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## COMPUTERIZATION OF RECEPTION DESK BUSINESS IN HOTEL

Vlado Galičić  
Slobodan Ivanović  
University of Rijeka, Croatia

**Abstract:** Today in hotels reception desk business is executed with help of computer technology, through specially made application programs. Modern technology recently changed a lot way of reception desk business even if it still stayed the same. Different form of computer technology facilitated receptionists' job specially internal communication connection which connects all hotel departments. In that way there are collected all necessary data only in one place. This brought faster way of working and that each receptionist now can do everything and can be in service to guests. For more quality managing of reception desk department business in hotel, today are developed particular methods of managing and account of income and out-goings made by activities in department of accommodation. With the aim of statement of business success of accommodation hotel department, hoteliers are advised to use those modern methods of records and account, because based on given indicators it is possible to state certain indexes which can be used for evaluation of quality of accommodation department business.

*Key words:* hotel, reception desk, computer technology, management.

**Sažetak:** INFORMATIZACIJA RECEPCIJSKOG POSLOVANJA U HOTELU. Danas se u hotelima recepcijsko poslovanje obavlja uz uporabu informacijske tehnologije, posredstvom namjenski izrađenih aplikacijskih programa. Suvremena je tehnologija posljednjih godina uvelike promijenila način recepcijskog poslovanja, iako je ono u suštini ostalo isto. Različiti oblici informacijske tehnologije olakšali su rad recepcionarima, a posebno interna komunikacijska veza, koja povezuje sve hotelske odjele, tako da su na jednom mjestu prikupljeni svi potrebni podaci. To je pridonijelo mnogo bržem načinu rada, ali i tome da svaki recepcionar, sada može raditi sve i time je na još većoj usluzi gostima. Za što kvalitetnije upravljanje poslovanjem recepcijskog odjela u hotelu, danas su razvijene posebne metode vođenja i obračuna prihoda i rashoda nastalih aktivnošću u odjelu smještaja. S ciljem utvrđivanja uspješnosti poslovanja smještajnog odjela hotela, hotelijeri se upućuju na korištenje takvih modernih metoda evidencije i obračuna, jer je temeljem dobivenih pokazatelja moguće izvesti određene pokazatelje, koji će koristiti za ocjenu boniteta poslovanja odjela smještaja.

*Gljučne riječi:* hotel, recepcija, informacijska tehnologija, menadžment.

<sup>1</sup> Vlado Galičić, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Slobodan Ivanović, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, University of Rijeka, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management in Opatija, Croatia.

## INTRODUCTION

Last years on tourist market there are important changes and one of them is certainly strong implementation of computer technology in almost all aspects of hotel business. Hotel management became activity in which computerization is one of the most important factors of technological modernization. But, in spite of this fact, hotel management joined relatively late in process of computerization and reasons for this situation we have to search in following facts:

- passivity and low level of education of management personnel,
- lack of informatics science and computer literacy of final users,
- traditional resistance against all that what is new,
- lack of offers of domestic producers of hardware and software for hotel management.

For all these facts we cannot diminish importance of application of computer technology in hotel management, because it is connected with process of changes and it is thought on bigger business integrity and application of modern methods of managing. In approach of building and development of hotel computer system, it is necessary to specify priority areas of computerization, taking care of specifications of hotel management. Regarding the differences in technological process, form and way of giving services in hotel management, for specifying of those priorities, it is useful to apply standard classification on:

- preparation and offering accomodation services (arrival-staying-departure or «guest cycle») and
- preparation and offering of food and bevarage services («food cycle»).

Generally, hotel computer system has to fulfill needs of those business processes which are the most critical for success of business whilst in construction of hotel computer system ad including of computer technology in hotel management, the biggest priority is to be given to those areas which are key parts for strengthening of market orientation and following of all factors that influence on expenses and final business result, that is profit. In other words, main purpose of modern hotel business can be described as process in which it is necessary to create a consumer.<sup>2</sup>

Generally we can say that introduction of hotel computer system could start with development of those computer sub-systems which will relatively in short period directly participate in improving of business results. Those are:

1. selling of accommodation capacities and reception desk (complete control of incomes),
2. control of entrance, processing and exit of food and beverage on spending places in hotel (restaurants, bar, kitchen, etc.),
3. control of all other expenses in hotel, with which it's possible to overview in profitability of each spending place and complete hotel (consumer material, energy, permanent property, small inventory, human work),
4. market information,

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<sup>2</sup> Drucker, P., *Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices*, Harper & Row, New York, 1974, p. 61

5. circling of hotel computer system with special accent on informatics support of business management.

