


**LEVEL OF FAILURES IN SERVICES AT FOUR-STAR HOTELS IN THE CITY OF CAMPOS DE JORDÃO/SP**

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Article history:</b>  <b>Received:</b> December, 02<sup>nd</sup> 2023  <b>Accepted:</b> March, 11<sup>th</sup> 2024</p>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> This research aims to investigate, using the Servqual model, the level of gaps in services offered by four-star hotels in a winter season city, characteristic of Switzerland, called Campos do Jordão/SP, Brazil.</p>
<p><b>Keywords:</b>            Quality of Services;            Hospitality;            Competitive Advantage;            Four-Star Hotels.</p>	<p><b>Theoretical Framework:</b> Quality of service is crucial to the success of any service organization. As customers participate in the delivery and consumption of services, they closely interact with various aspects of organizations, critically evaluating the services they provide. Customers assess the quality of a service they receive by comparing it with the service they desire. Thus, quality of service plays a critical role in adding value to the overall service experience.</p>
	<p><b>Methodology:</b> This research uses qualitative and quantitative data. The data collection instrument was a Servqual questionnaire published by Parasuraman et al. (1988), which was applied to eight hotels (owners, managers, and customers). In this way, we verify significant dysfunctions and service results about the competitive factors that customers value.</p> <p><b>Findings:</b> This research sought to investigate the level of gaps in the services offered by hotels in the city of Campos do Jordão, the size of gaps related to competitive, strategic, and operational dysfunctions in the businesses surveyed, and to test a set of hypotheses. All of the hypotheses were confirmed. The research did not observe significant dysfunctions pointing to strong adherence among the agents, so much so that the medians of all the gaps were null. From the results, it can be concluded that the competitive gap is influenced equally by the operational and strategic gaps.</p> <p><b>Research, Paratical and Social Implications:</b> This research sought to investigate the level of gaps in the services offered by hotels in the city of Campos do Jordão, the size of gaps related to competitive, strategic, and operational dysfunctions in the businesses surveyed, and to test a set of hypotheses. All of the hypotheses were confirmed. The research did not observe significant dysfunctions pointing to strong adherence among the agents, so much so that the medians of all the gaps were null. From the results, it can be concluded that the competitive gap is influenced equally by the operational and strategic gaps.</p> <p><b>Originality/Value:</b> The results help stimulate new research on the quality of services and facilitate an analysis of the procedures used to meet the expectations of hospitality in hotels. Finally, this study has presented some initial considerations and guidelines for the elaboration of specific projects that allow quantifying the quality of services and developing actions that reduce or even eliminate competitive dysfunctions, as well as contributing to future studies regarding the proposition of new models for the evaluation of the quality of services.</p> <p>Doi: <a href="https://doi.org/10.26668/businessreview/2024.v9i3.4474">https://doi.org/10.26668/businessreview/2024.v9i3.4474</a></p>

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## NÍVEL DE FALHAS NOS SERVIÇOS EM HOTÉIS QUATRO ESTRELAS DA CIDADE DE CAMPOS DE JORDÃO/SP

### RESUMO

**Objetivo:** Esta pesquisa tem como objetivo investigar, utilizando o modelo Servqual, o nível de lacunas nos serviços oferecidos por hotéis quatro estrelas em uma cidade de inverno, característica da Suíça, chamada Campos do Jordão/SP, Brasil.

**Referencial Teórico:** A qualidade do serviço é crucial para o sucesso de qualquer organização de serviços. À medida que os clientes participam na entrega e no consumo de serviços, eles interagem estreitamente com vários aspectos das organizações, avaliando criticamente os serviços que prestam. Os clientes avaliam a qualidade de um serviço que recebem comparando-o com o serviço que desejam. Assim, a qualidade do serviço desempenha um papel crítico na agregação de valor à experiência geral do serviço.

**Método:** Esta pesquisa utiliza dados qualitativos e quantitativos. O instrumento de coleta de dados foi um questionário Servqual publicado por Parasuraman et al. (1988), que foi aplicado a oito hotéis (proprietários, gestores e clientes). Dessa forma, verificamos disfunções e resultados de serviço significativos sobre os fatores competitivos que os clientes valorizam.

**Contastações:** Esta pesquisa buscou investigar o nível de lacunas nos serviços oferecidos pelos hotéis da cidade de Campos do Jordão, o tamanho das lacunas relacionadas a disfunções competitivas, estratégicas e operacionais nos negócios pesquisados e testar um conjunto de hipóteses. Todas as hipóteses foram confirmadas. A pesquisa não observou disfunções significativas que apontassem para forte adesão entre os agentes, tanto que as medianas de todas as lacunas foram nulas. A partir dos resultados, pode-se concluir que o gap competitivo é influenciado igualmente pelos gaps operacionais e estratégicos.

**Pesquisa, Implicações e Práticas Sociais:** Esta pesquisa buscou investigar o nível de lacunas nos serviços oferecidos pelos hotéis da cidade de Campos do Jordão, o tamanho das lacunas relacionadas a disfunções competitivas, estratégicas e operacionais nos negócios pesquisados, e testar um conjunto de hipóteses. Todas as hipóteses foram confirmadas. A pesquisa não observou disfunções significativas que apontassem para forte adesão entre os agentes, tanto que as medianas de todas as lacunas foram nulas. A partir dos resultados, pode-se concluir que o gap competitivo é influenciado igualmente pelos gaps operacionais e estratégicos.

**Originalidade/Valor:** Os resultados ajudam a estimular novas pesquisas sobre a qualidade dos serviços e facilitam a análise dos procedimentos utilizados para atender às expectativas da hotelaria. Por fim, este estudo apresentou algumas considerações iniciais e diretrizes para a elaboração de projetos específicos que permitam quantificar a qualidade dos serviços e desenvolver ações que reduzam ou mesmo eliminem disfunções competitivas, bem como contribuir para estudos futuros no que diz respeito à proposição de novos modelos para a avaliação da qualidade dos serviços.

