

Change Management Practices and Performance of Contemporary Hotel Businesses in Kigali City, Rwanda: A Case of Sainte Famille Hotel

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Abstract: This study examined the influence of change management practices on the performance of contemporary hotel businesses in Kigali City, using Sainte Famille Hotel as a case study. The study was motivated by the increasing challenges faced by hotels in implementing organizational change, including employee resistance, inadequate training, ineffective communication, and limited innovation, which undermine service quality, operational efficiency, competitiveness, and long-term sustainability. The study was anchored on theories of technological change, leadership, organizational learning, stakeholder engagement, and organizational performance. A quantitative research approach employing a descriptive and correlational research design was adopted. The target population comprised 268 respondents drawn from hotel management, employees, and guests at Sainte Famille Hotel. A sample of 192 respondents was determined using Slovin's formula. Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, as well as inferential statistical techniques to examine the relationship between change management practices and organizational performance. The findings revealed that effective change management practices significantly improve hotel performance by enhancing service quality, operational efficiency, employee adaptability, customer satisfaction, and organizational competitiveness. Specifically, technological innovation, transformational leadership, organizational learning, stakeholder involvement, and effective communication were found to play a significant role in reducing resistance to change, fostering employee commitment, and promoting innovation. The results further demonstrated that well-implemented change management practices strengthen teamwork, improve decision-making processes, and contribute to sustainable organizational growth. The study concludes that effective change management is a critical determinant of organizational performance in contemporary hotel businesses. It recommends that hotel managers institutionalize comprehensive change management strategies by investing in employee capacity building, strengthening internal communication, promoting participatory leadership, and encouraging continuous innovation. Policymakers should support the development of policies that facilitate organizational transformation within the hospitality industry, while future researchers should extend similar studies to other hospitality establishments and employ mixed-methods or longitudinal research designs to provide broader empirical evidence.

Keywords: Management Practices, Performance, Hotel Businesses, Contemporary, Kigali City.

1. INTRODUCTION

The contemporary hospitality industry is characterized by rapid technological advancements, increasing globalization, changing customer expectations, and intense market competition. These developments have compelled hotel businesses to continually adapt their operations, organizational structures, and service delivery systems to remain competitive.

Consequently, change management has emerged as a strategic organizational capability that enables hotels to successfully implement technological, structural, and managerial changes while minimizing employee resistance and ensuring organizational effectiveness. Effective change management enhances organizational flexibility, improves service quality, strengthens customer satisfaction, and promotes sustainable business performance (Prayag, Chowdhury, & Moghadam, 2024; Alonso-Almeida & Bremser, 2021).

Globally, the hospitality industry has undergone profound transformation due to digitalization, the emergence of online booking platforms, artificial intelligence, data-driven decision-making, and increasing demand for personalized customer experiences. These developments require hotel organizations to redesign their operational processes, strengthen employee competencies, and adopt innovative management practices. Moreover, global disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that hotels with effective change management systems were better positioned to adapt through digital service delivery, enhanced health protocols, flexible work arrangements, and operational restructuring, thereby maintaining organizational resilience and performance.

Across Africa, the hospitality industry continues to expand alongside increasing tourism, urbanization, and investment in hospitality infrastructure. However, hotel businesses face persistent challenges, including shortages of skilled personnel, technological limitations, financial constraints, and changing customer expectations. These challenges necessitate effective change management practices that promote organizational learning, employee engagement, leadership commitment, and innovation to improve operational efficiency and organizational competitiveness.

Within the East African Community (EAC), regional integration and growing investment in tourism have intensified competition among hotel businesses. Hotels are increasingly adopting digital reservation systems, internationally recognized service standards, and customer relationship management technologies to remain competitive. Nevertheless, many establishments continue to experience challenges related to organizational restructuring, employee adaptation to new technologies, and resistance to organizational change. Consequently, effective leadership, stakeholder participation, continuous employee training, and effective communication have become essential elements for successful organizational transformation and sustainable performance.

In Rwanda, the hospitality sector has experienced remarkable growth, supported by political stability, economic reforms, increased investment, and government initiatives that position tourism as a strategic contributor to national development under Vision 2050. Kigali has particularly emerged as a regional destination for business tourism, international conferences, and leisure travel. As competition among hotels intensifies, hospitality organizations are increasingly investing in digital technologies, service innovation, workforce development, and quality management systems to meet international service standards and changing customer expectations. These transformations require structured change management practices capable of facilitating organizational adaptation while maintaining service excellence and operational efficiency (Mugisha & Niyonsaba, 2021; Kamanzi & Uwizeye, 2022).

