



University of St.Gallen

WORK PACKAGE 4C – REPORT

Measuring the productivity of service designs in tourism and hospitality

INNOSUISSE FLAGSHIP – RESILIENT TOURISM (ResTo)

Subproject 2: Designing digitally supported services, business processes and business models

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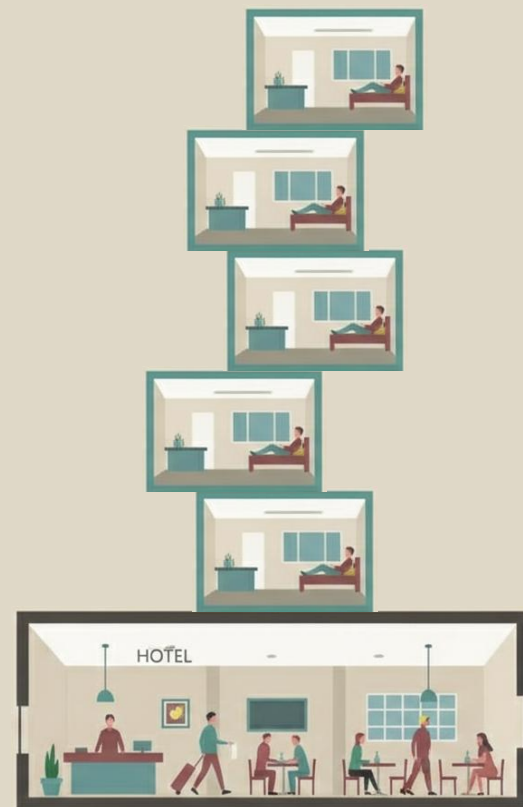


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Disclaimer: This report (partly) consists of (updated) slides from our contributions to the two Resilient Tourism Flagship Conferences in Lausanne (2023) and Lucerne (2024) and is complemented by workshop results (2025).



Abbreviations

ADR	average daily rate
AI	artificial intelligence
AR	augmented reality
cf.	confer (compare)
CHF	Swiss francs
e.g.	exempli gratia (for example)
EBIT(DA)	earnings before interest and taxes (depreciation, amortization)
GOI	gross operating income
GOP	gross operating profit
GPS	global positioning system
h	hours
HSG	University of St.Gallen
ICT	information and communication technology
IMP	institute for systemic management and public governance
IT	information technology
KPI	key performance indicator
m2	square meters
ResTo	flagship resilient tourism (by Innosuisse)
RevPAR	revenue per available room (ADR x occupancy)
SP2	subproject 2 (from flagship ResTo)
T&H	tourism and hospitality
WP	work package (from flagship ResTo)



Definitions

Productivity of services – on a firm level

(cf. Grönroos & Ojasalo, 2004, p.417)

Service productivity

= f(internal efficiency, how effectively are resources transformed to outputs?
external efficiency, how well is the quality of the process and its outcome perceived?
capacity efficiency) how effectively is the capacity of the service process utilized?

Dilemma: more efficient processes (*input*) can lead to decreasing quality and lost revenues (*output*)
Therefore, it is important to look at all components of productivity (*efficiency* and *effectivity*).

Productivity of services – on a national level

(cf. Federal Statistical Office of Switzerland)

Labor productivity (LP_t) is measured as the ratio of economic output Q_t to the labor input required (L_t) for this production, in each respective year t : $LP_t = (Q_t / L_t)$

In Switzerland there are two ways of measuring labor productivity:

- **Labor productivity in the total economy**
by actual hours worked in the year t is the ratio of
gross domestic product (GDP)_t / number of actual hours worked_t
- **Labor productivity by economic sector and activities**
in the year t is measured as
gross value added (GVA)_t / full-time equivalents (FTE)_t

“You can see the computer age everywhere but in the productivity statistics.”

Solow, 1987, The Productivity Paradox

Productivity paradox

In general, and in tourism and hospitality

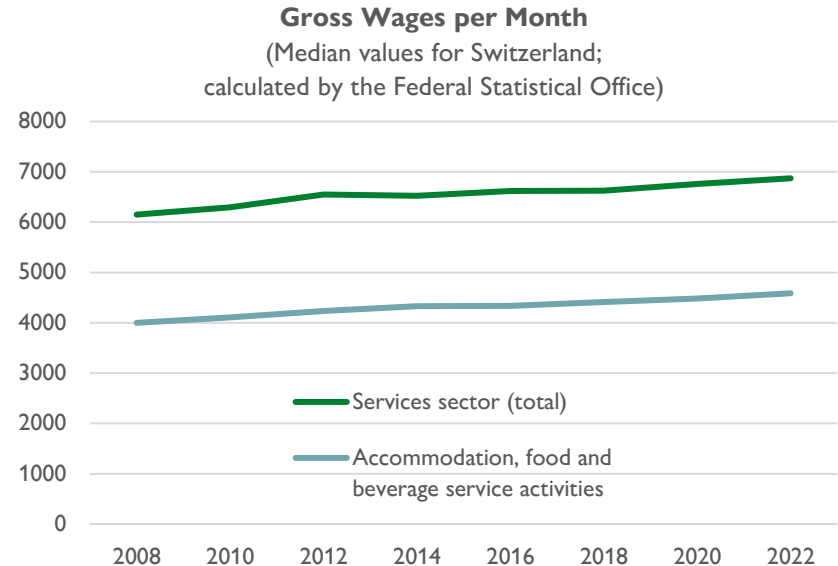
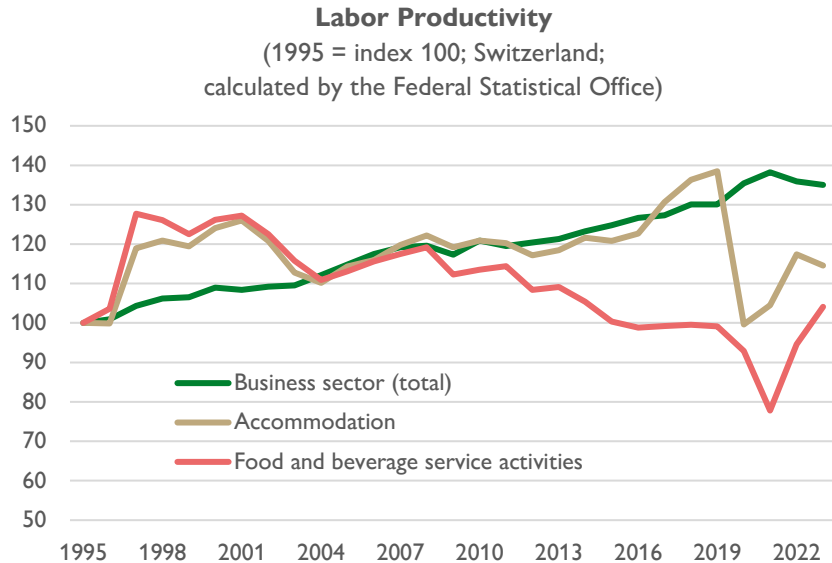
There is a wide range of reasons, why productivity of computers and effects of digitization seem to be invisible in the statistics