Inside hotel computer system there is intensive communication between parts, sub-systems and optimal business system as a whole it's possible only with reciprocal effect of its all sub-systems, having in mind direct aims of a whole. Finally, all sub-systems of hotel business are integrating and with it we exclude double execution of multiple administrative jobs and simultaneous making of different and obligatory statistic reports is abandoned.

Topic of this paper is computerization of reception desk business that is generally present as a part of integral hotel computer system and it is made by following parts (sub-systems):

1. computer sub-system «selling of accommodation capacities»,
2. computer sub-system «reception desk business»,
3. computer sub-system «preparation of food»,
4. computer sub-system «restaurant business»,
5. computer sub-system «material-financial business».

Basic promoting motive in computerization of reception desk business represents more economic preparation and offering accommodation services and rationalization of managing processes with those services. In continuation we will discuss about basic regulations of computerization of reception desk business as most important part of process function of preparation and offering accommodation services from which major part of hotel income is made.

### **1. COMPUTER SUB-SYSTEM «RECEPTION DESK BUSINESS»**

Often it's thought that reception desk is the real image and mirror of each hotel and that in reception desk business, as in whole hotel industry, there is a small number of permanent and a big number of variable events. This fact is a consequence of the fact that each settled service is changeable on guest request and it is a known fact that a hotel guest can be satisfied with complete work of reception department only when he is satisfied with each employee who is employed in reception desk (with receptionist, doorman, baggage-boy and with others).<sup>1</sup>

This also says something about how computerization of reception desk business is demanding. This approach represents programming of guests' wishes in advance, in one hand, and in the other, hotel possibilities because for the most part of transactions we have to have several alternatives. Main reception desk place is usually that point in hotel where the guest has his first impressions about hotel and its personnel. This is a place where the first contact between guest and hotel is made when he arrives in hotel and this is an information centre during guest staying in hotel. This is also the place of last contact when the guest is leaving a hotel.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Rutherford, D.G., *Hotel Management and Operations* (Third Edition), John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York, 1998, p. 96

This is a reason why we have to dedicate a lot of attention to this hotel department because from functional point of view, reception desk is «nerve system which is a heart of hotel»<sup>4</sup>. Information about what's going on in hotel have to arrive to main reception desk place. So this is also a place where the needs for computer technology application the biggest one.

Usage of computer technology is most often connected with following fields of working which are connected with process function of preparation and offering the accommodation services:

- bookings,
- guests' registration and notice of leaving,
- control of guests' data,
- issuing and preparation of bills,
- managing of accommodation units,
- different reports.

In the world where there are many program packages for reception desk business, which assure performance of very different jobs for needs of successful reception desk business managing. Usage of computer technology on reception desk very often passed several evolution phases starting from computerization of administrative jobs to integration of hotel computer system and to active connections inside hotel. In the frame of preparation and offering accommodation service processes, in hotel enter all activities and jobs appearing from the moment of guest registration through controlling of guests' data during his stay in hotel and to the moment of his leaving.

