

Abstract of the Doctoral Dissertation

Title: The importance of food and beverage services in the operation of hotels in Poland

For years, food and beverage services in Polish hotels were mainly seen as an essential component required to fulfil the formal criteria, not as a key part of the hotel business. In her dissertation, the author discusses food and beverage services in Polish hotels and points out the different ways the food and beverage department can work in a hotel. The changes in the offer and scope of catering services are the result of economic, social, and cultural transformations. As a result of these changes, the importance of catering services in hotel operations varies, and the author of the dissertation points to the factors that influence them.

For the purposes of this study, it was assumed that hotel catering services are a set of activities, including the production of food and beverages, their sale along with other commercial goods, and customer service, often extended to include cultural, entertainment, and recreational services (Milewska et al., 2017). These are food-related services provided to hotel guests and external customers. They include meals offered by the hotel, catering companies' activities on its premises, and other services related to serving food and beverages. The author used the concept of "significance" in relation to hotel catering (the basic unit) from the perspective of its function in hotel operations. For the purposes of this study, it was assumed that the significance of catering services in hotel operations is the value and effects they bring to both the hotel itself and its customers. It is crucial to emphasize that both the short- and long-term effects of hotel catering activities were considered. The author used the terms "significance," "role," and "function" interchangeably.

Considering the definitions presented, the author posed the following research questions:

- What types of food and beverage services do Polish hotels offer?
- What functions do food and beverage services perform in hotel operations
- What internal factors influence the diversity of food and beverage services offered by hotels in Poland?

- What external factors influence the diversity of food and beverage services offered by hotels in Poland?
- What is the level of importance of food and beverage services in hotel operations? Do food and beverage services play a basic, complementary, or dominant role in the hotel industry?
- What is the importance of food and beverage services to hotel customers in Poland?

Considering the research problem and questions, the following hypothesis was adopted:

Catering services are significant in the functioning of hotels in Poland, and the level of this importance is differentiated by internal factors (such as category, type/kind of hotel, and form of ownership) and external factors (such as the level of urbanization and tourist attractiveness of the hotel's location).

Given the theoretical framework, appropriate research methods were selected to best answer the main and specific questions and verify the hypothesis. The author used methodological triangulation, which enabled a complementary presentation of the research problem not only from the perspective of quantitative data but also from the perspective of attempting to understand and explain the phenomenon under study.

The main research methods used for this study included a multi-stage literature review using the snowball method and bibliometric analysis, an inventory of catering services in Polish hotels ($n=294$, representing a proportional number of hotels from each voivodeship and category), and content and sentiment analysis of comments posted on Booking.com ($n=209,535$), performed using web scraping technology.

A carefully designed research process enabled the author to collect extensive empirical material of both quantitative and qualitative nature. The data obtained, together with statistical and qualitative analyses, proved adequate to verify the research hypotheses and achieve the objectives set out in this dissertation. Food and beverage services play an important role in hotel operations in Poland, and their significance varies depending on the facility category, organizational structure, business profile, and location. The analysis showed that the food and beverage offerings of hotels include not only breakfast but also other services, the most popular of which are the organization of weddings, family, and business receptions. Food and beverage services can be of minimal, significant, or dominant importance. Owing to the wide range of

food and beverage services in hotel operations, the author distinguishes five functions: economic, complementary, social, cultural-educational, and promotional.

The diversity of the offer is influenced, among other things, by the categorization of hotels—particularly evident in 3–5* establishments—and their affiliation with larger organizational structures. Location plays a role, but the correlation is more visible at the county and municipality levels than at the provincial level. The study also showed that dining experiences influence guest satisfaction and hotel ratings on Booking.com.

In light of the results obtained, it should be emphasized that the hypothesis adopted in the doctoral dissertation has been confirmed: food and beverage services are important in the operations of certain types of hotels, where their importance can be described as minimal, significant, or dominant, and the scope of the offer is differentiated by factors such as the tourist attractiveness of counties, the degree of urbanization, the type of facility, and hotel category.

The use of methods such as spatial analysis, location indicators, and web scraping enabled a comprehensive assessment of the phenomenon under study and provided insight into customer opinions. The findings encompass both a methodological aspect, highlighting the effectiveness of innovative research tools, and a cognitive aspect, enhancing the comprehension of catering's significance in the hotel sector.