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An Analysis of the placement of music in Miami Beach hotels

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE PLACEMENT OF MUSIC IN MIAMI BEACH HOTELS

By

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A professional paper submitted in partial fulfillment
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PART ONE

Introduction

In recent years, there has been a shifting trend of music's use in hotels. Hotel companies are now using music to enhance their servicescapes at their individual properties. Hotel companies such as Hyatt, Omni, Hilton and Starwood hotels are strategically using music to enhance their servicescapes while others simply sit on the sideline failing to see music's strategic value (Torrini, 2006). W hotels even ventured a step further by hiring a Director of Music to strategically utilize music to enhance the hotel servicescape.

This professional paper details the placement of music in public areas of hotels in Miami Beach, Florida. A literature review was conducted on the musicscape of hotels in general and music's placement in the hotel servicescape. Data was collected to gather a more intuitive understanding of current trends in the hotel musicscape. A sample of 35 hotels in Miami Beach were used to collect data on the presence of music in specific locations within each hotel. Locations within a hotel were observed to determine the presence or lack of presence of music. Based on the data collected, an analysis was conducted to determine hotels utilizing music in each location and general trends that occurred. Additional analysis was completed dependant on the size of the property, guest satisfaction levels, and property's star rating. Implications and opportunities will be discussed for practitioners and academia.

Purpose

This professional paper looks into the placement of music in hotel public spaces. Specifically, the purpose is to gather relevant data on the location of music within hotels in Miami Beach and assimilate the gathered information for hoteliers and academics for

informative purposes. Upon completion of this professional paper, readers shall have a solid understanding of the locations within a hotel that have music present and should be aware of trends associated with music played in specific locations in a hotel.

Statement of the problem.

Hotels firms have traditionally used music throughout the hotel servicescape to enhance atmospherics, yet hotel managers are customarily unaware of the proper locations that music can be, and should be, used to enhance the overall servicescape. Many hotel firms simply outsource music management at a significant cost or internally manage music without proper knowledge of the placement of music in hotels. In addition, a lack of research concerning the placement of music in hotels yields a need for a study such as this one.

Justification.

With increasing competition in the marketplace, hotel companies are moving beyond putting “heads in beds”; hoteliers rather, are looking for a competitive advantage to gain an upper hand. Music has been a key focus for some firms. These firms are using music strategically to outperform competitors. Yet not all hotels are strategically using music. Hoteliers have long used intuition, experience, and a gut feeling in their placement of music in hotels. This professional paper will further advance the knowledge of hoteliers by simply giving life to new research that has not been conducted prior to this writing. From an academic standpoint, current research concerning music’s impact on hotels is limited at best. The paper at hand will increase this limited niche of research.

This study intends to aid both practitioners and academia in a number of ways. First, practitioners will benefit by reviewing a detailed analysis of music’s placement in a large sample

of hotels. Second, academia will benefit given that only a minimal amount of research has been conducted about music's placement in hotels. By building upon this research, academics could conduct additional complementary research as to where music should be played in a hotel to enhance the hotel servicescape.

Constraints.

There are a small number of caveats that the researcher should mention prior to analyzing the data. While, a large sample of hotels was conducted, the sample only took place in a single metropolitan area. As a result, the data may not be generalizable to hotels outside of Southern Florida. Hotels in other regions of the United States and around the globe may offer different results if this exact study was completed elsewhere. In addition, the analysis by market segment should be reviewed with a close eye since the results offer a smaller proportion of the entire sample. Simply stated, the breakdown analysis may offer less validity and may not be representative of all hotels in a particular market segment. In general, this professional paper is more exploratory in nature, and should be taken as such.

PART TWO

Introduction

The literature review gives a short overview of research completed on (a) music's effect on servicescapes, (b) music's impact on consumer behavior and attitudes, (c) music's impact on hotel guests' behavior and attitudes and (d) the placement of music in hotels.

Literature Review

Music's effect on the servicescape.

A plethora of research has been conducted on Music's impact on servicescapes in general. Researchers, notably Kotler (1973), have coupled music with other attributes such as scent,

touch, and visual cues to coin the term “atmospherics” of an environment. Kotler noted that Atmospherics could have a significant effect on purchasing decisions of consumers. Bitner (1992) took this notion one step further. Bitner coined the term servicescape, which is defined as the surrounding physical attributes that affect the services provided by an organization.