**Palavras-chaves:** Qualidade de Serviços, Hospitalidade, Vantagem Competitiva, Hoteis Quatro Estrelas.

## NIVEL DE FALLA EN SERVICIOS EN HOTELES CUATRO ESTRELLAS EN LA CIUDAD DE CAMPOS DE JORDÃO/SP

### RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** Esta investigación tiene como objetivo investigar, utilizando el modelo Servqual, el nivel de brechas en los servicios ofrecidos por hoteles de cuatro estrellas en una ciudad invernal, característica de Suiza, llamada Campos do Jordão/SP, Brasil.

**Marco Teórico:** La calidad del servicio es crucial para el éxito de cualquier organización de servicios. A medida que los clientes participan en la entrega y el consumo de servicios, interactúan estrechamente con varios aspectos de las organizaciones, evaluando críticamente los servicios que brindan. Los clientes evalúan la calidad de un servicio que reciben comparándolo con el servicio que desean. Por lo tanto, la calidad del servicio juega un papel fundamental al agregar valor a la experiencia general del servicio.

**Método:** Esta investigación utiliza datos cualitativos y cuantitativos. El instrumento de recolección de datos fue un cuestionario Servqual publicado por Parasuraman et al. (1988), que se aplicó a ocho hoteles (propietarios, administradores y clientes). De esta manera verificamos disfunciones significativas en el servicio y resultados sobre los factores competitivos que los clientes valoran.

**Resultados y Discusión:** Esta investigación buscó investigar el nivel de las brechas en los servicios ofrecidos por los hoteles en la ciudad de Campos do Jordão, el tamaño de las brechas relacionadas con disfunciones competitivas, estratégicas y operativas en los negocios investigados y probar un conjunto de hipótesis. Todas las hipótesis fueron confirmadas. La investigación no observó disfunciones significativas que indicaran una fuerte adherencia entre los agentes, hasta el punto de que las medianas de todas las brechas fueron cero. De los resultados se puede concluir que la brecha competitiva está igualmente influenciada por las brechas operativas y estratégicas.

**Implicaciones de la Investigación Sociales:** Esta investigación buscó investigar el nivel de brechas en los servicios ofrecidos por los hoteles en la ciudad de Campos do Jordão, el tamaño de las brechas relacionadas con disfunciones competitivas, estratégicas y operativas en los negocios investigados, y probar un conjunto de hipótesis. Todas las hipótesis fueron confirmadas. La investigación no observó disfunciones significativas que indicaran una fuerte adherencia entre los agentes, hasta el punto de que las medianas de todas las brechas fueron cero. De los resultados se puede concluir que la brecha competitiva está igualmente influenciada por las brechas operativas y estratégicas.

**Originalidad/Valor:** Los resultados ayudan a estimular nuevas investigaciones sobre la calidad de los servicios y facilitan el análisis de los procedimientos utilizados para satisfacer las expectativas de la industria hotelera. Finalmente, este estudio presentó algunas consideraciones iniciales y lineamientos para el desarrollo de proyectos específicos que permitan cuantificar la calidad de los servicios y desarrollar acciones que reduzcan o incluso eliminen disfunciones competitivas, así como contribuir a futuros estudios en lo que respecta a proponer nuevos modelos a evaluar. la calidad de los servicios.

**Palabras clave:** Calidad de Servicios, Hospitalidad, Ventaja Competitiva, Hoteles de Cuatro Estrellas.

## 1 INTRODUÇÃO

Quality of service is crucial to the success of any service organization. As customers participate in the delivery and consumption of services, they closely interact with various aspects of organizations, critically evaluating the services they provide. Customers assess the quality of a service they receive by comparing it with the service they desire. Thus, quality of service plays a critical role in adding value to the overall service experience.

Hotels constitute the main element of tourism in the city of Campos do Jordão/SP(BR). They represent an active component of services that attract and generate wealth for the city. They offer a differentiated service, added value, and competitive advantage, primarily regarding customer support.

In a context of fierce competition, hotels seek to serve customers such that their expectations are fully met, with the striving for excellence in services highlighted as an essential strategy in the relationship process with the client. Indeed, customers' level of satisfaction is an important issue that must be measured. Thus, the present research contributes to managing the service strategy of particularly four-star hotels.

This study analyzes gaps in service quality concerning the expectations and perceptions of owners, managers, and customers in the Campos do Jordão hotel segment. In this context, the investigation intends to analyze the level of competitive dysfunction, operational dysfunction, and strategic dysfunction. Evaluation of the expectations and perceptions of customers and responsible owners and managers seems highly subjective, necessitating capable instruments. Servqual is a vital evaluation tool in this regard, as it assists in the differentiation of analysis criteria.

For a company to provide high-quality services, a minimum level of competitive dysfunction must be observed; that is, a reduced level of gaps is required between expectations and the level offered. Parasuraman et al. (1994) argues that the key to ensuring good quality of service is achieved when customer perceptions exceed their expectations of the service quality, and the ideal value of these gaps should be equal to zero.

Each specific gap within an analysis influences the whole perception of the quality of service and customer satisfaction. This represents the general mismatch between company management and customers.

**Gap 1** is the result of inaccurate information concerning the expectations of guests. For example, management can adequately evaluate the time guests are willing to spend at check-in at a hotel's reception desk but may not have enough staff to meet those expectations.

**Gap 2** occurs due to a discrepancy between the management's perceptions of the expectations of the clients and the specifications of the quality of the service, including poorly executed services, a project of indefinite service, a non-systematic process of new services, or a lack of resources.

**Gap 3** results from poor human resources management performance, indefinite roles, conflict of interests, a weak evaluation system, and a lack of teamwork. This gap appears when the guest does not understand or know his or her role and responsibility in the service process.

**Gap 4** is due to a lack of marketing communications and integrated services, i.e., interactive marketing that is not part of the communication plan, as well as a lack of internal marketing and managing customer expectations through all forms of communication.