There are several **explanations, why productivity** of computers (think: digitization) **seems low**:

- (1) Even in places where there are many computers, (their) output is hardly measured** – or hard to measure.
 - Computers are prevalent in admin, finance, insurance, etc., where output is poorly defined.
 - Computers create efficiency gains which cannot be internalized but are met with increasing expectations.
 - Computers provide values that are hard to measure, such as convenience or (aesthetically) improved interfaces.
- (2) It takes time for computers to appear in the statistics** – or they might just be less productive than commonly thought.
 - Computers require high initial investments (and often involve sunk costs), that take time to materialize.
 - Computers are employed in inefficient ways by making systems more complex and demanding for users.
 - Computers provide potential for distraction that consumes any efficiency or time gains.
- (3) Although computers appear to be everywhere, they in fact aren't** – at least in economically relevant terms.
 - Computers make a relatively small share of the capital stock of a firm or country.
 - Computers provide returns which contribute to only a small share of (national/firm/individual) incomes.
 - Computers are dominant in non-productive (consumptive) areas (e.g., entertainment, gaming).

→ **Do these positions and explanations still hold after 30 years of intense digitization across industries?**

There is a (widening?) gap in labor productivity and wages in tourism and hospitality in comparison to the average economy



→ **How is this possible in times of shortages of skilled workers and high tourism demand (even: over-tourism)?**

Why is productivity a “problematic” (disliked) term in tourism and hospitality (with both managers and guests)?

Less personal customer service

It goes against the principles of outstanding client service

It might lead to overtourism

Service is intangible

It is seen as a threat to their job by workers

Tough conditions for workers

It is evoking a mental image of factories, which goes against concepts like service quality

It is not always possible to measure our competencies and related productivity

Employees already work really hard

Service is not productive

It squeezes labor

Because it's hard to measure and some of the actors don't want to be measurable



Selected feedback from workshop

There are many reasons why productivity is seen as a problematic concept in tourism and hospitality

(1) In the context of services, productivity often has negative connotations.

“If significant numbers of Swiss hotel managers hold an ‘impression’ that productivity concepts are impractical, is it surprising that conceptual thinking is rejected, both at an individual level and at a collective, value-forming level?” (Ingram & Fraenkel, 2006, p.441)

(2) The (co-created) productivity of services is not so easy to measure and interpret.

“...tourism industry is less productive than other industries...

actual tourism productivity measurement ... is not well understood” (Brien et al., 2022, p.4)

“...service and the phenomena quality, productivity and profitability ... have not yet been satisfactorily explained. They are ... affected by ... IT [and] ... many other things...” (Gummesson, 2014, p.656)

“...adoption of ICT does not significantly improve labour productivity in the tourism/hospitality industries.” (Li, 2014, p.385)

(3) The macroeconomic concept of productivity is of limited value to the individual firm or manager.

→ **Let us focus on the micro-level: Would companies implement ICT if it was not worthwhile?**

Assumption: in today's highly digitized (service) economy, it should be possible to resolve Solow's productivity paradox

Interestingly, there is hardly any (academic) literature on **service productivity**.

We suggest the following approach to close this gap (cf. *preceding slide*):

- A** **Conceptual thoughts** on productivity, based on business models and processes
- B** **Studying the practice** by looking into exemplary case studies from the industry
- C** **Mapping digitization** in a business process view to identify its economic relevance
- D** **Developing measures** (KPIs) to identify productivity gains of digitized processes
- E** **Providing a framework** on the measurement of the productivity of services



Conceptual thoughts

Productivity in tourism and hospitality

Many tourism and hospitality organizations do not get out enough from their business activities



Many **tourism and hospitality enterprises** are confronted with **low margins** and **low profitability**.

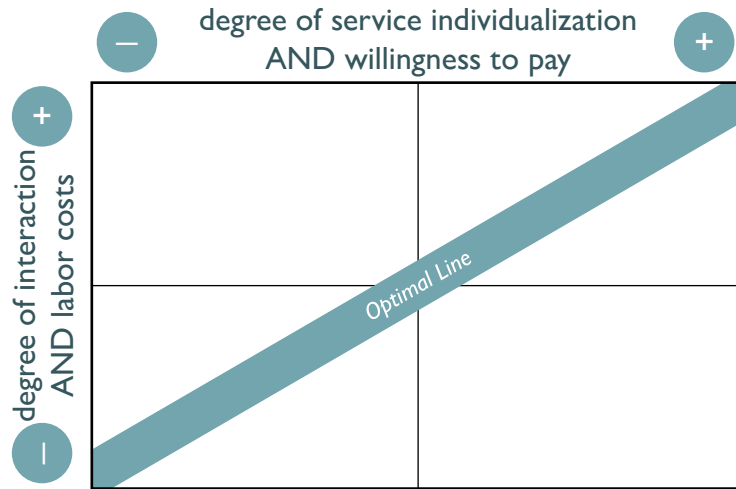
- In the recent past, many tourism and hospitality processes only could create value at all because they had **access to** (too?) **favorable production factors**.
 - Abundance of cheap **capital** and **land** (low interest rates);
but value is insufficiently “captured” and often lost to intermediaries
 - Immigration of workers, providing cheap **labor** (low wages);
average hospitality salaries $\approx 4'000$ CHF gross (cf. pharma at $\approx 10'000$ CHF)
- The **aftermaths of the pandemic** and **demographic changes** have ripped away this band-aid:
 - Key production factors (land, capital, labor) have become **scarce** and thus expensive.
Service processes need to be designed and managed with the available type and extent of staffing in mind.
 - However: further production factors such as knowledge or **entrepreneurship** remain!
With the help of smart technology, processes can be aligned with the available scarce human and financial resources.