According to Bitner, atmospherics is only a small subsection of the overall surroundings that a person might encounter while being encompassed by a servicescape. From a hotel perspective, this would include all the physical surroundings and senses inside a hotel from the lighting, music, color of the walls, texture of the floors, height of the ceiling, or any other factor that defines the particular space. Bitner describes it best, noting that the servicescape attributes are more important in service organizations, such as hotels, since customers are being serviced “in the factory”. If the factory were the product, it would therefore be important for hoteliers to consider all attributes that affect customers.

Other researchers have specifically looked into music’s impact on the service environment. A large number of researchers have found that music can have a large effect on consumer behavior in the service environment. Sullivan (2002) specifically noted that it is not necessarily important on what genre of music is played; rather only that music is being played in general. Sullivan also notes that it is the customer’s perception or belief that should determine if music should be played in a service environment. Sullivan would agree with the notion that music that might be considered quiet in an English pub may be considered loud in a French bistro. Other researchers offer a different perspective noting that there may be certain characteristics in music that have different impacts on consumer behavior and attitudes.

Music’s impact on consumer behavior and attitudes.

Music has been found to significantly effect consumer behavior and attitudes at a macro

level. North and Hargreaves (1996) work may best illustrate the power of music in their study that concluded that if patrons liked the music played, they were more likely to enjoy the establishment and patron the location again. In essence, they found that a patron might be more loyal if the music is pleasurable. One caveat should be noted however, North and Hargreaves study was not causal in nature, rather only a correlation was found due to methods used by the researchers. A summary of works by Edwards and Gustafsson (2008) describes the immense impact that background music may have on consumer behavior. “Background music can influence the amount of time and money spent, reduce anxiety, increase positive mood ratings, relieve depression, decrease frustration, increase employee output, reduce absenteeism and reduce the stress associated with queuing” (p. 24). Additional research by Edwards and Gustafsson and others, reveals that specific attributes concerning music have a significant affect on consumer behavior or attitudes.

Oakes (2000) created the term “musicscape”, an addition to Bitner’s musicscape in which Oakes details the specific attributes of music including tempo, volume, and harmony that effect consumer behavior and attitude. As Oakes describes, each of these has its own unique ability to manipulate consumer behavior and attitudes even without changes in the other attributes of music. Many researchers have specifically isolated these attributes and manipulated these attributes *ceteris paribus*.

Tempo.

Music tempo can have a significant affect on consumer behavior according to numerous researchers. Milliman (1986) found that the slower the tempo of music, the longer a restaurant patron would partake in a meal, thus affecting purchasing behavior. Milliman described how patrons were more inclined to purchase additional beverages yet consume an equal amount of

food. Milliman (1982) also found that in retail settings, the slower the tempo of music, the slower the pace of shopping by the customer. Music tempo can even alter the speed at which a customer eats. Roballey and others (1985) found that restaurant patrons actually chew food significantly slower when slow tempo music is playing compared to fast tempo music. In addition, Roballey et al.'s study revealed that persons listening to music, slow or fast tempo, will chew at a faster pace than if no music were playing at all.

Volume.

Music volume has also been found to affect consumer behavior and attitudes by numerous researchers. Many researchers may look into this one specific attribute of music because it is the easiest to isolate. Research completed by McCarron and Tierney (1989) revealed that subjects exposed to loud music consumed a significantly larger volume of soft drinks compared to when soft music was playing. In a related study, loud music played for subjects, revealed an increased "pleasure" of sweet drinks compared to when soft music was playing. The study found that it was likely due to increased levels of endorphins (Ferber & Cabanec, 1987).

Music genre.

Music genre has also been found to affect customer behavior and attitudes. A study revealed that when classical background music was playing in a wine store, patrons were more inclined to buy more expensive wine compared to when top-forty tunes were pumped into the retail location (Edwards & Gustafsson, 2008). In a related study by North, Shilcock, and Hargreaves (2003), classical music was shown to significantly increase revenue compared to no music and pop music being played as it was believed that classical music created a more upscale atmosphere. It was implied, as it should have been, that managers could utilize such research to capitalize on increased revenue.

Music's impact on hotel guests' behavior and attitudes.