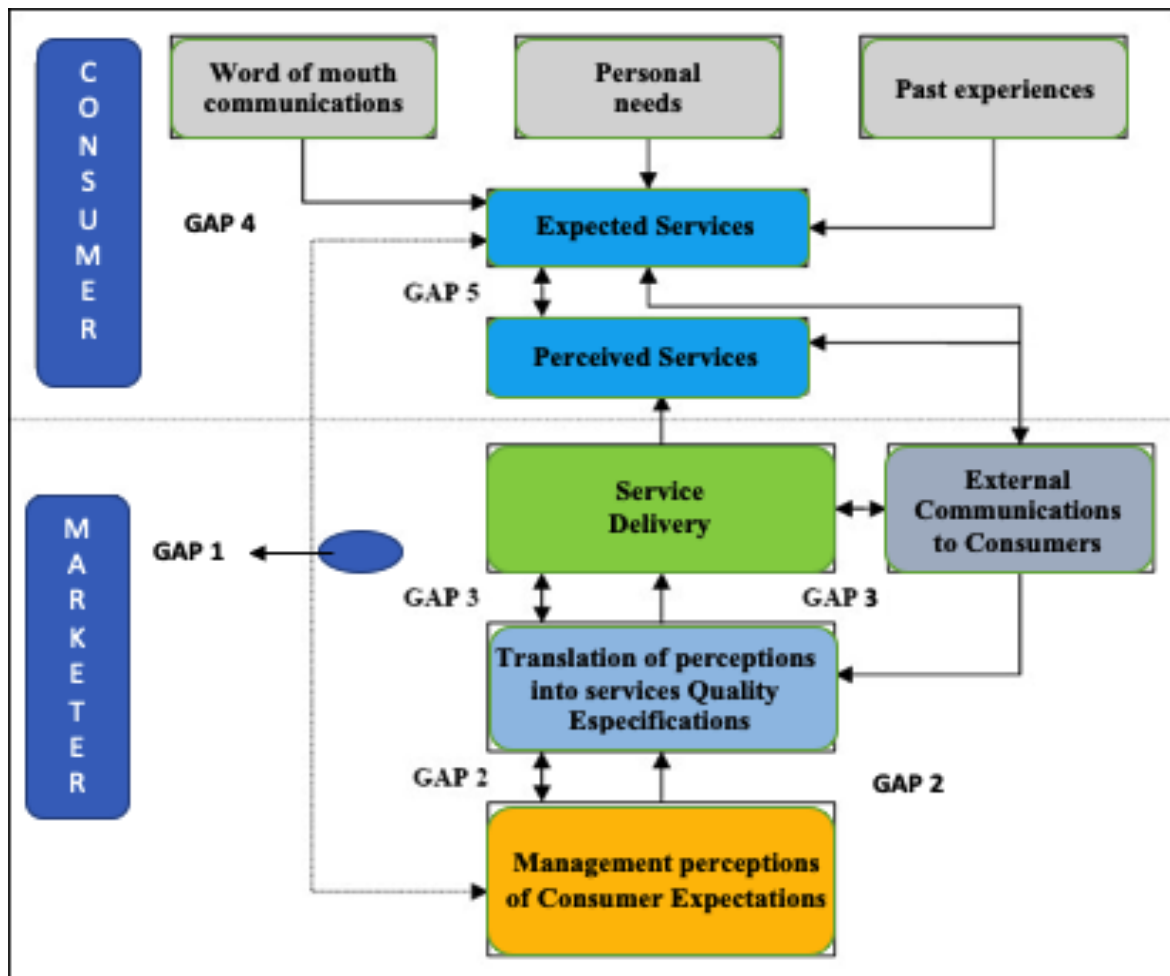
**Gap 5** emerges as the difference between clients' perceptions and experiences of services at a hotel, which may be the result of any of the gaps or a combination of these.

The formation of the Servqual scale later modified the Gap model to evaluate expectations and perceptions of service quality, developed initially through several studies between 1985 and 1994 (Parasuraman et al., 1985, 1988, 1994). The five dimensions of quality comprise (see Figure 1):

- Perceptibility – the presence of physical elements.
- Reliability – the capability of a promised service to be delivered in a specific manner.
- Responsibility – carefulness, willingness to help, and to offer a fast service.
- Safety – knowledge, politeness, and trustworthiness of employees.
- Empathy – delivering a personalized service and viewing each customer as an individual.

**Figure 1**

*A concept of service quality and its implications for future research.*

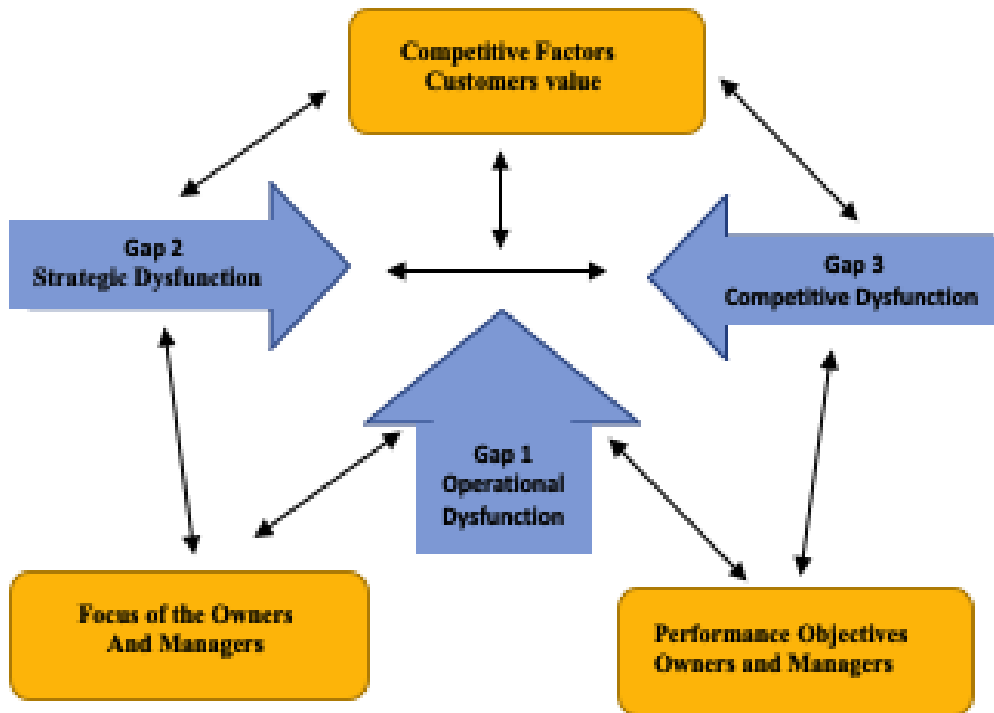


Source: Parasuraman et al. (1985).