Processes must be increasingly **aligned with** the available and often scarce human and financial **resources**: *design to resources*.

The decision of people versus technology (capital) depends on the customers' willingness to pay for human interaction

The allocation of human resources is valuable for both sides, where the marginal willingness to pay for human interaction is bigger than the related own marginal costs. Key question therefore: is an added value created in such a way that it triggers a **willingness to pay** which at least covers the costs of this personal interaction?

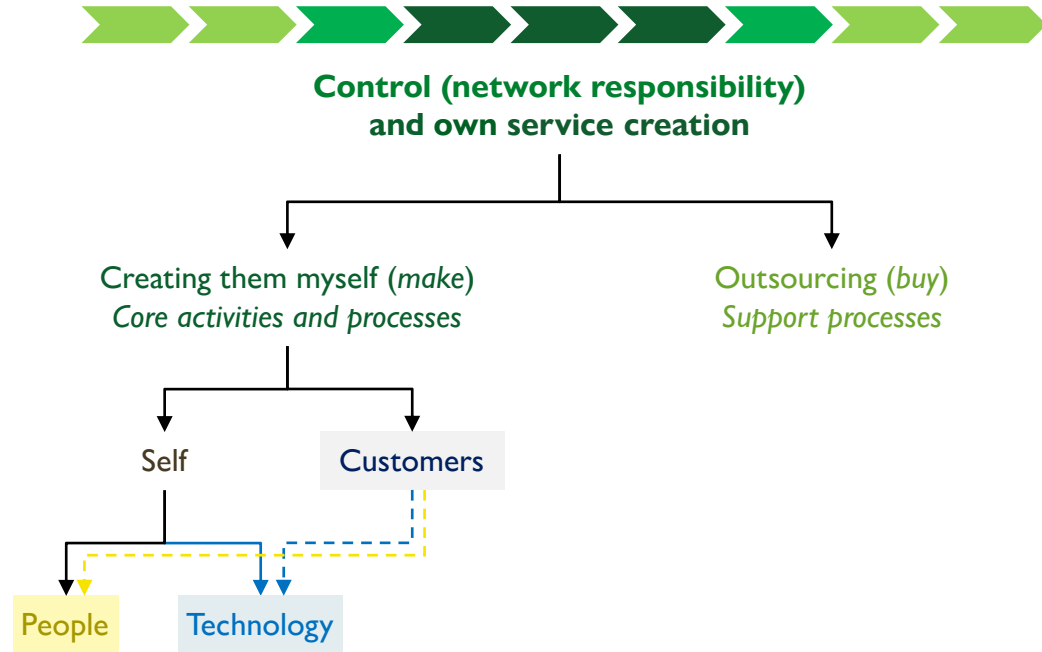


What is the willingness to pay for personal check-in (versus digital)?

What is the willingness to pay for having food served to the table or the room?

What is the willingness to pay for having a restaurant inside the hotel's premises?

Productivity of labor (and capital) depends on the configuration of the business model and processes



What is

- my understanding of
- and contribution to the service or value chain?

→ **Value proposition and business model**

What do I make myself?

What do I buy from others?

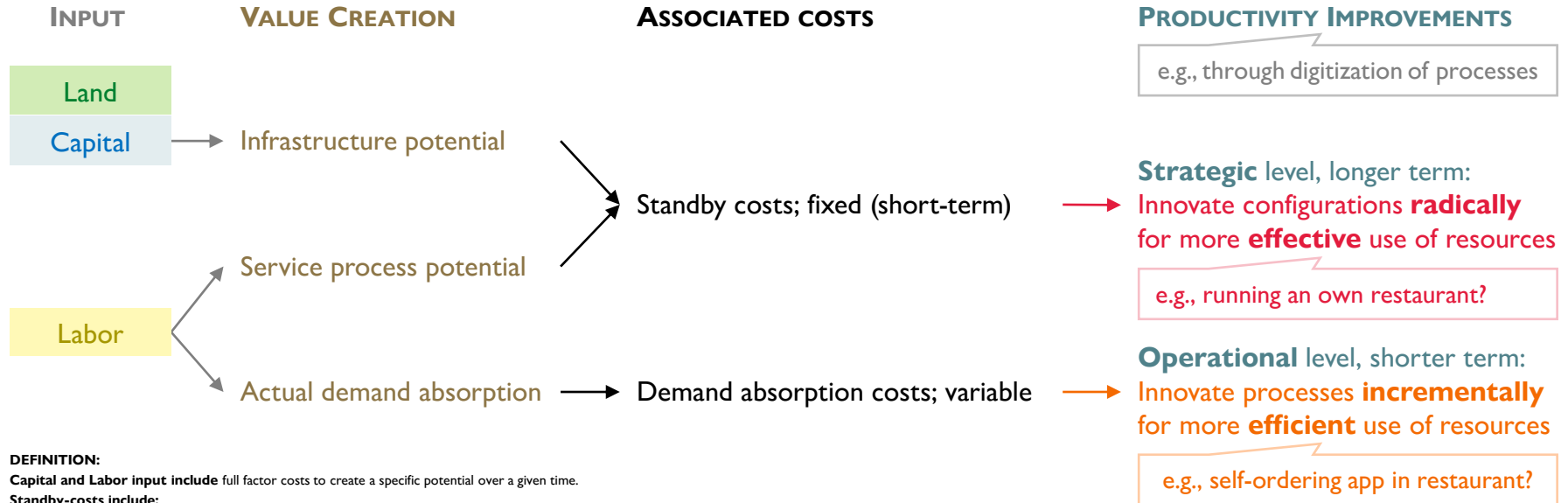
What do I do myself?

What do I delegate to customers?

Where do I use people?

Where do we (myself + customers) use technology?

Digitization can increase both effectivity (reduce standby costs) and efficiency (reduce demand absorption costs)



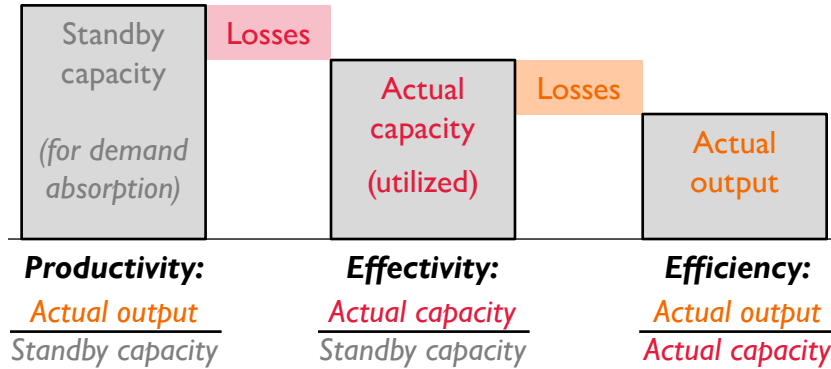
DEFINITION:

Capital and Labor input include full factor costs to create a specific potential over a given time.