Music in hotels has been studied very little relative to other service organizations such as restaurants and retail outlets. Typically research is conducted from a macro level and applied to a number of industries. Few, if any, of the previously discussed researched findings were specific to hotels, rather they focused on restaurants or retail or were broadly applied concepts to multiple industries.

Magnini and Parker (2008) assimilated research detailing music's potential impact on hotel guests' specifically. While their work is not original, it details how research on music from broad concepts and other industries could be specifically applied to the hotel industry. Magnini and Parker describe how music may affect:

1. The amount of time a guest spends in a hotel.
2. Purchasing behavior in a hotel.
3. The amount of money spent by a guest in a hotel.
4. Personal interactions between guests and between guests and employees in a hotel.
5. Customer satisfaction in a hotel.
6. Perceived wait times in lines in a hotel.
7. Perceptions of telephone wait time in a hotel.
8. Perceptions of décor in a hotel.
9. Customer loyalty in a hotel.
10. Employee productivity in a hotel.
11. Interest and satisfaction of a hotel's website.

The placement of music in hotels.

Recently, Intercontinental Hotel Group (IHG) conducted a two-year study focusing on many aspects of music in their hotels. This included tempo variations, geographical variations, and congruency across the brand (Jones, 2009). Yet, IHG failed to research the placement of music within each of their hotels. This phenomenon is not isolated to IHG. Starwood hotels' W hotel brand is more in tune with what songs to put on their next CD compilation than they are in the placement of music within their hotels (Anonymous, 2008). In fact, the placement of music in service environments, including hotels (e.g. guestroom corridors), has not been researched to date by academia or the business world. As a result, a gap in knowledge seems to be present that could be easily be filled by academia.

On the other hand, hoteliers acknowledge that music is extremely important to their hotels. Many of the largest hotel companies have music programs yet these programs are mostly linked to the music's characteristics such as genre and volume. Hoteliers do believe, however, that music "zones" within a hotel or restaurant can be used strategically and should be considered when managing a hotel's music strategy (Areni, 2003). Phil McAveety, Chief Branding Officer for W hotels, recently noted that music was an important aspect of their properties from their lobbies to their guestrooms (Anonymous, 2008). The Sagamore Resort in Bolton Landing, New York, recently installed multiple zones of music located strategically around the multiple outdoor servicescapes that are located on the Sagamore property. According to the Director of Information Technology for the Sagamore, the outdoor music zones have been an overwhelming success from the feedback received from guests (Crowell, 2009). Hotel firms are also looking to enhance guestrooms by using music. For example, Hotels are currently working with software developers on how to play music in guestrooms according to guest pre-selected preferences

(Freed, 2009).

Literature Review Conclusion

While little research in this subject matter has been focused specifically on hotels, the literature review revealed that music could have a significant effect on hotel guests, specifically on guest behavior and attitudes. In addition, hotel managers should be actively managing their music strategy, ensuring that it is effectively aligned with their organizations overall strategic objectives. With this in mind, the remainder of this professional paper will shed light into a niche of music strategy that has yet to be researched.

PART THREE

Methodology

The researcher sampled 35 hotels in Miami Beach, Florida for the presence of music in specific locations within each hotel. Specific locations observed for the presence of music included:

1. Lobby
2. Lobby restroom
3. Food & beverage outlet
4. Elevators
5. Elevator landings
6. Porte-cochere
7. Parking lot
8. Pool area
9. Fitness facility
10. Spa
11. Meeting room corridors
12. Website
13. Guestroom corridors

There are simply two attributes that were used by the researcher while completing observations; “music is present” or “music is not present”. “Music is present” in a specific location is defined as audible music is heard with either an audio system or live instrument present in the location. “Music is not present” is defined as audible music is not heard and/or no audio system or live instrument is present in the specific location. These are mutually exclusive events.

Each location within a hotel was observed to determine the presence or lack of presence of music. The observer simply walked into a specific location within a hotel, noting the location and whether music was present or not present as defined prior. Due to security restrictions within the majority of hotels, not all locations could be observed. Data collection was logged via a portable iPad equipped with an encrypted excel worksheet file. Data collection took place on July 20th, 2010 and was unannounced to hotel staff. In addition, each hotel’s website was reviewed to determine if music was present or not present on each hotel’s homepage.

