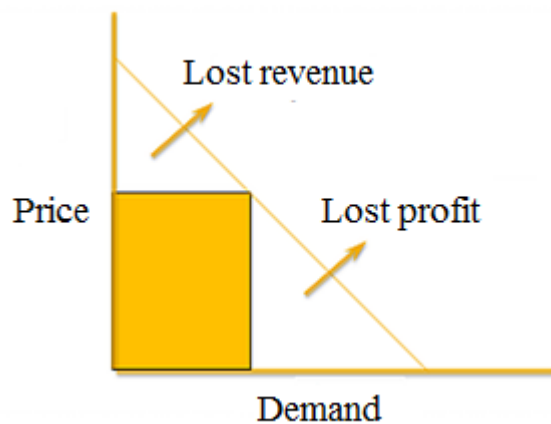
## 2.6 Revenue Management technique in the hospitality segment

Nowadays, hospitality RM techniques are becoming more widespread as a way of managing supply and demand. It is a managerial practice that predicts consumer demand and behavior in the micro market, optimizing the price and availability of products, seeking to maximize hotel revenue and profits. (ALENCAR, 2012). In other words, RM is selling the right product to the right customer at the right price, maximizing hotel revenue.

Firms offering tangible goods can alleviate supply and demand imbalances by using inventories. However, for service companies this is not possible as services cannot be stocked for future sale. This detail increases the need for much more efficient administration.

Although RM is a relatively new concept in the hotel market, due to the large amount of information that must be analyzed and updated continuously, as mentioned from the fifth chapter of this paper, its principles, though basic, need to be in the context of maximization of the recipe. *zação da receita*.

In practice, Revenue Management works as follows. Imagine a hotel has a 100% occupancy rate, but poor management of RM. If the price per night to fill the hotel is R \$ 180,00, for a 50 room deal, you get a nightly revenue of R \$ 9,000.00, however, if there was 90% occupancy at a rate of R \$ 210.00, you would get a higher turnover of \$ 9,450.00. Finding the ideal pricing model that balances supply and demand is the ultimate goal of RM. As shown in Graphic 1, where price and demand are balanced so that there is no lost revenue or profit.



Graphic 1 – Management of rates  
Source: InfoBlog (2017)

At Staybridge, fare management using the RM technique mainly influences open rates in group control for best-bid submission (seasonality). There is an essential department in the hotel that acts for better profitability and revenue, influencing 100% in the result, positively or negatively. The price fluctuation is daily in the distribution channels, as competition and demand move for a given period.

Staybridge's chief operating officer states that the hotel's Revenue department works as follows: A team works with 2 monitors to keep up with their own rates and competition. The system presents the results in graphical form, where the current rate that the hotel charges is verified and what is being charged by the competition, so it is possible to make daily rate

fluctuation according to the competition analysis. In the next subchapter the most common errors when applying RM will be presented.

### **3 METHOD**

This article aimed to stimulate debate on the subject of “management in hotel occupation” considering an exploratory study about a hotel located in the city of São Paulo. The main thread of this paper intends to establish the use of tools developed for similar service sectors as a way to address low occupancy in times of crisis. The plausible argument for the correlation of the facts was reinforced by exploring the theme with the hotel management through a qualitative and limited scope interview.

The relevance of the approach, given the participation of the sector in the economy of São Paulo, has been taken into consideration. Nevertheless, the results of this work need to be replicated on a larger scale because of the complexity of the theme, which encompasses factors that imply innumerable variables, it is necessary a theoretical review.

### **4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In the course of the research it was found that the current economic scenario, influenced by political and economic factors, impacts on exchange rate variation, inflation, increase in unemployment rate and decrease in population income, consequently directly affecting the hotel sector, as well as the others and causing a low occupancy rate, which implies a decrease in revenue for the sector.

Faced with this scenario, hotels create strategies and mechanisms to overcome this unstable moment and remain competitive in the market. It was identified that the management tools, linked to the use of technology, contribute and assist in hotel rate management, allowing to analyze and observe the market in order to maximize profits for the sector, highlighting the use of the Revenue Management technique as a strategic component.

This investigation highlighted the application of the Revenue Management technique that is being spread in the hotel segment in conjunction with the other management tools, achieving a positive result in relation to strategic and sales control, contributing greatly to the results of the hotel operation.

In this sense, the hotel chosen for the research, in addition to using RM, links daily sales to promotional packages with special rates, taking into account commemorative dates or events in the state capital. This hosting concept was brought from the US and Canada, where it is already successful. They are called longstay, featuring daily sales to the corporate and business audiences.

According to Hotel Staybridge's chief operating officer, over the past two years the hotel has been impacted by lower occupancy rates with decreased longstay (Flats, Airbnb), fewer events and groups, thus demonstrating the low fare in all segments, consequently lower RevPAR, occupancy and average daily.

According to Teixeira (2017), your hotel will have no use having a perfect MR strategy, if you do not know how to communicate it to customers as well as possible. And for that to happen, the RM industry has to go hand in hand with marketing and the commercial area so that the defined fare strategy has an extremely efficient way of communicating to generate sales.

Hotel Staybridge, for example, sets new promotional rates in the near periods when occupancy can still be leveraged, and communicates on social networks, and on the IHG network system, which is linked to the Global Distribution System (GDS), which makes the



broadest distribution to the other channels. They allow you to make last-minute deals and communicate rates and promotions focused on online conversion as best as possible.

## 5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In recent years, with the period of economic recession, all sectors were affected without distinction and consequently the hotel industry with the drop in accommodation rates, directly linked to the economic downturn and fewer events and business activities.

In addition to conjunctural issues, it is essential that the hotel sector create business mechanisms and strategies to minimize the effect of the crisis. The article also sought, even if in a fragile way with the case of Hotel Staybridge, to present management tools that could compete with an adverse occupation scenario.

Although it is not exclusively successful to use the MR technique to achieve a satisfactory occupancy level, it is essential to tailor the services to the current scenario, combining other strategies, the hotel in question, which belongs to an important international network, has been using this model with relative success, but it is important to emphasize the fragility of the results because it is a specific study.

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