According to Babackus and Boller (1992), competitive dysfunction can be evaluated by the concept of quality service failure analysis, widely accepted as a method for measuring consumers' perceptions of service quality. Thus, this research estimates the size of gaps related to strategic (Gap 1), competitive (Gap 2), and operational (Gap 3) dysfunctions in eight four-star hotels and demonstrates whether these are significant, as confirmed in Figure 2 below:

**Figure 2**

*Research object dysfunctions*



*Source: Author*

For ease of interpretation, we tried to define these dysfunctions as in Figure 3 below.

**Figure 3**

*Description of the dysfunctional object of the research*

DYSFUNCTION	DESCRIPTION
Operational gP&F	The gap between the competitive factors valued by the customers' expectations and the competitive factors valued by the owners.
Strategic gP&Cexp	The gap between the competitive performance factors prioritized by the managers and the competitive factors valued by the owners.
Competitive gF&Cper	The gap between the competitive performance factors prioritized by the managers and the competitive factors valued by the owners.

Source: Authors

Competitive dysfunction essentially arises as the result of the two strategic and operational dysfunctions mentioned above (Figure 2). It should be noted that the evaluation of the perception of the client seems to be subjective where there are no capable instruments available. In this way, Servqual is a vital evaluation tool because it assists in the differentiation of analysis criteria.

Based on this, a question arises: What is the level of competitive dysfunction of hotels evaluated through the conceptual model of service quality flaw analysis, called Servqual? I am assumed that the theme is quality in services aimed at identifying competitive dysfunction, thereby analyzing competitiveness and competitive advantage, how these occur and how they can be measured in the hotels of the city.

The objective of this research was to evaluate, through the Servqual model, the level of competitive dysfunction (gaps) and to identify the contributions made by strategic dysfunction and operational dysfunction.

Concerning the hotels in the city of Campos do Jordão in the state of São Paulo, this paper offers the following hypotheses:

Ha: Gap 1: failure to perceive consumer expectations concerning the owner's view.

Hb: Gap 2: failure to convert the owner's view of customer expectations into quality specifications for the operating area is low.

Hc: Gap 3: failure to provide a service concerning the quality offered is low; that is, there needs to be a small discrepancy between the specifications of the quality of service and the provision of the service.

## 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### 2.1 COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE REVIEW

According to Porter (2015), competitiveness is the ability of companies to formulate and implement competition strategies that permit the expansion or conservation of sustainable market positions. Many companies compete for markets and resources, measure competitiveness through relative participation in markets or profitability, and use competitive strategies to improve their performance. This forms the basis of Ferraz; Kupfer & Haguenaer (1995) argument that competitiveness makes one company more profitable than its rivals. However, Barbosa (2001) highlights other aspects of competitiveness.

Organizational competition occurs through economic as well as technical and institutional factors, in addition to pressures to comply with technical standards, other organizations, and socially accepted standards of conduct. Given this requirement, presenting a reputation of efficiency, prestige, and socially legitimized behavior is necessary. Competitive advantage as

any characteristic of the company's product or service that customers recognize as a positive differentiator compared to other companies, causing them to become attracted to it.

For Robbins (2015), competitive advantage is conferred by the capacity or circumstance in which a company has a relative advantage over its competitors. A company will be more competitive where its quality of services at a given cost level is higher or where its costs are lower than its competitors (Wongleedee, 2016). In the hotel industry, service quality in terms of customers' expectations and perceptions may lead to customer loyalty, enhanced image, reduced costs, and increased business performance (Ramanathan & Ramanathan, 2011).

According to Barney (2011), a company has a competitive advantage when it can generate higher economic value for customers than its competitors, this being defined by the difference between the benefits perceived by customers concerning the product or service and the cost of production and sale. Service quality is critical in providing a competitive advantage to a hotel, and therefore, the best way for hospitality organizations to gain competitive differentiation is through service quality (Crawford, 2013).

## 2.2 QUALITY OF SERVICES

Services are defined as an activity of an intangible nature that occurs through intentions between clients and contact staff or the goods and physical resources of the service provider (Grönroos, 2003). Services represent a combination of results and experiences provided to and received by the client; the process of transformation in services primarily involves information and variables that cannot be controlled; the customer's participation in the process is simultaneous to the process, all of which makes quality control difficult (Jonhston & Clark, 2002).

Quality of services is more abstract and challenging regarding product quality, which can be measured objectively through various indicators (Lovelock & Wright, 2003). According to Parasuraman et al. (1985), the differences between services and products can be summarized under four categories: intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity, and permissibility. For Cronin and Taylor (1992), performance should be the most appropriate measurement parameter. Hooper et al. (2013) stated that employees are among the most influential factors regarding customers' perceptions of service quality.

Service quality has been identified as crucial to the hotel industry and is measured to assist managers in making decisions, thus improving overall efficiency and profits. Service



quality has gradually been recognized as a key factor in gaining a competitive advantage and retaining customers (Nasution, 2016).

In the conceptual model of Parasuraman et al. (1985), ten dimensions of quality were introduced, specifically reliability, responsiveness, competence, access, courtesy, communication, credibility, security, understanding and tangibility. Parasuraman et al. (1988) later developed a multi-item scale (Servqual) to measure the quality of services and simplified the ten dimensions into five dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy.

In addition, Wyckoff and Lovelock (2001) have stated that the quality of service is seen as the degree of excellence in meeting customer needs. According to their research on the quality of service provided in a restaurant and an airline, customers are willing to pay more if the service is better in value. The Quality-of-Service Gap Model by Parasuraman et al. (1985) defines quality of service as the gap between what is expected (the service that should be provided) and what is perceived (what the customer perceives with the service provided).

The model is used to explore discrepancies in the quality of the service process to identify the factors a hotel needs to improve. Any gaps in the quality-of-service operation will lead to customer dissatisfaction. The model demonstrates that the smaller the gap, the better the quality of service provided and the greater the customer satisfaction. It also recognizes that these gaps form a source of dissatisfaction. The service standards, performance, communication, and quality act as a basis for understanding and measuring the quality of the service (Brown & Swartz, 1989). The differences in perception may be due to various reasons that the managers and employees generally prefer to avoid mentioning deficiencies in the quality of services. The factors contributing to hotel service quality are often the services related to employee behavior and tangibles (Dedeoglu & Demirer, 2015).