Once all observations were completed, the data collected was cross-tabulated (utilizing a pivot-table) across additional variables such as star rating, number of hotel rooms, and guest reviews from each hotel. The star rating for each hotel was determined by Expedia’s star rating process. Expedia is the largest online travel company in the world with a standard rubric applied to all hotels throughout North America. Expedia’s star rating rubric can be viewed at Expedia.com (Expedia.com). Expedia’s guest rating system was used to tabulate average guest reviews for a hotel. According to Expedia, only guests that stayed at the property are allowed to rate the property. The number of rooms in a specific hotel were determined by visiting each hotel’s website or calling the hotel directly.

Results

Summary.

Thirty-five Miami Beach hotels were sampled out of a population of 200 hotels on Miami Beach according to Tripadvisor.com. The average sampled hotel had an Expedia star rating of 3.66 (out of 5), guest review rating of 4.0 (out of 5) and had 155.6 hotel rooms. Star ratings ranged from 2 to 5, guest review ratings ranged from 2.4 to 4.8 and hotel room count ranged from 18 to 790 hotel rooms. Due to hotel security measures at each property, not all locations within each hotel were able to be measured. For example, select pool areas were off limits to the general public. In addition, many hotels simply did not have the specific “location” within each hotel. For example, many of the smaller properties were not equipped with a fitness facility, spa, or pool area. Observations of these non-existent areas were not taken as a result. Two hundred and seven observations were collected from the 35 hotels sampled, yielding an average of 5.9 observations at each property. Of the 207 observations taken, less than half (43.5%) of the observations revealed music playing in specific areas within the Miami Beach hotels.

Analysis based upon attributes other than music’s placement.

A first level analysis of music’s placement in hotels was completed by Expedia’s star rating, Expedia guest review average, and by number of hotel rooms. This section highlights generalizations based on overall observations and not the specific placement of music in each hotel.

Star rating.

Hotels with 3 stars or less revealed a music observation rate of only 25.9%, meaning music was present in all observations 25.9% of the time in hotels with 3 stars or less. In contrast, hotels with 3.5 stars or higher had a music observation rate of 50.34%, meaning music was

present in all observations 50.34% of the time in hotels with 3.5 stars or higher. While these findings should be noted, it is not conclusive that music is more evident in high end hotels compared to their low end counterparts based upon this simplified analysis.

Guest reviews.

The observations of hotels with an average guest review score of 4.0 or higher revealed a music observation rate of 52.3%, meaning music was present in 52.3% of all observations in hotels with a guest review score of 4.0 or higher. In contrast, hotels with guest reviews lower than 4.0 revealed music being observed only 29.1% of the time. Similar to the star rating variable, these findings do not offer conclusive evidence that guest satisfaction is a result of music's presence or lack of presence, it simply reveals that a correlation might be present. On the other hand, the literature review illustrated music's powerful influence on consumer behavior and that it could affect guest satisfaction.

Size.

Separating hotels into hotels over 100 rooms and hotels under 100 rooms reveals a nearly even music observation rate. On the other hand, the five smallest and five largest hotels were compared which lead to a more significant difference. The five smallest hotels, with an average of 33 rooms, had a music observation rate of 10 out 32 observations (40.6%) while the five largest, with an average of 445 rooms, had a music observation rate of 23 out of 34 observations (67.6%). It should noted however that the five largest hotels had an average star rating of 4.2 while the five smallest hotels had a star rating of 3.2.

Analysis of music's placement in Miami Beach hotels

The following section reveals some interesting observations between music's presence in specific locations within a hotel, guest satisfaction, and star rating. In this section, observations

were analyzed by the specific location within a hotel. As a result, a summary by location within a hotel is detailed below.

Lobby.

The lobby was observed in each of the 35 hotels sampled. Twenty-four or 68.57% of hotels were observed with music present in the lobby while 11 were observed without music present. On average hotels with music present in the lobby had higher guest reviews (4.09) compared to their counterparts with no music present (3.61) and higher star ratings (3.75) compared to their counterparts with no music present (3.14). In addition, hotels with music playing in the lobby had more rooms (177.67) on average compared to hotels observed not playing music in the lobby (111.27). Table one highlights the lobby observations.

Table 1

Lobby Table

	Music Present	Music Not Present
Observations	24.00	11.00
Guest Review Score	4.09	3.61
Star rating	3.75	3.14
Number of rooms	177.67	111.27

Lobby restroom.

