

The ambivalence of the work of the hotel managers: an approach to ergonomics

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Abstract. This article uses the contributions of ergonomics to understand the work performed by hotel managers. The concern to understand the job of managers is something new in the ergonomics and few studies address this issue, especially in what concerns the work of hotel managers and its aspects of performance and health, which is the focus of this article. Through a literature review on the subject, it is sought to understand the managers' work activity, the impacts on their health and their organizational performance, as managers take an ambivalent position in organizations, since they have to deal directly with the demands of upper and lower hierarchies in a context of high competition, organizational changes and user requirements. It is then inferred there is a risk of increased work density for managers, bringing negative consequences to their health and organizational performance. This phenomenon, still poorly covered by ergonomics, contributes to a certain invisibility of the manager's work in society as a whole, when the manager may suffer from health problems, which are also common in certain populations of workers who do not take the managerial function.

Keywords: Ergonomics; Macroergonomics; Managers, Hospitality.

1. Introduction

The management activity, predominantly mental (cognitive and psychological), refers to the consideration of mental workload and psychological suffering involved, often linked to the demands of the manager's work organization, characterized by the exigencies of time, conflict situations, frequent task interruptions and induced mental self-acceleration. According to Wisner [1], workers who perform predominantly mental activity, sometimes also complain about physical disorders.

The manager is charged by their effectiveness. Drucker [2] "is a specific technology for those who work with knowledge within the organization." And regards the "ability to make the right things done." Being effective means to effectively "show some contribution to the organization," according to Drucker [2] in terms of expected results.

Noteworthy is the fact that managers are faced with ambivalent situations in organizations, since they have to deal directly with the demands of upper and lower hierarchies in the context of a highly competitive industry, changes in management models variability and user requirements. It is then inferred there is a risk of increase in the work density – according to Wisner [1] – for (hotel) managers, which can significantly increase their workload and bring negative consequences to their health and organizational performance.

This phenomenon that is seen in the work of managers is still little approached by ergonomics, which contributes to a certain invisibility of the manager's work in society as a whole, when, in fact the manager – it seems – may be in a way suffering of health problems, which are also common to certain populations of workers who do not take the managerial function.

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The concern to understand the work of managers is something new in the ergonomics and few studies address this issue, especially with regard to the work of hotel managers and its relation to organizational performance (criterion of production) and the managers' health, which is the focus of this work.

This article presents a theoretical and conceptual approach to the work of managers in general, and especially hotel managers, trying to comprehend, from the Ergonomic Analysis of Work, the work activity of managers and the impacts on their health and organizational performance.

The EWA – Ergonomic Work Analysis, as a method, makes possible to understand the managers activity and discover sources of possible cognitive overload and psychological distress, according to Wisner [1]. The managers, who are in charge of prescribing the work of others, have their own work prescribed by the organization, and it is this prescription that guides their activity and that is somehow materialised in the actual work. The manager's work, so to speak, is organized and organizer in the meaning expressed by Hubault *apud* De Tersac and Maggi [3].

The context of economic expansion and high competitiveness in certain sectors of the economy, reflects in increased work demands of management. When the organization does not consider this aspect and therefore does not adapt the managerial activity to this new systemic demand, the responsiveness of the manager will tend to decrease, because the workload is probably increased, as well as the work density, with negative consequences to their life quality in work, health, productivity and effectiveness.

2. The context of tourism and hotel industry

In Brazil, "historically, the growth of international tourist arrivals has exceeded the economic growth. In the period from 1975 to 2000, Tourism grew by an average of 4.6% per year, while the average world economic growth, measured by GDP, was 3.5% per year, " according to Brasil [4]. According to the WTO [6], between 2002 and 2009 there was a growth of 26.32% in international tourist arrivals in Brazil, a rate that fell to minus 5.88% between 2008 and 2009. Brazil is the 45th most competitive country in the world tourism industry, according to Switzerland [5].

Tourism is responsible for the generation of 6% to 8% of total employment in the world, being one of the economic activities that demand less investment

to generate jobs according to the WTO [6]. "The hotel industry, a segment which is intensive in labor and has got large participation in the touristic activity, demands about R\$ 16,198.60 of the activity production value for the generation of a job unit. This value is much lower than the value demanded by other economic sectors such as textiles (U.S. \$ 27,435.20), building (R \$ 28,033.00) and steel (U.S. \$ 68,205.90)", according to FIPE [7].