Gaps and images are also correlated. If a hotel has the right idea, a small service gap tends to be acceptable. On the other hand, even a tiny gap can lead to perceptions of harmful customers if it has a bad image.

Du and Tang (2014) have highlighted that “gap analysis is a direct and appropriate way to identify inconsistencies between suppliers’ and customers’ perception of service performance. to formulate strategies and tactics to ensure consistent expectations and experiences, thus increasing the likelihood of satisfaction and a positive quality assessment. Numerous empirical studies have identified substantial differences in the expectations of service quality between customers and management in the service industry (Dedeoğlu & Demirer, 2015; Torres et al., 2013). The development of quality in services is different from the case of the industrial

product. Characterization of the service is essential to understanding the challenges inherent to quality development processes. The characteristics highlighted include:

1. generally, the service is intangible;
2. generally, ownership cannot be transferred;
3. service cannot be resold;
4. usually, the service cannot be demonstrated as it does not exist before purchase;
5. a service cannot be stocked;
6. production and consumption generally coincide;
7. production, consumption, and often the sale are made in the same place;
8. the service cannot be transported (although customers often can);
9. the client directly participates in the operation;
10. in most cases, direct contact should be necessary (Normann, 1993).

Services are thus recognized as the sector characterized by the provision of an intangible benefit and are, therefore, difficult to quantify through effective performance measures. The consumer must evaluate the quality of the service provided based on the comparison, that is, the consumer compares what he or she wants to receive with what he or she receives, which is related to the gaps model proposed by Parasuraman et al. (1985, 1988). In this way, the quality of the service does not simply depend on the service itself but additionally on expectations of the provision of the service (Grönroos, 2003).

According to Garvin (1992), the association of quality management and service excellence with strategic planning and its implications for profitability and market share can constitute an essential competitive advantage for companies in the Brazilian industry.

### 2.3 SERVQUAL

The Gaps model proposed by Parasuraman et al. (1985, 1988) suggests that clients perceive quality as a departure from original expectations and the service received. These authors highlight three essential characteristics of the quality of services: a) clients find it more challenging to evaluate the quality of services than that of a good; b) perceptions of quality in services result from a comparison of consumer expectations and final performance; and c) quality assessments do not solely depend on the final result of the service, but also on the process of providing the service (Prabhakar & Ram, 2013).

The first two statements present the characteristics of the services. In contrast, the third reflects the conceptual basis for the model, identifying a set of discrepancies (gaps) between the perception of service quality and the tasks associated with service delivery. The key factors influencing expectations include personal communication, personal needs, experience, and external communications. The Servqual model measures service quality by comparing pre-service expectations and post-service perceptions (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

Based on a series of quantitative and qualitative studies, Parasuraman et al. (1985) have identified ten overall dimensions determining the quality of service (before consolidating them as just five in 1988) to represent the evaluation criteria used by consumers. Five gaps are noted as the causes of failures in service delivery. At the same time, in the revised version, five dimensions of quality (reliability, promptness, reliability, hospitality, and tangibility) are used for evaluation. Each of these dimensions was deployed in four or five qualifying items, generating 22 qualifying items that, when applied before the service is performed, collect information about the client's expectations regarding the ideal service.

The Servqual scale only measures service quality, not customer satisfaction (Parasuraman et al., 1985). Thus, Servqual defines a hierarchy of items constructed to measure clients' expectations (E) and perceptions (P) regarding the service provided. The quality (Q) results from the difference between (P) and (E), that is:  $(Q = P - E)$ .

If expectations (E) exceed perceptions (P), the perceived quality being below the satisfactory level will lead to an unacceptable rate, which will increase the discrepancy between (P) and (E).

As indicated by research conducted by Ladhari (2008); Yu et al. (2014); Silva Rodrigo, Bísvaro, Nogueira, Oliveira, & Arraes, (2016), the use of Servqual as a generic tool to evaluate the quality of services in a diverse range of sectors has been widely reported in the last two decades. According to Ladhari (2008), numerous studies have been undertaken to question the model's universality concerning the adequacy of the five dimensions used to evaluate any service. Qualitative aspects such as the hierarchical structure of service quality and the cultural characteristics that affect client perception have also been studied. However, according to Ladhari (2008) little effort has been made to obtain empirical evidence corroborating the alternative proposals reported. The Servqual scale has been widely accepted as a method for assessing consumers' perceptions of quality in services. According to Bayraktaroglu & Atek (2010), the Servqual model represents a useful tool to measure service quality in virtually every service industry field.

## 2.4 HOSPITALITY

As already noted, hospitality is not only about receiving a visitor. Instead, it consists of the union or, better the approach of cultures, customs, and different people as a relationship of exchange of values between the visited and the visitor. Hospitality can be understood in terms of diverse concepts such as comfort, receptivity, sociability, food, leisure, etc. For Lashley (2004), hospitality is creating or consolidating relationships with strangers, whereby society changes, grows, renews, and reproduces within the social, private, and commercial domains.

However, for Godbout (1999) hospitality consists of crossing a border without abolishing it, a form of temporary permission. It is the first degree of commitment, an expense that can dilate or contract, multiplying relationships within or interacting in the direction of other groups (Gotman, 2001). The one who receives food, space, protection, and security, even if this gift is not unconditional (Godbout & Caillé, 1999).

Grinover (2002) defines hospitality as the act of welcoming and providing services to someone who is, for some reason, outside his or her place of domicile. Hospitality does not consist of giving space to the other but of receiving the other in the area. Lashley (2004, p. 21) best expresses this as “the broader understanding of hospitality suggests, first and foremost, that this is fundamental, the relationship built between host and guest.” Moreover, Camargo (2008, p. 15) states, "Nothing more represents than the hospitality that the act of welcoming people who knock on the door. The perfection of knowing how to receive their guests means the attention given to them. The manner of talking and addressing the client is more important than the work process itself. In considering that hospitality should be understood in its broadest sense of qualifying the social relations between an established community and the foreigners (to the place) who will come to visit it or rest "(Gotman, 2008, pp. 115-134). Is faced with questions that, in different ways, are placed in the everyday life of contemporary cities in a particularly acute form.