The lobby restroom was observed in 11 of the hotels sampled. Two, or 18.18% of hotels were observed with music present in the lobby restroom while nine were observed without music present. On average hotels with music present in the lobby restroom had higher guest reviews (4.15) compared to their counterparts with no music present (3.88) and higher star ratings (4.0) compared to their counterparts with no music present (3.44). In addition, hotels with music playing in the lobby restroom had more rooms (163.5) on average compared to hotels observed

not playing music in the lobby restroom (154.9). Table two highlights the lobby restroom observations.

Table 2

Lobby Restroom Table

	Music Present	Music Not Present
Observations	2.00	9.00
Guest Review Score	4.15	3.88
Star rating	4.00	3.44
Number of rooms	163.5*	154.9*

Guestroom corridors.

Due to security restrictions, guestrooms corridors were difficult to observe. However, 12 observations were taken, yielding only one observation of music being present. The hotel with music present in the guestroom corridors had higher guest reviews (4.0) compared to its counterparts with no music present (3.1) and higher star ratings (3.5) compared to its counterparts with no music present (3.32). In addition, the hotel with music playing in the guestroom corridors had less rooms (39) compared to hotels observed not playing music in the guestroom corridors (74.27). With only one observation of music being present in guestrooms corridors, these findings should be taken with caution.

Meeting room corridors.

Only one observation was taken of the meeting room corridors of all 35 hotels. It should be noted that very few of the properties sampled had meeting space, which is evident in the fact that the average size of the hotels sampled was only 157 rooms. The Loews South Beach was the only observable meeting room corridor; which did not have music present.

Elevator landings.

Elevator landings in guestroom corridors were also difficult to observe due to hotel security measures. Only three observations were taken in these specific locations, each of which was found to not have music present when observed.

Elevators.

Eleven observations were taken of hotel elevators and their presence or lack of presence of music. Each of the 11 elevators were observed to have no presence of music.

Fitness facility.

Fitness facilities were observed in only four of the hotels sampled due to security restrictions and hotels lacking such amenities. One hotel was observed with music present in the fitness facility while three hotels were observed without music present. An additional observation revealed a single television with audio in a fitness facility without the presence of music. The hotel with music present in the fitness facility had higher guest reviews (4.6) compared to its counterparts with no music present (4.2) and higher star ratings (4.5) compared to its counterparts with no music present (4.0). In addition, the hotel with music playing in the fitness facility had more rooms (790) on average compared to hotels observed not playing music in the fitness facility (183.7). With only one observation of music being present in fitness facilities, these findings should be taken with caution. Table three highlights the fitness facility observations.

*Table 3**Fitness Facility Table*

	Music Present	Music Not Present
Observations	1.0	3.0
Guest Review Score	4.6	4.2
Star rating	4.5	4.0
Number of rooms	790.0	183.7

Pool area.

The pool area was observed in 20 of the hotels sampled. The remaining hotels either did not have a pool or was limited to guest access only. Eleven, or 55% of hotels were observed with music present in the pool area while nine were observed without music present. On average hotels with music present in the pool area had higher guest reviews (4.16) compared to their counterparts with no music present (3.8) and higher star ratings (3.77) compared to their counterparts with no music present (2.94). In addition, hotels with music playing in the pool area had more rooms (211) on average compared to hotels observed not playing music in the pool area (164.78). Table four highlights the pool area observations.

*Table 4**Pool Area Table*

	Music Present	Music Not Present
Observations	11.00	9.00
Guest Review Score	4.16	3.80
Star rating	3.77	2.94
Number of rooms	211.00	164.78

Porte-cochere.

The porte-cochere, or hotel entrance, was observed in 34 of the hotels sampled. Thirteen, or 38.2% of hotels were observed with music present in the porte-cochere while 21 were

observed without music present. On average, hotels with music present in the porte-cochere had higher guest reviews (4.28) compared to their counterparts with no music present (3.73) and higher star ratings (3.81) compared to their counterparts with no music present (3.43). In addition, hotels with music playing in the porte-cochere had more rooms (195) on average compared to hotels observed not playing music in the porte-cochere (121.38). Table five highlights the porte-cochere observations.