Despite these developments, many hotels in Kigali continue to encounter challenges associated with implementing organizational change, including employee resistance, inadequate communication, insufficient training, and limited stakeholder involvement. Such challenges often hinder innovation, reduce operational efficiency, and negatively affect customer satisfaction and organizational performance. Although numerous studies have examined change management in manufacturing, public institutions, and financial organizations, empirical evidence on the influence of change management practices on the performance of contemporary hotel businesses in Rwanda remains limited. This study therefore sought to examine the influence of change management practices on the performance of contemporary hotel businesses in Kigali City, using Sainte Famille Hotel as a case study, with the aim of generating evidence to inform management practice and policy within Rwanda's hospitality industry.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive research design to examine change management practices and the performance of contemporary hotel businesses in Kigali City, Rwanda, with particular reference to Sainte Famille Hotel as the case study.

2.2 Target Population

In this study, the target population consisted of guests, employees, and administrative staff of Sainte Famille Hotel.

2.3 Sample Size

Since it is often impractical to study every member of a population, an appropriate sample size was determined to ensure that the findings would be representative while minimizing sampling error. The study targeted a total population of 268 respondents, comprising guests, hotel employees, and administrative staff at Sainte Famille Hotel. The sample size was determined using the Slovin's (1960) formula, which is appropriate when the population size is known and a specified margin of error is desired.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where:

- n = Required sample size
- N = Total population (268)
- e = Margin of error (0.05)

Substituting the values into the formula:

$$n = \frac{268}{1 + 268(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{268}{1 + 268(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{268}{1.67}$$

$$n = 160.48 \approx 160 \text{ respondents}$$

Therefore, the required sample size for the study was 160 respondents.

2.4 Sampling Techniques

In this study, a mixed sampling approach was adopted, incorporating both probability and non-probability methods for selecting respondents. Purposive sampling was used to identify employees with relevant experience and knowledge directly related to the study objectives, ensuring informed responses. In contrast, simple random sampling was applied to select hotel guests, giving each guest an equal opportunity of being included in the study and promoting fairness in representation.

2.5 Data Collection Methods

In order to collect data, the researcher used documentary technique, questionnaires and interviews.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Effect of technology change on Guest experience

		Column Total N %	Column Valid N %	Layer Column Valid N %	Interpretation
Fast and easy online booking	Strong disagree	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	Strong Agree
	Disagree	2.6%	3.7%	3.7%	
	Neutral	5.2%	7.4%	7.4%	
	Agree	20.8%	29.4%	29.4%	
	Strongly agree	42.2%	59.6%	59.6%	
Digital check-in reduced waiting time	Strong disagree	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	Strong Agree
	Disagree	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
	Neutral	8.3%	11.8%	11.8%	
	Agree	26.0%	36.8%	36.8%	

Free Wi-Fi is available and reliable	Strongly agree	36.5%	51.5%	51.5%	Agree
	Strong disagree	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
	Disagree	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
	Neutral	15.6%	22.1%	22.1%	
	Agree	44.3%	62.5%	62.5%	
Room automation was limited	Strongly agree	10.9%	15.4%	15.4%	Strong Agree
	Strong disagree	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
	Disagree	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
	Neutral	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
	Agree	44.3%	62.5%	62.5%	
Some systems need improvement	Strongly agree	26.6%	37.5%	37.5%	Strong Agree
	Strong disagree	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
	Disagree	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
	Neutral	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
	Agree	18.8%	26.5%	26.5%	
Overall, technology slightly improved the experience	Strongly agree	52.1%	73.5%	73.5%	Agree
	Strong disagree	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
	Disagree	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
	Neutral	35.9%	50.7%	50.7%	
	Agree	9.4%	13.2%	13.2%	
	Strongly agree	25.5%	36.0%	36.0%	
	Strong disagree	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
	Disagree	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
	Neutral	35.9%	50.7%	50.7%	
	Agree	9.4%	13.2%	13.2%	

Table 1 presents respondents' views on how technological changes have influenced their overall hotel experience. The findings indicate generally positive perceptions of the hotel's digital systems, while also pointing out specific areas requiring improvement. Regarding the online booking system, 29.4% of valid respondents agreed and 59.6% strongly agreed that the system is fast and easy to use, giving a combined agreement of 89%. This strong level of approval is reflected in a high mean score of 4.45, confirming that customers perceive the online platform as efficient and user-friendly.

Similarly, the digital check-in system received high ratings, with 36.8% agreeing and 51.5% strongly agreeing that it reduced waiting time. With no recorded disagreement and a mean score of 4.39, the results indicate that digital check-in significantly enhances convenience and improves the arrival experience for guests.