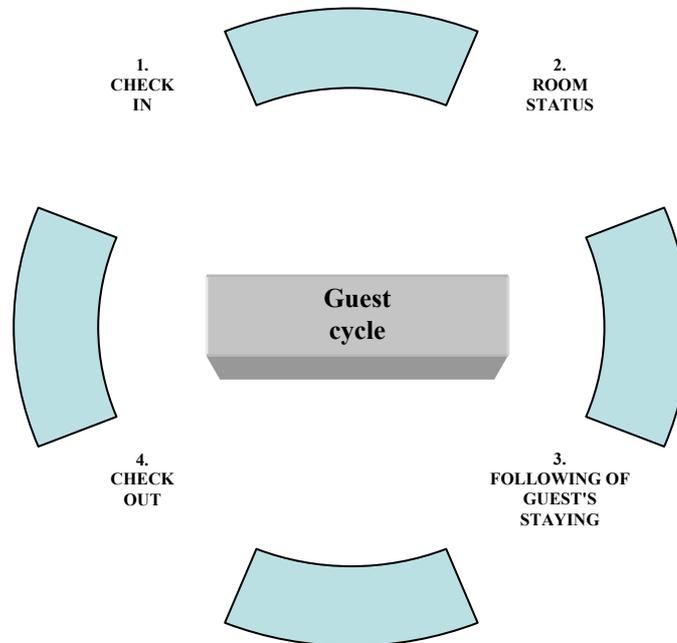
Following the structure and flowing of data in preparation and offering of accommodation services processes, it is possible to distinguish how it is divided on many sub-processes (Figure 1) and which are later on observed as processes of lower rank:

- a) check in (this is ordinary name for process of guest's receiving and registration),
- b) room status (with which it is included the accommodation process and satisfying of his needs related with a room that can have different status),
- c) following guest's staying (as a process in which there are recorded all changes regarding guest's staying in hotel, and registration of all basic and other hotel services which he had used),
- d) check out (as a process of service paying, notice of leaving and his sending-off).

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<sup>4</sup> Vallen, J.J., *Check in - Check Out principles of effective front office management*, WCB. W.C. Brown Company Dubuque, Iowa, 1974, p. 6

**Figure 1:** Sub-processes of process function of preparation and offering accomodation service



Quality program solutions for computerization of reception desk business usually include following main functions:

1. definition and maintenance of basic module (data base of permanent data),
2. selling of accomodation capacities,
3. booking of accomodation units,
4. registration of a guest,
5. account of services,
6. notice of giest's leaving,
7. making of computer basis for business decisions.

With computer sub-system «reception desk business», are included all usual functions of this business and invoicing on organizational level of hotel.

Observing from wider aspect, this sub-system represents only a part of complete hotel computer system, and it is desirable that application will be solved as interactive and simple for maintaining to final users because it's needed to pay attention that step number for access will be in minimum.

Application of reception desk business and selling of accomodation capacities can't be observed separately because they are straightly connected which is conditioned with the fact that in manual flow of documentation, selling service delivers certain

documents to reception desk to make all preparations needed for arrival of guests. This is why it is necessary that before arrival of guests all necessary conditions of guest's staying will be defined and to make room assignment. The content of good applicative solution for reception desk business has to fulfill following requests:

- following of room prices according to currency, periods and business intervals,
- following of all rates of exchange of convertible currency,
- registration of guests (individual or group),
- following of main and additional services with direct charge on guest's account,
- notice of guest's leaving by room, group or editing of different types of bills (estimate, inter calculation, week calculation, final calculation, pro facture),
- room condition (free, occupied) on day and in specific period,
- making guests' list and books of domestic and foreign guests,
- calculation of cash-desk with control of open accounts and individual items,
- making of daily, decade and monthly hotel journal,
- making of invoices and calculations on agencies and on order forms and controlling of situation of buyers' debts,
- complete statistics of realized traffic (daily, decade, monthly) with precise indexes about types (structure) of food spending in pension (breakfast, lunch, diner) and bevarages (regarding selling places),
- following of guests' statistics according their country, agency and periods,
- following of realization respecting the plan,
- history card (the files of permanent guests with registered data about their special wishes, habits, address, birthday etc.),
- guests' complaints (room questionnaire).

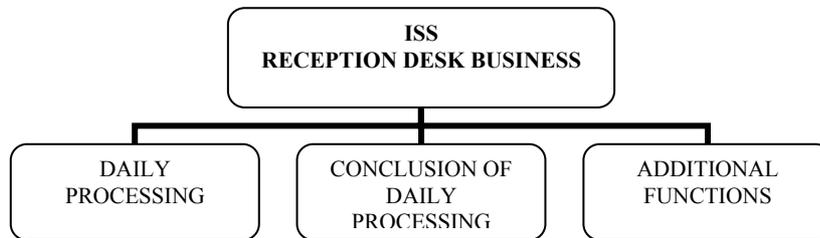
The aim of application is that from the beginning it requests entering of all parameters necessary for correct statistic and financial guests' controlling in hotel and that final aim of all will be bigger automatism in gaining the results of processing market data as basis for market exploring and marketing strategy.