For any study of hospitality, one must consider Grinover's (2003: 50) argument that:

... the concept of hospitality extends beyond the confines of hotels, restaurants, shops or entertainment establishments. That implies the need to resort to historical, epistemological, and empirical analyses of the actions undertaken in hospitality.

When one studies hospitality, one must understand that what Camargo (2008) describes within substantive hospitality is a social fact constructed by several scenarios. In how the

individual sees himself or herself, the way the surroundings are seen, felt, and perceived are unique forms of perception that act directly or indirectly in the projection process that the tourist will have on the place visited. According to Kozel and Kashiwagi (2005), perception is associated with constructing cognitive maps and belongs to a single individual.

Hospitality is not only a sociocultural phenomenon but an aggregate of several elements. However, portraying this phenomenon as a product ready to be marketed would disregard what cannot be sold but merely exchanged, precisely the symbolism involved in human interaction.

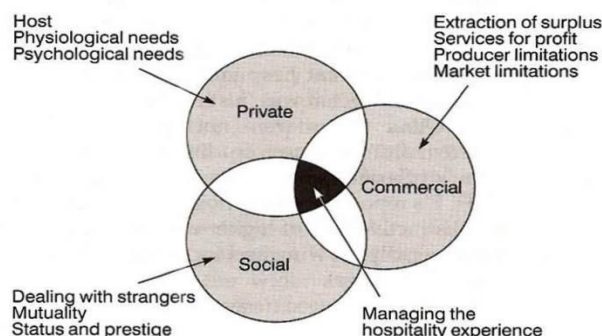
As Lashley and Morrison (2004, p. 5) argue:

Each domain represents an aspect of the offer of hospitality, which is both independent and superimposed. The social field of hospitality considers the social scenarios in which hospitality and acts connected with the hospitality condition occur, along with the impacts of social forces on the production and consumption of food, drink, and accommodation. The private domain considers the scope of the issues associated with the offer of the “trinity” (Offer of food, drinks, and housing).

Furthermore, as the usual tasks within hospitality are conducted, it is necessary to meet specific priorities, as Wada (2007, p. 27) notes:

Among their usual tasks, those who have priority in the commercial domain are in areas of control, procurement, and auditing. Areas of advice or support to the operation, such as human resources, marketing, legal, deployments, and even general management, feel divided in meeting the various demands, often without realizing that they are dealing with different domains of hospitality.

According to Selwin (2004), hospitality is a set of behaviors originating from the very foundation of society, whose primary function is to establish new relationships or to strengthen existing relationships. In this sense, Camargo (2004) shows hospitality is the human act of welcoming, hosting, feeding, and entertaining people temporarily displaced.

**Figure 4***Domains of hospitality*

Source: Lashley and Morrison (2004: 6)

Thus, hospitality becomes an act of closer relations between people who, according to Lashley and Morrison (2004), are divided into three domains (social, private, and commercial) based on the scenarios where these activities take place, by Figure 4.

### 3 MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present research utilizes qualitative and quantitative data. The data collection instrument was a Servqual questionnaire published by Parasuraman et al. (1988). The sample comprised eight four-star hotels in Campos do Jordão, São Paulo. The research was random and for convenience and was carried out from June to July 2017.

Three samples were created for operational research:

Sample 1 - refers to the experimental group of eight owners (P).

Sample 2 - refers to the group of eight managers (G).

Sample 3 - refers to the random group of clients surveyed, in turn divided into:

- a) Customer expectation (Cexp): referring to the group of clients, before lodging (total of 140 respondents)
- b) Customer perception (Cper): referring to the group of clients at the time during the lodging, a total of 136 respondents.

The SPSS 20.0 software was used to analyze and calculate 20 responses to the questionnaire, and the medians were calculated for each set of reactions. The same was done for the five items of the quality dimension of Parasuraman et al. (1988), that is, the same tabulation form was used, and the respondents' median for each size was calculated.

According to Vergara (2000), data can be treated either quantitatively using statistical procedures, which can be parametric (analysis of variance, correlation, Student’s t-test, chi-square regression, proportion) or non-parametric (Mann-Whitney, Kruskal-Wallis, Wilcoxon), or qualitatively, codifying and presenting them in a more structured way before analyzing them. One can also analyze the data using both forms in the same study, which occurs when a descriptive statistic is made to support or trigger a subjective interpretation.

Appropriate analytical instruments were used to test the hypotheses and answer the questions raised by this research. Non-parametric techniques were used owing to the typology of the data. BioEstat V.05 was used to analyze the data. Then, to verify the adhesion level, the chi-square and G tests were utilized as non-parametric tests to compare samples related to the Wilcoxon test.

#### 4 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Considering the eight hotels surveyed, the following hypotheses were tested:

**Hypothesis Ha, Gap 1:** failure to perceive consumer expectation is low; there is a slight discrepancy between what the customer expects and the owner’s perception. In the test concerning the adhesion of Gap 1 samples in which the owner of the item versus the expectations of clients (Strategic Dysfunction) are analyzed, the results of the chi-square test using the data of the medians obtained showed that at a significance level of 0.05, there is a strong correlation ( $p = 1.0000$ ), as can be observed in Table 1 below.

**Table 1**

*Chi-square test between the variables of owner and customer expectations*

Statistics	Results
Sum of categories	153.0
Chi-square	0.262
Degrees of freedom	20
(p)=	10.000

Source: Research data

Next, to test the Ha, the descriptive statistics of Gap 1 was applied according to data already obtained, which can be observed in Table 2. This demonstrates the test of the Ha hypothesis between the owner variables and customer expectations.

**Table 2**

*Descriptive data of Gap 1 samples' descriptive statistics*

Statistics	Owner	Customer expectations	Gap
Maximum	7.00	7.00	1.00
Total amplitude	1.00	1.00	2.00
Median	7.00	7.00	0.00
First quartile (25%)	64.000	69.000	0.0000
Third quartile (75%)	69.000	69.000	0.5000
Interquartile deviation	0.4900	0.000	0.4900
Average arithmetic	6.77	6.92	0.15
Variance	0.12	0.08	0.22
Standard deviation	0.33	0.27	0.44
Standard error	0.08	0.07	0.11
Coefficient of variation	4.96%	4.24%	280.78%
Asymmetry (g1)	-1.04	-3.05	-0.26
Curtose (g2)	0.05	8.08	1.41

Source: Research data

Subsequently, to test the  $H_a$ , the descriptive statistics of Gap 1 were applied according to data already obtained, which can be observed in Table 3. This presents the sample mean of Gap 1 between owner variables and customer expectations.