Concerning free Wi-Fi availability and reliability, 62.5% agreed and 15.4% strongly agreed, totaling 77.9% positive responses. This suggests that internet connectivity is generally satisfactory, supporting guests' technological expectations during their stay. However, some aspects highlight the need for further improvement. A majority of respondents (62.5% agree and 37.5% strongly agree) indicated that room automation remains limited, suggesting opportunities for upgrading in-room technologies. In addition, 26.5% agreed and 73.5% strongly agreed that certain systems require improvement. This item recorded the highest mean score of 4.74, demonstrating strong consensus that technological enhancement should continue.

Finally, when asked whether technology slightly improved their overall experience, responses were more moderate: 50.7% remained neutral, while 49.2% expressed agreement or strong agreement. The overall interpretation of this item aligns with an "Agree" level of perception.

Therefore, the results show that technological changes particularly online booking and digital check-in have been effectively implemented and well received by customers, as reflected in their high mean scores (4.45, 4.39, and 4.74, respectively). These findings confirm that strategic technological change management has positively contributed to guest experience and overall hotel performance, while also identifying areas for continued improvement.

Table 2: Customer confidence in hotel management's ability to respond to needs and concerns

		Count	Column Valid N %
Staff were polite and attentive	Strong disagree	0	0.0%
	Disagree	0	0.0%
	Neutral	16	11.8%
	Agree	35	25.7%
	Strongly agree	85	62.5%
Requests were handled fairly quickly	Strong disagree	0	0.0%
	Disagree	0	0.0%
	Neutral	0	0.0%
	Agree	77	56.6%
	Strongly agree	59	43.4%
Management seems present and engaged	Strong disagree	0	0.0%
	Disagree	0	0.0%
	Neutral	0	0.0%
	Agree	30	22.1%
	Strongly agree	106	77.9%
Follow-up on concerns was inconsistent	Strong disagree	0	0.0%
	Disagree	0	0.0%
	Neutral	0	0.0%
	Agree	39	28.7%
	Strongly agree	97	71.3%
Some issues needed multiple reminders	Strong disagree	0	0.0%
	Disagree	0	0.0%
	Neutral	0	0.0%
	Agree	11	8.1%
	Strongly agree	125	91.9%
Moderate confidence in management's responsiveness	Strong disagree	0	0.0%
	Disagree	0	0.0%
	Neutral	0	0.0%
	Agree	41	30.1%
	Strongly agree	95	69.9%

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Staff were polite and attentive	136	4.5074	.69917
Requests were handled fairly quickly	136	4.4338	.49743
Management seems present and engaged	136	4.7794	.41618
Follow-up on concerns was inconsistent	136	4.7132	.45392
Some issues needed multiple reminders	136	4.9191	.27366
Moderate confidence in management's responsiveness	136	4.6985	.46059
Valid N (listwise)	136		

According to Table 2, the data reveal a compelling paradox in management and service performance. Customers overwhelmingly endorse the fundamental human elements of the service, with a strong agreement that staff are polite and attentive mean of 4.51. That management is visibly present and engaged mean of 4.78. However, this positive perception is sharply contradicted by critical failures in procedural follow-through and responsiveness. An alarming 91.9% of respondents strongly agree that "some issues needed multiple reminders, and 71.3% strongly agree that follow-up on concerns was inconsistent. This indicates a significant disconnect between management's visibility and the effectiveness of the systems they oversee. Consequently, while the hotel excels in creating an approachable and polite front-line impression,

this is undermined by operational deficiencies that erode customer confidence, as evidenced by the high agreement with having only "moderate confidence in management's responsiveness." This suggests that change management efforts should pivot from cultivating presence to implementing robust, reliable systems for tracking and resolving customer issues.

Table 3: The way use of customer feedback is valued and used to improve service

		Count	Column Total N %
Feedback forms available in rooms	Strong disagree	0	0.0%
	Disagree	21	10.9%
	Neutral	16	8.3%
	Agree	59	30.7%
	Strongly agree	40	20.8%
Staff encouraged verbal suggestions	Strong disagree	0	0.0%
	Disagree	0	0.0%
	Neutral	0	0.0%
	Agree	50	26.0%
	Strongly agree	86	44.8%
No clear updates based on feedback	Strong disagree	0	0.0%
	Disagree	0	0.0%
	Neutral	10	5.2%
	Agree	37	19.3%
	Strongly agree	89	46.4%
Some recurring issues still exist	Strong disagree	0	0.0%
	Disagree	0	0.0%
	Neutral	0	0.0%
	Agree	44	22.9%
	Strongly agree	92	47.9%
Improvements feel slow or informal	Strong disagree	0	0.0%
	Disagree	0	0.0%
	Neutral	12	6.3%
	Agree	39	20.3%
	Strongly agree	85	44.3%
Feedback is received but rarely acted on visibly	Strong disagree	0	0.0%
	Disagree	0	0.0%
	Neutral	32	16.7%
	Agree	23	12.0%
	Strongly agree	81	42.2%