## **2. DAILY PROCESSING**

After entering and checking of basic module (of all data pools of basic data), made training of all users, it is possible to start with usage of application which represents automatism of reception desk functions. Complete work with programs is possible to divide in three main parts (Figure 2), and those are:

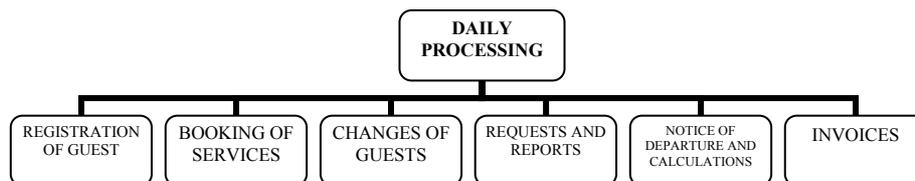
1. daily processing,
2. conclusion of daily processing,
3. additional functions.

**Figure 2:** Functional parts of computer sub-system «reception desk business»



Daily processing as one of the largest part of computer sub-system can be further on divided on work groups which represent circled cycle of arrivals, staying and leaving of a guest from hotel (Figure 3).

**Figure 3:** Groups of works on reception desk in daily data processing

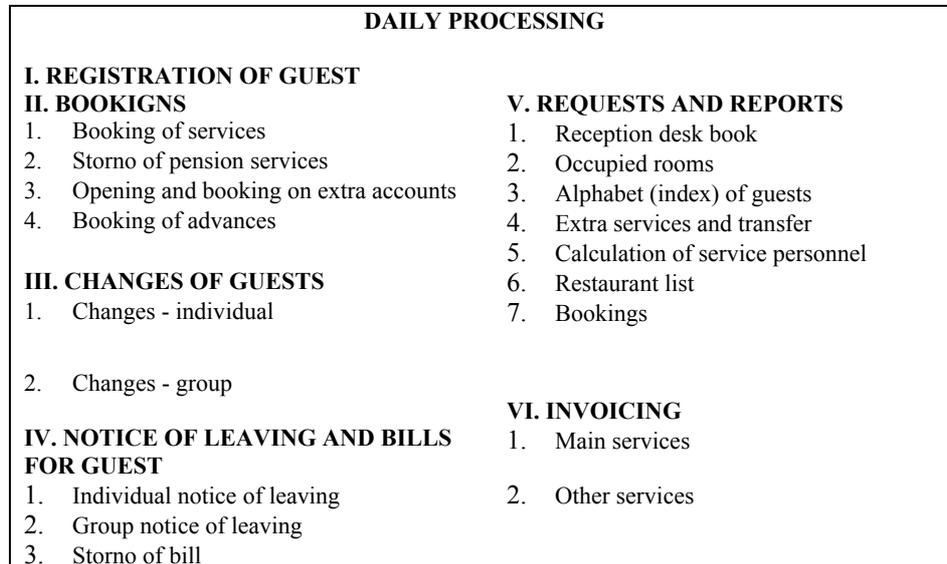


As it is visible from previous picture, jobs of daily processing are divided in six major parts, from which it is possible to list several procedures in frame of each group, as analytical imagery of all that what is going on in hotel or on reception desk in the moment when the guest arrives in hotel till his leaving (Figure 4).

Basis for this type of organization of data processing is flow of work on reception desk and application has to be conceptualized in the way that it doesn't request from the personnel some special knowledge about computers because it is normal way of working with application directing with advance defined menus.

Each application for controlling of reception desk business contain mostly major part of operations which are present on major part of reception desks so they are mostly typified with slight differences.