**Table 3**

*Test t: a sample of Gap 1*

Statistics	Gap 1
Sample size	20
Average population	0.0000
Sample average	0.1592
Default error	0.0952
(t)	16.697
Degrees of freedom	20
(p) unilateral	0.0547
(p) bilateral	0.1096
Power (0.05)	0.5098
Power (0.01)	0.2555
IC 95% (sample mean)	-0.0392 a 0.3575
IC 99% (sample mean)	-0.1107 a -0.4287

Source: Research data

The results do not reject the hypothesis  $H_b$ , failure to perceive consumer expectation is low, that is, there a slight discrepancy between what the customer expects and the owner's perception.



#### 4.1 GAP QUALITY ATTRIBUTES 1

Owner and customer expectations (strategic dysfunction) are analyzed as follows: the owners and clients of the hotels surveyed were asked to indicate their preference regarding the various characteristics considered by the model: Tangibility, Reliability, Availability, Guarantee, and Hospitality. Table 4 shows that columns P and Cexp express the medians of the owner’s preferences and the client's expectations. The columns P and Cexp stations say the choices are placed in order of stations. Station 1 indicates more preference. The Gap column expresses the difference between the owners’ offer and customers’ expectations and needs.

Based on the results obtained, the dimension of quality that stands out most clearly is Hospitality. Tangibility was the characteristic that presented the most considerable gap. The owners understand that customers value Hospitality greatly, as confirmed by the results obtained.

**Table 4**

*Preference for Gap stations 1.*

Characteristics	Owner (P)	Offer P	Customers’ expectations	Offer Cexp	Gap
Tangibility	25	2	15	4	2,5
Reliability	10	5	10	5	-0,5
Speed	20	3	20	2,5	-0,5
Warranty	15	4	20	2,5	-1,5
Hospitality	30	2	35	1	0

Source: Research data

In the table above, columns P and Cexp express the medians of owners’ preferences and customers’ expectations. These columns represent the preferences placed in the order of stations. Station 1 indicates greater appreciation. The Gap column expresses the difference between the owners’ offer and customers’ expectations.

**Hypothesis Hb, Gap 2:** failure to convert the owner’s perception of customers’ expectations in quality specifications for the operating area is low. In the test for adherence of the Gap 2 samples, in which the owner versus manager items (operative dysfunction) are analyzed, the results of the chi-square test using the data of the medians obtained showed that at the significance level of 0.05, there is a strong correlation ( $p = 1.0000$ ), as can be observed in Table 5.

**Table 5**

*Chi-square test between the owner and manager variables*

Statistics	Results
Categories sums	144.0
Chi-square	0.845
Degrees of freedom	20
(p)	10.000

Source: Research data

The results obtained from the chi-square test demonstrate the level of adherence between the owner and manager variables. Then, to test the Hc, applied the Descriptive Statistics of Gap 2 according to what was already obtained, which can be observed in Table 6, below. The results obtained from the chi-square test display the adherence between the owner and manager variables.

**Table 6**

*Descriptive data of Gap 2 samples Statistical Owner*

Statistics	Owner statistics	Descriptive manager	gap
Maximum	7.00	7.00	0.00
Total amplitude	1.00	1.00	1.00
Median	7.00	6.50	0.00
First quartile (25%)	66.000	59.000	-0.4900
Third quartile (75%)	69.000	69.000	0.0000
Interquartile deviation	0.4900	10.000	0.4900
Average arithmetic	6.77	6.51	-0.26
Variance	0.12	0.25	0.12
Standard deviation	0.33	0.52	0.33
Standard error	0.08	0.10	0.06
Coefficient of variation	4.98%	7.87%	- 134.52%
Asymmetry (g1)	-1.04	0.00	-1.04
Curtose (g2)	0.05	-2.22	0.05

Source: Research data

The result demonstrated the test of the hypothesis Hb with the application of the descriptive statistics of Gap 2 between the owner and managers. The t-test in Table 7 shows that the sample means of the Gap variable does not differ significantly at the 0.05 significance level of the null population mean.

**Table 7**

*t-test sample of Gap 2*

Statistics	Gap 2
Sample size	20
Average population	0.0000
Sample mean	-0.2490
(t)	-34.866
Degrees of freedom	20
(p) unilateral	0.0012
(p) bilateral	0.0021
Power (0.05)	0.9674
Power (0.01)	0.8773
IC 95% (sample mean)	-0.3992 a - 0.10008
IC 99% (sample mean)	-0.4532 a - 0.04710

Source: Research data

The table above presents the sample mean of the Gap 2 variable between the owner and manager variables. The results do not reject hypothesis H<sub>b</sub>: Gap 2, failure to convert the owner’s perception of customers' expectations into quality specifications for the operating area is low.

#### 4.2 QUALITY ATTRIBUTES OF GAP 2

The relationship between the owner and manager (operational dysfunction) is analyzed as follows: the owner and manager of each hotel and hostel were asked to indicate their preferences for the various characteristics considered by the model: Tangibility, Reliability, Promptness, Guarantee, and Hospitality. For purposes of understanding:

- Tangibility - the appearance of physical facilities, such as the staff looking good and the facilities seeming well-maintained.
- Reliability - The ability of the hotel to offer the promised service with reliability and precision.
- Promptness - The willingness of employees to help customers and provide prompt service.
- Guarantee - The knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and security.
- Hospitality - The concern and individualized attention the employees offer their clients.

Table 8 shows that columns P and G express the medians of the preferences of the owners and managers. The P and G stations indicate the preferences placed in order of stations. Station 1 demonstrates greater importance. The Gap column expresses the difference between the owners' and managers' offers.

**Table 8**

*Preference for Gap 2 stations*

Statisticians	Results
Sums of categories	136.7
Chi-Square	0.539
Degrees of freedom	20
(p)=	10.000

Source: Search data

From the results obtained, the dimension of quality that stands out is Hospitality, whereas Tangibility was the characteristic that presented the most considerable gap.