Standby-costs include:

- Infrastructure: Capital costs (principal and interest) + depreciation + standard maintenance + calculative premium
- Service Processes: Minimal full labor and labor supporting equipment costs + calculative premium

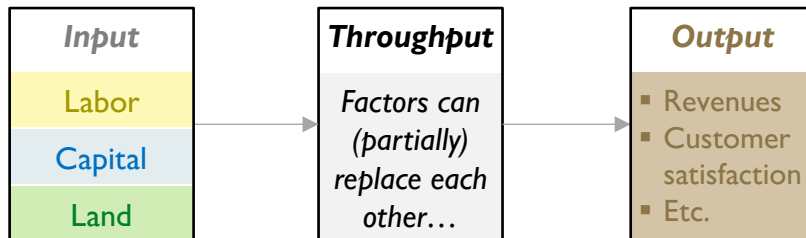
In a process view, (in-)effective allocation and (in-)efficient use of resources must be differentiated



Two aspects of service productivity:

Readiness to deliver a service and associated labor costs
 → **Losses** due to **ineffective** utilization of resources

Execution of a service and associated labor costs
 → **Losses** due to **inefficient** configuration of processes



$$\text{Productivity: } \frac{\text{Output}}{\text{Input}} = \frac{\text{Output}}{\text{Labor} \text{ Capital} \text{ Land}}$$

B

Studying the practice

Case studies in tourism and hospitality

Practical approaches to process redesign: a (non-exhaustive) selection of trends and cases

- (1) Technology-supported (re)delegation of individual processes to customers by applying self-service technology
- (2) Transformation of cost centers into profit centers and unbundling of services on a pay-per-use basis
- (3) Execution of various interpersonal processes centrally in one place and by the same personnel
- (4) Taking over third-party processes in order to exploit synergies

→ **What unites all four approaches from practice:**

- **They are enabled by information and communication technology (ICT).**
- **They improve productivity of both producers (services) AND customers.**

(1) Technology-supported (re)delegation of individual processes to customers by applying self-service technology

(Electronic) ordering or pick-up orders in restaurants



mridge

Table
Snappr

Powered by

Self-service or automated check-in/check-out in hotels



rocks resort

strav
BY CODEZORDER

Powered by

Also: automation and robotization of entire processes;
e.g., internal and external billing or cooking processes

(2) Transformation of cost centers into profit centers and unbundling of services on a pay-per-use basis

Housekeeping on demand with pay per use



acasa
SUITES ZÜRICH
LOCAL • INDEPENDENT • PASSIONATE

Self-contained luxury accommodation



Also: unbundling and add-ons as well as ancillary services; e.g., catering and room service

(3) Execution of various interpersonal processes centrally in one place and by the same personnel

Check-in at hotel bar or bistro



Remote (night) reception or concierge for several hotels



Also: cross-operational centralization of processes; e.g., central (large) kitchens or supply and disposal services

(4) Taking over third-party processes in order to exploit synergies across organizations

Hotel as a hub of services for holiday apartments



(G)host kitchens for multiple brands or restaurants



Powered by  apibase

Also: vice versa – outsourcing or virtual integration of processes or process groups; e.g., hotel's restaurants