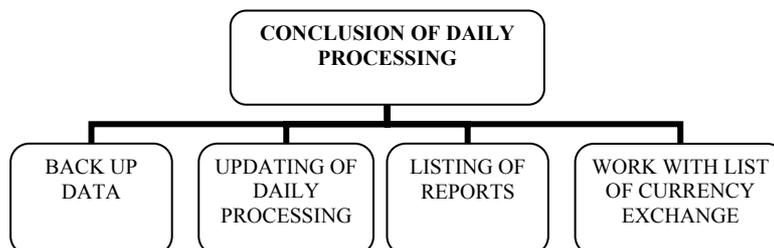
**Figure 4:** Functions of daily processing



### 3. CONCLUSION OF DAILY PROCESSING AND ADDITIONAL FUNCTIONS

Procedure of conclusion of daily processing is made after all guests are registered in system, updated their data and when all plants (service departments or selling places in hotel) stopped to work. Main functions of daily processing conclusion (Figure 5) are following:

**Figure 5:** Functions of daily processing conclusion



The most important function in daily processing conclusion is listing of reports about realized traffic in the frame of reception desk business. Basis of business of each hotel reception desk is daily calculation of traffic (hotel journal) with finances,

from which are visible results of all transactions in hotel. In making of applications it's necessary to pay attention of this because this is one of main requests.

Computer technology permitted that every day or in every moment to get necessary lists with different data. Lists with outgoing data are notably improved flow of information in hotel. Because of that in buying software hoteliers need to pay attention to quality and to easy reference of offered lists. Even if we don't have to exaggerate with variety of lists but create only those which will facilitate and improve business. Those lists need to be considered as useful exits from computer system whose task is to collect, update, storing, distribution and delivering of processed data. In process of computerization of reception desk business in hotel, as standard lists (reports) are considered following:

1. complete realized traffic in hotel,
2. service traffic in departments,
3. number of tourists and realized passings the night for each country,
4. registration forms for foreign guests,
5. book of domestic and foreign guests,
6. services according the items (analytical traffic of services),
7. list of paid bills and unpaid demands towards means of paying (cash desk situation),
8. calculation on service personnel (traffic on each receptionist),
9. list of arrivals and leavings,
10. number situation of guests with relative participation,
11. daily transfers (changes of staying conditions, transfer, etc.),
12. everyday extra services (for example safe, garage and other),
13. control lists (as basis for quality control of systems).

Only with consistent application of quality made informatics solution, in every moment is possible to know exact situation of all data important for reception desk business and also to achieve automatic making of all necessary reports of business. In the same time, it's the way how to achieve the main effect of computerization, time and energy are freed for all those jobs which are later performed on classic way because the computer, in this conception, cannot issue room keys or cards, deliver mail, give tickets for spectacles or similar. In short, with computerization of operative jobs on reception desk we realize conditions for personal approach and quality service of receptionist. This is surely an approach which always underlines that technological innovations in the area of computer technology stay only means which cannot and will not change basic character of hospitality.

To perform reception desk business in an undisturbed way, it's necessary that in the frame of computer sub-system «reception desk business» we develop some additional programs which are sometimes used (in the cases of necessary data correction or in previous processing). Those are following programs:

- correction of cash desk,
- guests' debts,
- correction of hotel journal,
- correction of guests' data on the day of arrival,
- change of journal values of food (breakfast, lunch and diner).

#### 4. ORGANIZATION, COORDINATION OF WORK AND CONTROL OF TECHNOLOGICAL PROCESS ON RECEPTION DESK

If we observe reception desk business from the point of view of modeling process, then in the request of computerization of reception desk business or reception desk functions we have to notice its stratification. There are, in fact, three main relations with which this request is expressed:

1. relation towards indirect and concrete business ad work tasks of receptionist, doorman, informatory or any other receptionist profile,
2. relation towards a whole of technological process in hotel and
3. relation towards business function of marketing and selling.

Quoted relations are reciprocally conditioned so on harmonization of those three levels of this vital hotel interest, successful work of reception desk depends. In continuation we will quote main statements in organizational, coordination and managing control business which determinate process of computerization of reception desk business.