**Hypothesis Hc, Gap 3:** failure to provide the quality of service is low, that is, there is a small discrepancy between the specifications of the quality of service and the provision of the service.

In the test for the adhesion of the Gap 3 samples, in which the managers' and clients' perceptions (competitive dysfunction) are analyzed, the results of the chi-square test using the data of the medians obtained showed that at the level of significance 0.05, there is a substantial correlation ( $p = 1.0000$ ), which can be observed in Table 9 below.

**Table 9**

*Chi-square test between the manager variables and customer perceptions*

Characteristics	Owner (P)	Offer P	Manager (G)	Offer G	Gap
Tangibility	25	2	15	5	1,5
Reliability	15	4	20	3	-0,5
Promptness	20	3	20	3	-0,5
Warranty	10	5	20	3	-0,5
Hospitality	30	1	25	1	0

Source: Research data

The results obtained from the chi-square test display the level of adherence between the variables of manager and customer perceptions. The test of Hd applied the Descriptive Statistics of Gap 3, according to data already obtained, which can be observed in Table 10, below.

**Table 10***Descriptive data of Gap 3 samples*

Statistics	Managers	Customer perception	gap
Maximum	7.00	7.00	1.00
Total amplitude	1.00	1.00	2.00
Median	6.50	6.00	0.00
First quartile (25%)	59.000	59.000	-10.000
Third quartile (75%)	69.000	59.000	0.0000
Interquartile deviation	10.000	0.0000	10.000
Average arithmetic	6.50	6.20	-0.30
Variance	0.27	0.17	0.44
Standard deviation	0.52	0.41	0.68
Standard error	0.12	0.09	0.16
Coefficient' variation	7.88%	6.44%	-225.69%
Asymmetry (g1)	0.00	1.56	0.36
Curtose (g2)	-2.22	0.66	-0.82

Source: Research data

The data demonstrate the test of the Hc hypothesis under the application of the descriptive statistics of Gap 3 between the variables of manager and customer perceptions. The t-test, shown in Table 11, demonstrated that the sample mean of the Gap variable does not differ significantly at the 0.05 significance level from the null population mean.

**Table 11**

*T-test: a sample of Gap 3*

Statisticians	Gap 3
Sample size	20
Average population	0.0000
Sample average	-0.2957
Standard error	0.1422
(t)	20.793
Standard error	20
(p) unilateral =	0.0249
(p) bilateral =	0.0490
Power (0.05)	0.6677
Power (0.01)	0.4027
IC 95% (sample mean)	-0.5911 a -0.0001
IC 99% (sample mean)	-0.6979 a -0.1066

Source: Research data

The data in the table present the sample mean of the Gap 3 variable between the manager and customer perception variables. The results obtained do not reject hypothesis Hc: managers' expectations do not differ significantly from clients' perceptions, that is, there is a small discrepancy between the quality-of-service specifications and the service provided.

#### 4.3 QUALITY ATTRIBUTES OF GAP 3

The managers' and clients' perceptions (competitive dysfunction) were analyzed as follows: the manager and each client were asked to indicate their preferences regarding several characteristics considered by the model: Tangibility, Reliability, Guarantee and Hospitality. Table 12 shows that the columns G and Cper express the medians of manager preferences and customer perceptions. The G-offer and Cper-offer columns express the preferences placed in order of positions. Station 1 indicates greater preference. The Gap column expresses the difference between the managers' and clients' perceptions.

**Table 12**

*Preference for Gap 3 offer*

Characteristics	Managers (G)	Offer G	Customer perception Cper	Offer Cper	Gap
Tangibility	15	4.5	15	4	0.0
Reliability	15	4,5	10	5	0.0
Promptness	20	2.5	20	2,5	0.0
Warranty	20	2.5	20	2,5	0.0
Hospitality	30	1	35	1	0.0

Source: Research data

From the results obtained, it is accepted that the dimension of quality evaluated that stands out most is Hospitality. In all other quality attributes, there is a preference agreement of stations, with Readiness being second in importance.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

Considering the legal framework regulating hotels, it is essential to clarify how they have specific, organized, rigorous conditions and procedures. Yet, the owner versus manager relationship in constructing the competitive strategy remains to be debated.

Given that Brazilian society has been advancing socially and economically in recent years and relatedly, tourists are increasingly demanding the quality of environments and services, instruments that can measure the quality-of-service provision are essential. Tools such as the Servqual model thus contribute to developing competitive strategies and implementing and evaluating possible gaps that can result in competitive, strategic, and operational dysfunctions.

Notably, the quality of the service provided by the hotels surveyed proved to be adequate according to the respondents, confirming Parasuraman et al.'s (1988) argument that the quality of the service does not solely depend on the provision of the service itself but also expectations about the condition of the service.

This research sought to investigate the level of gaps in the services offered by hotels in the city of Campos do Jordão, the size of gaps related to competitive, strategic, and operational dysfunctions in the businesses surveyed, and to test a set of hypotheses. All of the hypotheses were confirmed. The research did not observe significant dysfunctions pointing to strong adherence among the agents, so much so that the medians of all the gaps were null. From the results, it can be concluded that the competitive gap is influenced equally by the operational and strategic gaps.

According to Grönroos (2003), adding value to the customer by offering high-quality services is necessary. Of all the factors considered, the most critical quality dimension was hospitality. Concerning the other attributes, reliability came second, readiness third, and tangibility fourth. This result reflects the competition profile of hotels focused on the differentiation of providing complete customer service.

Therefore, this paper has presented the perceptions and expectations of the agents involved and has highlighted the value of Servqual in evaluating the quality of service.

The results help stimulate new research on the quality of services and facilitate an analysis of the procedures used to meet the expectations of hospitality in hotels. Finally, this study has presented some initial considerations and guidelines for the elaboration of specific projects that allow quantifying the quality of services and developing actions that reduce or even eliminate competitive dysfunctions, as well as contributing to future studies regarding the proposition of new models for the evaluation of the quality of services.

A limitation of this research is that it is restricted to a small sample of hotels. The study has also been based on the premise that respondents' answers are truthful.

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