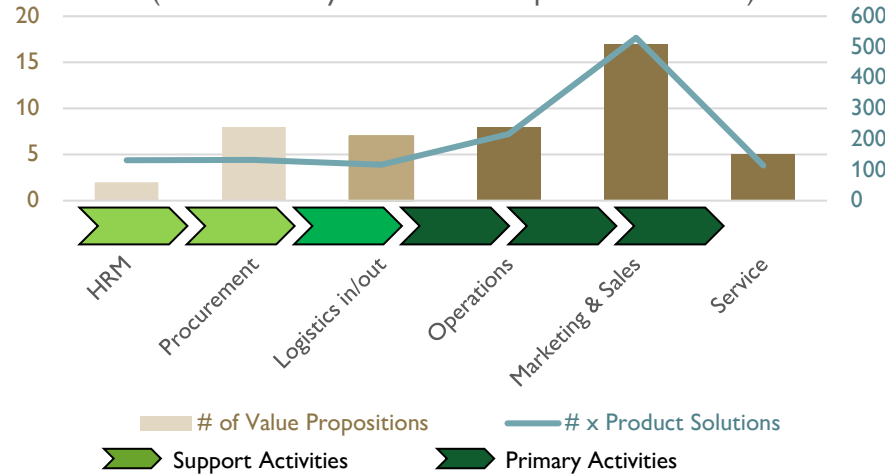


Mapping digitization

Digital applications in tourism and hospitality

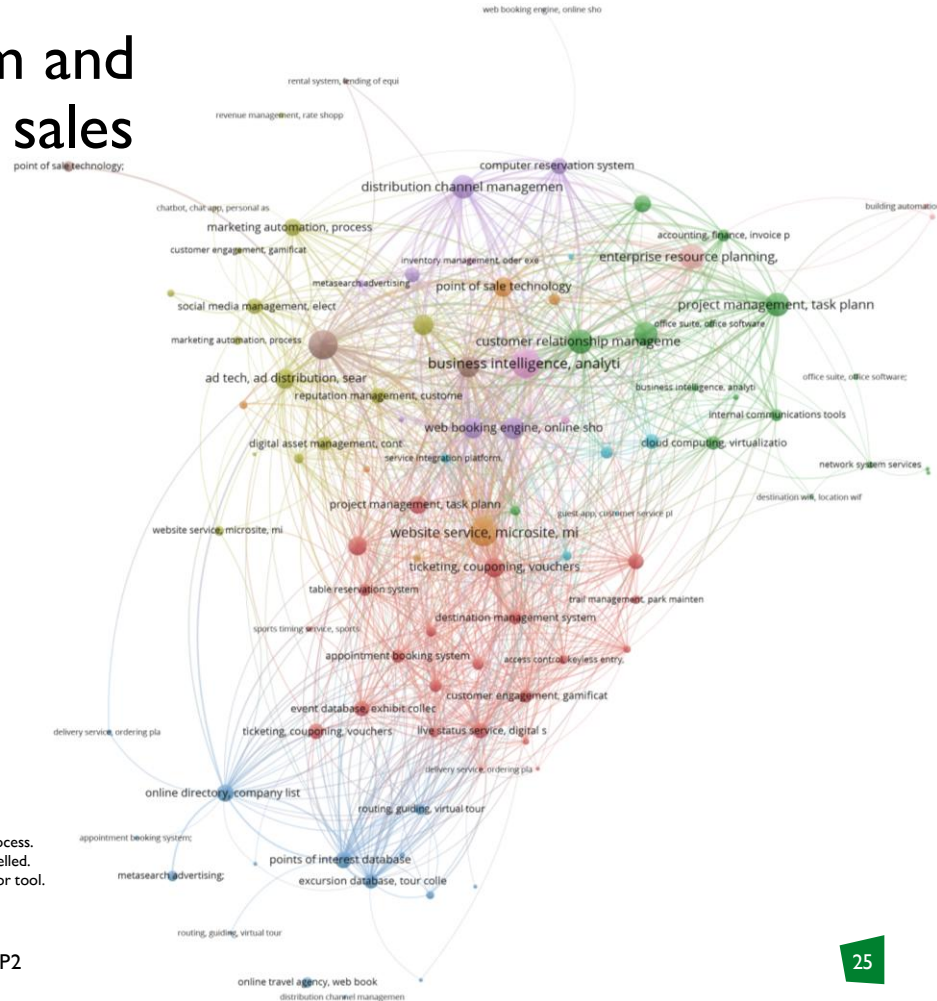
Most digital applications in tourism and hospitality support marketing and sales

ICT applications along the value chain in T&H
(own meta-analysis based on 400 products/solutions)

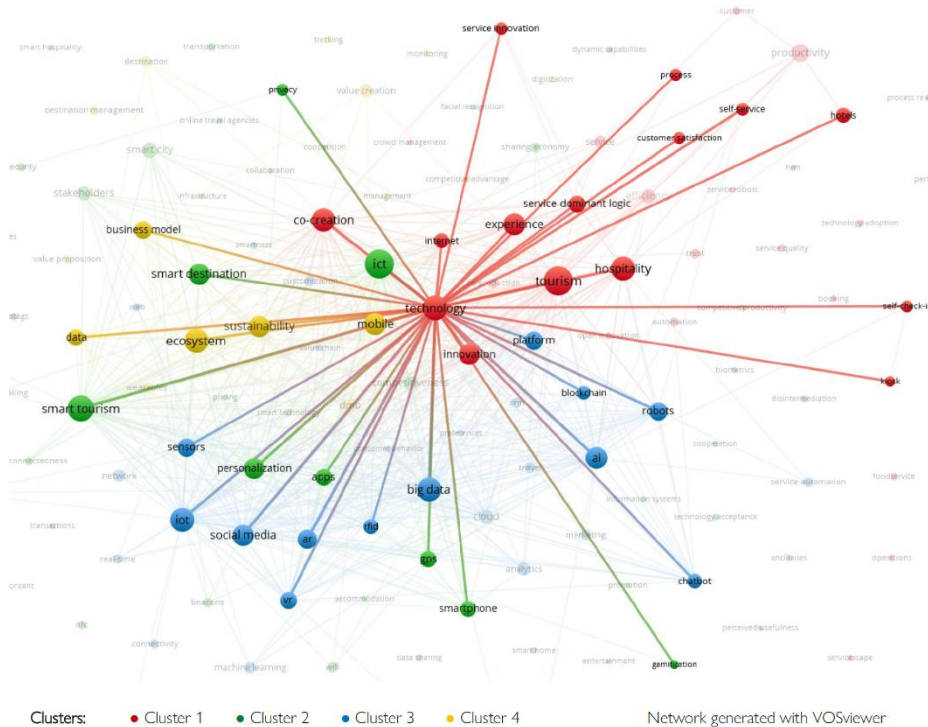


Legend (to figure on the right side)

The larger the circle (and label), the more solutions or tools are available to digitally enable the respective functionality or (business) process. This map contains 60 of the most relevant functions for Swiss tourism and hospitality. Due to space limitations, some circles are not labelled. The proximity of circles and connecting lines represent a frequent combination or integration of the functionality in one single solution or tool.



Literature shows that technology is at the core of service design and process innovation in smart tourism



Source: broad literature review
on productivity, process innovation,
service design and smart tourism

CLUSTERS

- (1) Productively **co-created experiences**
- (2) Smartly **personalized applications**
- (3) Networked **platform solutions**
- (4) Data-based **business ecosystems**

While the four clusters show the general direction of thought, ten granular topics from literature provide ideation starters



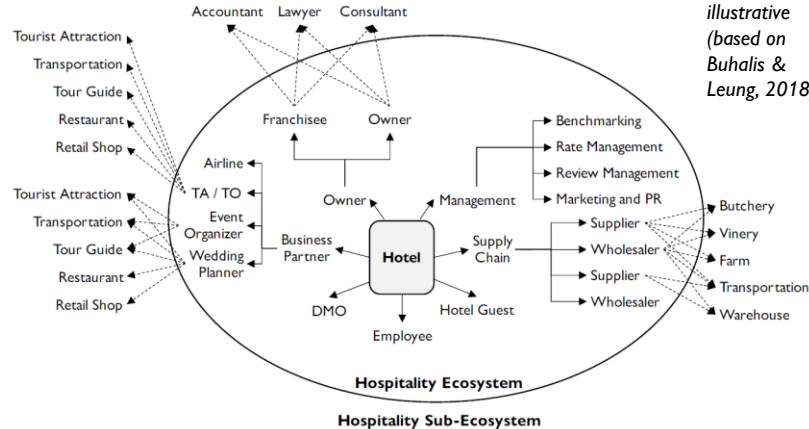
TOPICS	Keywords (some examples)
(1) Hardware	Networks, GPS, beacons, smartphones, wearables...
(2) Software	AI, AR, biometrics, business intelligence, open data...
(3) Solutions	Maps, chatbots, robots, automation, yield management...
(4) Services	Booking, accommodation, foodservice, entertainment, mobility...
(5) Features	Accessibility, connectivity, context-awareness, customization, gamification...
(6) Capabilities	Analytics, crowd management, forecasting, marketing, process re-engineering...
(7) Collaboration	Co-creation, coopetition, ecosystem, peer-to-peer, self-service...
(8) Concepts	Business model, experience economy, smart city, tourism 4.0, tourist behavior...
(9) Economics	Competitiveness, effectiveness, efficiency, human capital, profitability...
(10) Issues	Governance, overtourism, privacy, trust, resilience...