Table 5

Porte-cochere Table

	Music Present	Music Not Present
Observations	13.00	21.00
Guest Review Score	4.28	3.73
Star rating	3.81	3.43
Number of rooms	195.00	121.38

Food and beverage (f&b) outlet.

F&B outlets were observed in 32 of the hotels sampled. Twenty-six or 81.25% of hotels were observed with music present in the F&B outlets while six were observed without music present. On average, hotels with music present in the F&B outlets had higher guest reviews (4.02) compared to their counterparts with no music present (3.65) and higher star ratings (3.69) compared to their counterparts with no music present (3.17). In addition, hotels with music playing in the F&B outlets had more rooms (175.62) on average compared to hotels observed not playing music in the F&B outlets (134.33). Table six highlights the F&B outlets observations.

Table 6

F&B Outlets Table

	Music Present	Music Not Present
Observations	26.00	6.00

Guest Review Score	4.02	3.65
Star rating	3.69	3.17
Number of rooms	175.62	134.33

Retail outlets.

Retail outlets were observed in seven of the hotels sampled. Four or 57.1% of hotels were observed with music present in the retail outlets while three were observed without music present. On average hotels with music present in the retail outlets had higher guest reviews (4.5) compared to their counterparts with no music present (3.7) and higher star ratings (4.38) compared to their counterparts with no music present (3.5). In addition, hotels with music playing in the retail outlets had more rooms (454.3) on average compared to hotels observed not playing music in the retail outlets (235). Table seven highlights the retail outlets observations

Table 7

Retail Outlets Table

	Music Present	Music Not Present
Observations	4.0	3.0
Guest Review Score	4.5	3.7
Star rating	4.4	3.5
Number of rooms	454.3	235.0

Spa.

Only two observations were taken at hotel spas, one hotel spa had the presence of music while the other did not (50% music observation rate).

Website.

Hotel websites were observed in all 35 of the hotels sampled. Seven, or 20% of hotels were observed with music present on the hotel website while 28 were observed without music present. On average, hotels with music present on the hotel website had higher guest reviews

(4.0) compared to their counterparts with no music present (3.9) and higher star ratings (3.8) compared to their counterparts with no music present (3.5). In addition, hotels with music playing on the hotel websites had less rooms (122.1) on average compared to hotels observed not playing music on the hotel website (165.5). Table eight highlights the website observations.

Table 8

Website Table

	Music Present	Music Not Present
Observations	7.0	28.0
Guest Review Score	4.0	3.9
Star rating	3.8	3.5
Number of rooms	122.1	165.5

Conclusions

The observations taken at sampled hotels revealed a clear picture of where hoteliers are placing music in Miami Beach Hotels. These results should be used by hoteliers to gauge how their music placement compares to hotels in Miami Beach. More importantly, hoteliers should focus on the comparisons of when music was present and not present.

From the data gathered, hotels that had music playing throughout the hotel typically had higher overall guest ratings according to Expedia.com reviews. Just as interesting, when music was present in specific areas in a hotel, guest reviews and star ratings were relatively higher compared to when no music was present. From the research conducted in the literature review and based upon the data and analysis, it seems evident that hoteliers should use music strategically throughout their hotels to enhance the servicescape. Specifically, hoteliers should manage the specific placement of music in each location within a hotel as it could have a tremendous impact on consumer behavior and guest satisfaction. In addition, it seems evident

that music's characteristics, such as volume, tempo, and genre play an important role in how it affects hotel guests. As a result, hoteliers should actively manage these characteristics with the goal of optimizing each to enhance a hotel's servicescape. It is important to note that a causal reference is beyond the scope of the research at hand, yet it lends to future academic research.

Recommendations for Future Research

From an academic perspective, additional research should be conducted on the placement of music in hotels. The literature review revealed that this topic can be, and should be, researched in more depth. Specifically, music's placement in hotels could be analyzed to determine whether a causal relationship is present. In addition, repetitive research should be conducted to test the findings of this paper. Additional researchers could also repeat this study in other metropolitan areas, small cities, and remote locations to determine if results found in this paper can be repeats in other locales. While this professional paper aimed to gather the majority of locations within a hotel, it did not have an exhaustive list of locations. For example, telephone on-hold systems were not observed. As a result, further research could be conducted in locations that were not included in this paper.

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