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MANAGING DIGITAL REPUTATION RISKS IN HOSPITALITY: A THREE-LEVEL FRONT DESK CONTROL MODEL

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The quality of front desk operations shapes the first impression of an accommodation facility and significantly affects the overall evaluation of a guest's stay. Under current competitive conditions, not only check-in and check-out standards are critical, but also the staff's ability to respond quickly, meaningfully, and effectively to problem situations. Studies of front-office service quality show that the greatest impact on guest satisfaction comes from response speed, communication skills, personalization of interaction, and predictability of response procedures [1; 2]. At the same time, the digitalization of hotel operations has strengthened the role of public reviews, because negative experiences associated with formal or slow staff responses quickly turn into an online reputation issue [3; 4]. Under these conditions, control of front desk service should be considered a separate object of management rather than a secondary element of the overall service system.

The purpose of these theses is to substantiate organizational tools for controlling hotel front desk service in situations when guests complain about formal, slow service and the inability of staff to resolve emerging problems independently. The basis for generalization was a case in which the object of control is the process of communication with the guest and the speed of request closure, while the complaint category is the service process that directly affects service quality and the reputation of the accommodation facility. The study applies a problem-oriented approach, the logic of root cause analysis, process modeling of front-office interaction, and the construction of a KPI system for subsequent final control.

As a result of processing the case, three basic causes of unsatisfactory service recovery were identified. The first cause is a lack of authority: front desk administrators cannot independently offer a guest a compensatory solution without the manager's approval. The second cause is the absence of a standardized response algorithm for non-standard and conflict situations. The third cause is resource-related and manifests itself in staff shortages during peak check-in and check-out hours, when one employee simultaneously handles arrivals, departures, phone calls, and complaints. These

findings are consistent with contemporary studies in which the effectiveness of front desk operations is associated with the quality of internal communication, the structuring of procedures, and the ability of frontline staff to make decisions within delegated authority [2; 5; 6].

To reduce the recurrence of service failures, a three-level control model is proposed. To validate its operational feasibility, the proposed framework underwent a two-week pilot implementation cycle at the case hotel, focusing on peak occupancy periods. Preliminary control should focus on checking shift staffing with due regard to occupancy forecasts, the functioning of the PMS and internal communication channels, as well as on a short briefing devoted to problematic requests from the previous day. Current control should include visual monitoring of the queue at the desk, recording the time of transferring and executing requests in the internal CRM or PMS, and a rule for the prompt involvement of the senior administrator in the event of a conflict risk. Final control should be carried out through the analysis of the complaint log, review of communication records, and monitoring of reviews on Booking, Google Maps, and TripAdvisor in categories related to front desk staff performance. This approach is consistent with current trends in online review management, where value lies not only in the fact that the hotel responds, but also in the relevance, timeliness, and substantive adaptation of that response to the specific situation [3; 7].

The practical solution lies in combining four groups of corrective actions. The organizational block provides for the introduction of an additional short shift for a second administrator during peak departure and arrival hours. The procedural block includes the implementation of a standardized response algorithm of the Listen – Apologize – Solve – Thank type, together with a matrix of allowable compensation limits, according to which the administrator may independently offer a compliment, a discount, or a service action within predefined authority limits. The resource block covers the installation of an additional terminal or tablet for express check-in in order to reduce the load on the main desk. The communication block provides for the creation of templates for quick but non-formal responses in the internal chat and a checklist for informing the guest about the status of problem resolution. The scientific novelty of the proposed approach lies in combining service recovery control with the logic of risk-oriented management: the critical task is not only to eliminate an existing complaint but also to prevent a single incident from turning into a systemic reputational problem.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the measures, four key indicators are proposed: the average response time to a guest request; the number of complaints about front desk operations per 100 guests; the share of repeated complaints within a week; and the guest rating of the “front desk performance” category in reviews or questionnaires. Empirical observations during the testing phase confirmed that the integration of these control loops allowed the front-office team to stabilize performance metrics and gather data. In practical terms, this system makes it possible to connect current front-office control with final reputational consequences. Research in the field of service recovery confirms that post-recovery satisfaction depends on a combination of response speed, fairness of the solution, emotional quality of the interaction, and subsequent feedback [4; 5]. That is why emergency actions in the first 24–48 hours are of decisive

importance: a short staff briefing, temporary delegation of authority for small compensations, and the manager's personal presence during peak hours make it possible not only to stabilize the process promptly, but also to gather factual data for further adjustment of SOPs.

Therefore, the problem of formal and slow front desk responses cannot be reduced solely to individual employee mistakes. It is the result of a combination of procedural, staffing, communication, and managerial deficiencies and therefore requires systematic control. The proposed model proves that service recovery at the reception desk should be regulated, measurable, and supported by real authority granted to frontline staff. The practical value of the results lies in the possibility of their use by accommodation facilities of different categories in order to increase the speed of request resolution, reduce the frequency of repeated complaints, and stabilize the digital reputation of the establishment.

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