When thinking about approaches to improve productivity, we can adopt a system or a process perspective

System perspective

- Business model maps
- Business ecosystems

⇒ Business model and ecosystem innovation

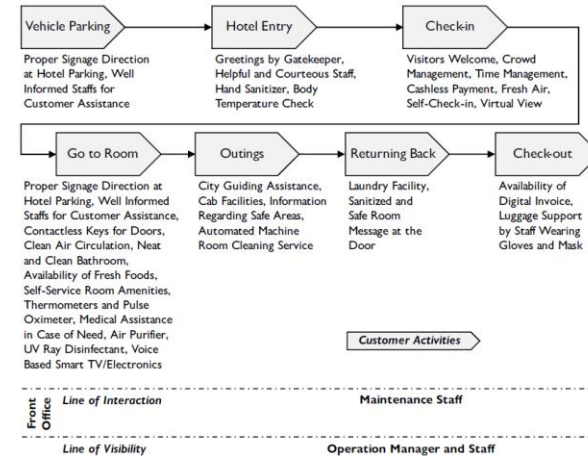


illustrative
(based on
Buhalis &
Leung, 2018)

Process perspective

- Process flowcharts
- Service blueprints

⇒ Process reengineering and service redesign



illustrative
(based on
Pandey &
Kulshrestha,
2021)



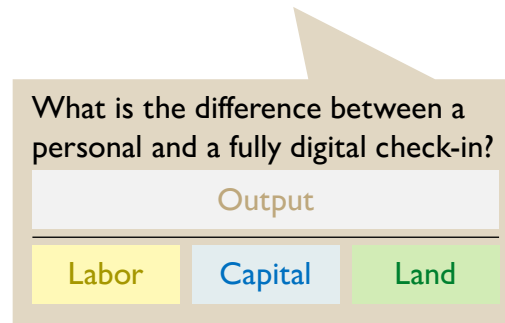
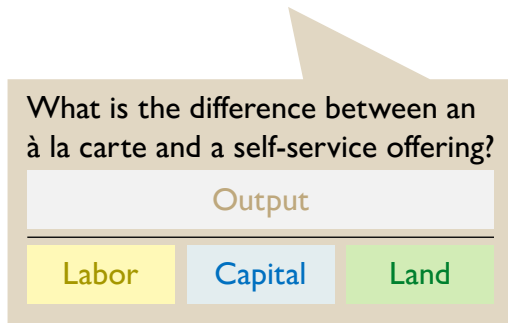
Developing measures

KPIs for tourism and hospitality

After looking at the status quo of digitization in hospitality: Why should we measure productivity of services?

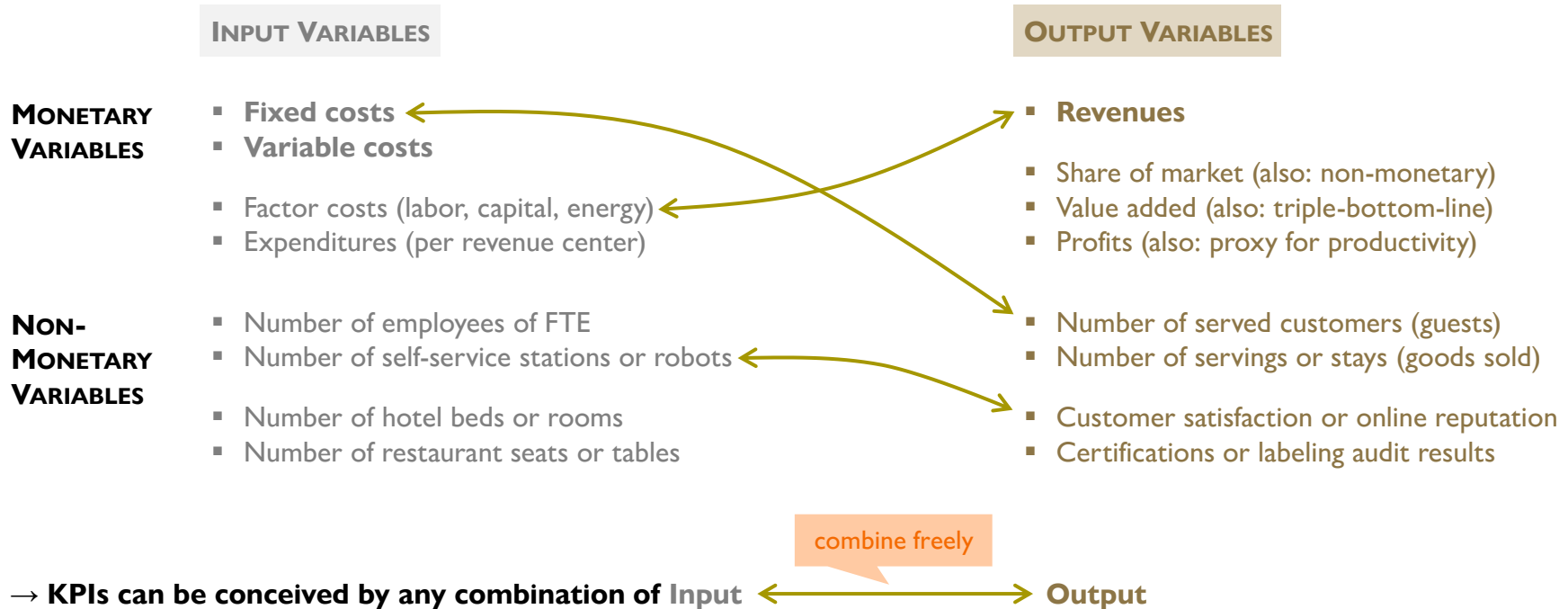
We look at productivity on a micro-level: **firm(s) and their processes**.

- To identify **weaknesses** in the business model.
- To find and simulate **improvements** in the business processes.
- To ensure an **effective** allocation of resources and an **efficient** process design.