**Organization business.** Work on reception desk is usually done in three shifts (somewhere in four), that is, the work process lasts continuously to execute and to conclude daily data processing on computer at the end of the day. Results of processing of previous day are given immediately after third shift on reception desk (and work on selling places like night bars, aperitif bars and other selling places in hotel), and directly before beginning of first shift on hotel reception desk. In this way organization of reception desk business quality improved and it got on updating. Very important changes of classical organization of work on reception desk in the way that is dedicated special attention to function of guests' registration, in work of reception desk and to functions which anticipate the registration of guests. Those are, in fact, functions with which help all work process on reception desk and behind reception desk is defined and in the case that they are regularly implicated we will get exact results of processing, very updated and automatism will be present till the end.

**Coordination jobs.** To fulfill successfully the request for computerization of reception desk business, to the main functions we have to add the functions which assure two-way communication towards other departments in hotel:

- restaurants, or on all other selling places,
- kitchen,
- household and technical service,
- phone centrals,
- registration system,
- financial service (calculation, liquidation, invoicing).

It is important to establish good coordination of hotel reception desk with other departments that exist in hotel, which depends on property character, organization structure, size, category and type of hotel. In fact, the task of reception desk is to offer guests other services which are part of arrangement of their staying or they are requested by the guests. To satisfy guest means to assure him a product and services

that he requests whenever he wants, according the standards which he expects and according the price that suits him and that is reasonable.<sup>5</sup>

Quality service doesn't tolerate even the minimum of aberrancy in relation requested – offered, which can be realizable only if, between hotel departments, there is good coordination to which the basis of adequate system of computerization in hotel.

**Managing control.** During the day (daily processing) on reception desk is made guests' registration, issuing of bills, updating of all changes in hotel, giving of information, indebtedness and invoicing, control of performed works on reception desk. In conditions of computerization of reception desk business it is necessary to implement other forms of control that is case in conventional data processing. Here, it will be satisfactory the anticipative managing control of complete process of preparation and planning processes with elimination of unpleasant surprises. Here it's firstly thought on following procedures:

- precisely entered registrations,
- preparation of rooms for guests' acceptance,
- way of paying the services which will be offered,
- defined conditions from the contract of guests' staying,
- regular disposition of employees' jobs,
- computerization of other departments in hotel.

Main aims of reception desk business should be known to all employees in that department. In that case, management as process which permits to perform certain job always means planning, organization, directing, managing control and personnel managing. This is why the job of reception desk manager can be defined through following activities:

- organization of efficacious performance of jobs and tasks,
- transmittion of jobs and responsibility on lower levels,
- managing control and analysis of complete service process with the aim of realization of better business results,
- motivation and prizing of business executor

From this there is constataion that responsibility for managing of reception desk business belongs to main reception desk manager,<sup>6</sup> which has to find the way that through all efforts of all employed to solve all problems based on their skills and work experience.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Lashley, C., Lincoln, G., *Business Development in Licensed Retailing (A unit manager's guide)*, Butterworth Heinemann, Oxford, 2003, p. 243

<sup>6</sup> Vallen, J.J., *The Art of Science of Modern Innkeeping*, Hayden Book Company, Inc., New Jersey, 1985, p. 242

<sup>7</sup> Iverson, K.M., *Introduction to Hospitality Management*, Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York, 1989, p. 99

## CONCLUSION

In conditions of computerization of reception desk business, the role of management is more and more accentuated. This is because the management is the most competent to evaluate the role of new computer technology. Implementation of computerization in reception desk business the things are changing that make presumptions that based on analytical basis, the decisions have to be made in rational way. In other words, deciding in conditions of computerization has to be based on rational deciding and less on intuition.

To let freely flowing of organization, coordination and work control process of reception desk business, there is an indispensable condition and which are continuously present before beginning of computer data processing usage and this is that except employed people in registration hotel department, about importance, possibilities and organization requests during usage of computer equipment, get to know even other departments in hotel.

With presumption that computer sub-system of reception desk business in its wholeness fulfilled main statements and it made possible good computerization of responsible management for reception desk (and whole hotel management), then we can say that it's created a good basis even for making decisions.

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