With regard to domestic tourism in Brazil, "with regard to lodging, the use of tourist services (hotels, hostels, campsites and resorts) account for 30.8% of total trips," according to FIPE [7]. Brazil has had a continuous increase in the number of hotels and other types of formalized temporary accommodation. "In the period from 2002 to 2008, the growth was 31.01%" (picture 1).

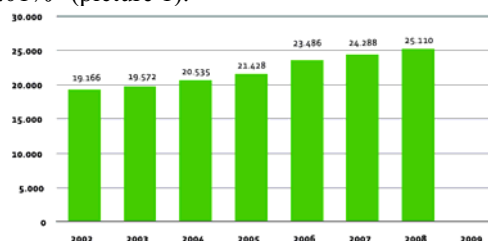


Figure 1: Number of hotel establishments, 2002-2008. Source: RAIS / MTE cited in Brazil [4].

Table 1 shows that between 2004 and 2009, the billing of lodging facilities ranged from 12% to 23.5% compared with the previous year, falling to 2.9% in 2009.

Table 1
Revenues of the private sector, 2004-2009.
Source: FGV / Brazil MTur *apud* [4].

Revenue from the private sector (% over previous year)						
CATEGORY / YEAR	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
TRAVEL AGENCIES	20,1	2,8	17,7	-1,8	25,6	-4,7
LODGING FACILITIES	17,5	23,5	12,0	12,9	19,9	2,9
OPERATORS	47,0	17,3	18,5	18,1	47,1	2,9
FAIRS AND EVENTS	5,7	13,9	27,3	19,5	13,5	11,8
CAR RENTAL	23,3	33,0	42,9	24,1	47,0	1,7
AIRLINES	-	21,5	22,8	22,8	30,1	1,3
ROAD TRANSPORT	-	-	-	2,0	12,6	2,6
INBOUND TOURISM	13,5	15,0	-4,2	22,1	13,3	-29,4

With the FIFA World Cup scheduled for 2014 and the Olympic Games for 2016 in Brazil, the construction of hotels has been stimulated by the Federal Government in order to expand the national hotel chain and meet the emerging demand for accommodation. As a result, standards of infrastructure, organization, operation, service and qualified staff have been required by government agencies, prosecutors and certification companies.

Tourism activity policies and expansion actions boost the increase in the amount of existing lodging facilities, while the underlying legal and regulatory requirements condition hotel funding, certification and accreditation to a process of modernization and changes in management practices, in order to improve the quality standard of facilities and services.

"One of the deficiencies related to the labor market in tourism is linked to the efficiency and effectiveness of professional qualification, which has great impact on the quality of services provided and the expansion and enhancement of tourism occupations" according to Brazil [4].

3. Ergonomics and management activity

"Ergonomics (or human factors) is the scientific discipline Concerned with the correct understanding of Interactions among humans and other elements of the system, and the profession That Applies Theory, Principles, data and methods to design in order to optimize human well -being and overall system performance ", according to the IEA [8].

Falzon [9] points out that the goal of Ergonomics is to prepare, with the collaboration of the several scientific disciplines of which it is made up, a body of knowledge that, under a perspective of application, must have a better adaptation of the technological means of production and work and life environments to man as a purpose.

Macroergonomics considers "organization as a sociotechnical system and incorporates the concepts and procedures of the sociotechnical systems theory in the ergonomics scope" according to Brown Jr. [10]. As an empirical science, Macroergonomics has as its scope the technological subsystem, the personnel subsystem, the external environment, organizational architecture and its interactions, according to Hendrick and Kleiner, [11].

Managerial activity in the service sector, especially in the hotel industry, is accentuated by the demand for multipurpose managers, where the commitment to the company and work mates should be constant for the best service provision [12]. In the organizational domain, ergonomics can contribute with a better definition of work situations in terms of organization and skills required, according to Boucheix et al [13].

4. Final considerations

Business competitiveness causes unrest and changes in organizations. In the hotel industry, it is not different: the need for change in the management model brings changes to the way people – managers and workers – do their work.

The analysis of managers' work can show their experience and skills, their difficulties in work managing, job demands in terms of time filling and results, the content of tasks and impacts on health.

The organizational approach of Ergonomics, permeated by EWA, enables the analysis of the of managers' activity, showing the relation between users' demand for accommodation and quality services in hotels and managers' health and performance.

Applied to the hotel industry, Macro (ergonomics) may help to establish a set of measures to improve efficiency and effectiveness of the sociotechnical system, in terms of health, safety, quality and productivity.

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