→ **What would you want to measure? Think of specific productivity KPIs.**

Productivity is essentially the relation of output per input but can be measured with a range of variables



What productivity KPI would you like to see?

Number of covers
per hour of service

Employee satisfaction versus
number of guest interactions

Employee education level
versus guest satisfaction

Willingness to pay versus
customer satisfaction

Factor costs for direct
booking versus
transaction costs in
third party distribution

Employee well-being
versus their productivity

Optimal business model based
on the share of various business
units' GOI of total GOI

GOI per FTE per
business unit

Quality or costs of furnishing
versus guest satisfaction

Number of arrivals and
departures per number of
hours allocated at reception

GOI per m2 per
business unit



Selected feedback from workshop

On the operational level, the efficient configuration of processes needs to be measured (shorter term)

Labor

Capital

Land

e.g. hotel

Housekeeping

- Labor per room sold [h or CHF]
- Labor per RevPAR (or ADR) [CHF or %]

Reception

- Labor per reservation (all channels) [h or CHF]
- Labor per check-in/-out (per arrival) [h or CHF]
- Labor per night [h or CHF]

Maintenance/Repairs/Replacements

- Labor per m2 (by hotel category and/or by occupancy)

Kitchen/Service

- Labor per food item [h or CHF]
- Labor per food and beverage item
- Labor per cover (or ticket) [h or CHF]

Additional analyses (related)

- What is GOI per room?
(Revenue – Housekeeping – Reception – other direct expenses)
- From which RevPAR on is break even on level GOI achieved?
- At what level of utilization are housekeeping costs optimal?
- At what point do fixed costs jump?
- What are costs of specific menus?
- What production factors are necessary for different configurations of the kitchen/restaurant?
(e.g., steps: room and labor)

ADR Average Daily Rate
RevPAR Revenue per Available Room = ADR x Occupancy

ReSTo SP2 WP4c

On the strategic level, the effective configuration of resources needs to be measured (longer term)

Land	+ Rooms (sleeping; transient, <3 months; by room category) [GOI/m ²]
Capital	+ F&B (catering; external/internal; production/consumption) [GOI/m ²]
Labor	+ Minors (wellness, fitness, etc.) [GOI/m ²]
	+ Living (residential; resident, >3 months) [GOI/m ²]
	+ Retail [GOI/m ²]
	= TOTAL [GOI/m ²]
	– Administration, marketing, maintenance (indirect expenses/overheads)
	= GOP [GOP/m ²]
	– Property expenses (insurance expenses, rental and leasing costs, etc.)
	= EBITDA
	– Depreciation and Amortization (D: tangible; A: intangible)
	= EBIT
	– Financing expenses
	= Earnings before taxes

e.g. hotel

Additional analyses (related)

- Not just per m² (land or space use), but also per fixed assets (capital invested) or per FTE (labor)
- Using imputed standard rates instead of tax-optimized depreciation of fixed assets
- Regression of optimal building configurations (including various attributes)
- Option to better calculate real estate value (based on configuration for use)



Providing a framework

Measuring the productivity of services

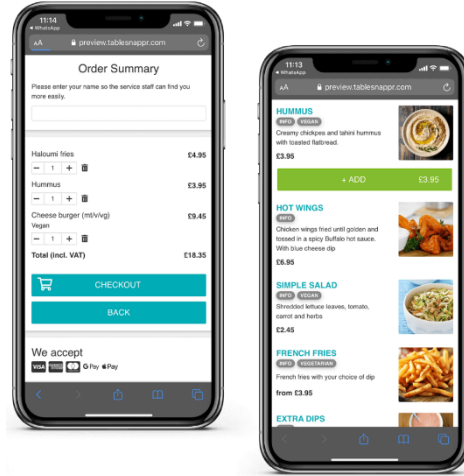
Guideline: improved productivity through digitization should benefit both the producer and the consumer

EXAMPLE: SELF-ORDERING

Producer

- ✓ Less walking for employees
- ✓ More time for customer care
- ✓ Stock-based menu items
- ✓ Simple up-/cross-selling
- ✓ Faster table turnover
- ✓ Analytics, etc.

✓ **Service productivity** ↑



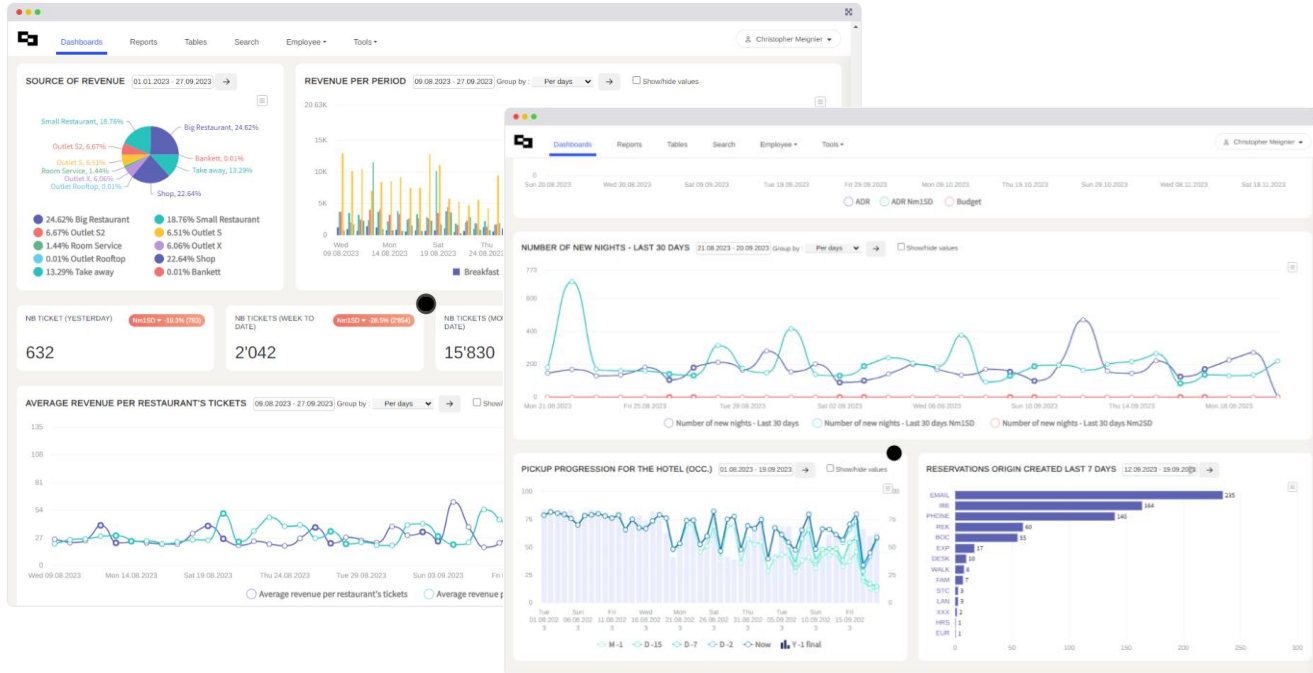
Consumer

- ✓ Less waiting (order at table)
- ✓ Simple filtering (diets, allergies)
- ✓ Accessibility (translation, zoom)
- ✓ Easy payment (various options)
- ✓ Loyalty options (discounts)
- ✓ Reservation updates, etc.

✓ **Customer productivity** ↑

Increasing service productivity is about relieving and enabling both employees and customers, NOT about higher pressure and reduced quality or reduced customer productivity.

Business intelligence tools allow the real-time mapping of a wide range of systems and processes



IDEA

based on the derived KPIs
(cf. preceding slides):

Configuring a productivity benchmarking tool for the tourism and hospitality sector in Switzerland (and beyond, for comparison)

What can be measured (and benchmarked) can be managed (and improved)

In today's highly digitized (service) economy, it should be possible to resolve Solow's productivity paradox. Thanks to digitized service processes, the (non-)productive potential of digitization can be evaluated in detail.

We suggest a **framework** that allows for data-based **benchmarking**:

- Over time
- Within companies
- Between regions or countries
- Across sectors and different industries
- For various scenarios (e.g., increasing capital or labor costs)

When should booking
category A be opened?

Why is restaurant X doing
better than restaurant Y?

What if labor is suddenly
extremely expensive?

Our mapping of digitization has shown that most processes in tourism and hospitality are supported by IT today. Based on these already established applications, a wide range of data is available for exploration and exploitation. **Our developed measures (KPIs) can easily be benchmarked thanks to readily available business intelligence tools.** This allows for continuous improvements (operational) and radical reconfigurations of asset allocation (strategic). As soon as the productivity framework is implemented a wide range of questions can be answered (cf. Appendix).

FRAMEWORK

**based on
existing tools**
(cf. blent.io)

Offering an
industry
benchmarking
cockpit,
allowing for
various levels of
granularity,
based on, e.g.,
membership
and own data
sharing...

Productivity appendix

Ideation outputs and literature references

1/7 Collected ideas and thoughts of workshop participants:

Productivity of service offerings and processes in general

- Quantity and quality of service portfolio (decrease variety, such as in menus or room types)
- Menu designs to balance the workload in the kitchen, ensuring that no single station becomes a bottleneck
- Standard operating procedures (SOPs) for consistency in service delivery
- Preventive maintenance schedules to avoid unexpected breakdowns
- Inventory management tools to track stock levels in real-time, reduce waste, and ensure ingredients are available when needed
- Outsourcing of non-core activities and focus on core competencies (cf. business models), while maintaining strong relationships with suppliers (subject to regular review)

2/7 Collected ideas and thoughts of workshop participants: *Productivity of processes in specific domains*

- Energy generation and use and related business models (insource parts of value chain)
- Energy management systems for efficient utility usage
- Waste reduction and water conservation measures
- Check-in and check-out processes (delegate process to guest)
- Housekeeping (replace process by benefit for guest)
- Ordering and/or delivery (delegate process to guest)

3/7 Collected ideas and thoughts of workshop participants: *Employees and labor*

- Workforce management software to optimize staff schedules
- Consideration of labor costs in scheduling decisions to maintain a balance between quality and OPEX
- Employee feedback to identify areas for improvement and increase job satisfaction
- Recognize and reward high-performing employees to boost morale and motivation
- Enable upselling knowhow and capacities with/of staff
- Free employees from administrative tasks by digitization and automation (e.g., check-in)

4/7 Collected ideas and thoughts of workshop participants: *Revenue management and financial management*

- Yield management based on actual costs per unit (marginal costs)
- Dynamic pricing strategies based on demand forecasting to maximize room revenue
- Packages and promotions to attract different market segments
- Optimization of distribution channels to increase visibility and bookings
- Review of financial statements to monitor profit margins and identify areas where efficiencies can be gained
- Cash flow management, especially in relation to inventory purchases and labor costs

5/7 Collected ideas and thoughts of workshop participants:

Personalization of services

- Analyzing the arrival process in the destination – digitalize and personalize the communication.
- Observe respectively ask the customers – stronger demand focus, context-related.
- Make the system available for personal changes, by building on proposed systems.
- Transforming a hotel lobby into a personal information and sales center for visitors
- Restaurant suggestions based on behavior.
- Add tourism activities (including pictures or videos) and propositions on the restaurant menu to create more emotions.

6/7 Collected ideas and thoughts of workshop participants:

Utilization of resources

- Using free capacities outside of tourism.
- App or software for overbooking: some hotels are overbooked; if we had this information in the ecosystem, we could faster find accommodation for the tourists left behind.
- Use a harmonized source of 'basic it services' together to skip all the messy backend work and focus on your specific digitalization process.
- Focus on 'back of house' optimization rather than front of house, this way reducing the concern of customer facing risks and allowing for trial and error.
- Liaise all players in one region/destination for cross-selling and selling from multiple points.
- Making all existing small and authentic services digitally available.

7/7 Collected ideas and thoughts of workshop participants: *Processes across ecosystems*

- Single guest account for all tourism services and registrations in Switzerland; guests can allow to transfer all needed data to selected service provider; data will be cleaner which saves service providers' time.
- Implement a comprehensive, standardized customer satisfaction score across Switzerland and learn collectively by sharing results and insights.
- What if we combine the data from reviews (e.g. Booking, Tripadvisor) to make teamwork and team management more effective (reviews could be combined with the information about employees working that day in the hotel).
- Integrate services along the tourist customer journey – e.g., don't charge separately – spread over different businesses.
- Make the value-chain of tourism in one piece; as little breakage as possible in the customer journey.
- Connect all data sources.

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See also reports from other work packages within subproject 2 (SP2) from the Innosuisse flagship resilient tourism (ResTo).

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