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Feedback forms available in rooms	136	2.00	5.00	3.8676	1.00965
Staff encouraged verbal suggestions	136	4.00	5.00	4.6324	.48395
No clear updates based on feedback	136	3.00	5.00	4.5809	.62722
Some recurring issues still exist	136	4.00	5.00	4.6765	.46955
Improvements feel slow or informal	136	3.00	5.00	4.5368	.65442
Feedback is received but rarely acted on visibly	136	3.00	5.00	4.3603	.84039
Valid N (listwise)	136				

Table 3 shows that data reveals a significant disconnect between the hotel's active solicitation of customer feedback and its operational follow-through. While the process of gathering input is strong evidenced by staff effectively encouraging verbal suggestions mean of 4.63 and feedback forms being readily available, the subsequent handling of this feedback is perceived as highly ineffective. Customers overwhelmingly report a lack of visible action, with strong agreement that there are no clear updates based on feedback, where the mean of 4.58, some recurring issues still exist as shown mean of 4.68, and

feedback is received but rarely acted on visibly mean of 4.36. This indicates a critical failure in the feedback loop; the hotel is successful in listening but is perceived as failing to translate that listening into meaningful, demonstrable improvements. Consequently, this undermines customer trust and suggests that the change management system is reactive and informal rather than a structured, closed-loop process that visibly addresses guest concerns.

Table 4: Customer satisfaction with overall service quality

		Count	Column Total N %
Rooms are clean and comfortable	Strong disagree	0	0.0%
	Disagree	0	0.0%
	Neutral	8	4.2%
	Agree	58	30.2%
	Strongly agree	70	36.5%
Friendly and helpful staff	Strong disagree	0	0.0%
	Disagree	0	0.0%
	Neutral	0	0.0%
	Agree	55	28.6%
	Strongly agree	81	42.2%
Food quality is average	Strong disagree	0	0.0%
	Disagree	0	0.0%
	Neutral	0	0.0%
	Agree	8	4.2%
	Strongly agree	128	66.7%
Facilities need minor updates	Strong disagree	0	0.0%
	Disagree	0	0.0%
	Neutral	0	0.0%
	Agree	118	61.5%
	Strongly agree	18	9.4%
Good location and secure environment	Strong disagree	0	0.0%
	Disagree	0	0.0%
	Neutral	0	0.0%
	Agree	0	0.0%
	Strongly agree	136	70.8%
Overall satisfaction is moderate to high	Strong disagree	0	0.0%
	Disagree	0	0.0%
	Neutral	0	0.0%
	Agree	109	56.8%
	Strongly agree	27	14.1%

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Rooms are clean and comfortable	136	3.00	5.00	4.4559	.60697
Friendly and helpful staff	136	4.00	5.00	4.5956	.49259
Food quality is average	136	4.00	5.00	4.9412	.23616
Facilities need minor updates	136	4.00	5.00	4.1324	.34013
Good location and secure environment	136	5.00	5.00	5.0000	.00000
Overall satisfaction is moderate to high	136	4.00	5.00	4.1985	.40037
Valid N (listwise)	136				

The above table 4 data demonstrates exceptionally strong performance in core service delivery fundamentals, with customers expressing overwhelming approval for the hotel's location and security, which received a perfect mean score of 5.00. This foundational strength is complemented by highly positive ratings for staff performance (mean of 4.60) and room cleanliness (mean of 4.46), indicating successful maintenance of essential service quality standards. However, the analysis

reveals two notable areas requiring management attention. The very high agreement that "food quality is average" (mean of 4.94) actually represents a significant concern when understood as a negatively-framed assessment, suggesting culinary services are not meeting customer expectations. Similarly, the consensus that facilities need minor updates (mean of 4.13) points to perceived infrastructure aging. These specific concerns appear to moderate the overall satisfaction rating (mean of 4.20), which, while positive, does not reach the excellence level of the individual service components, indicating that targeted improvements in food services and facility updates could substantially elevate the overall guest experience.

4. CONCLUSION

The study concluded that effective change management practices play a significant role in enhancing the performance of contemporary hotel businesses in Kigali City, with Sainte Famille Hotel serving as the case study. The findings demonstrated that technological change, particularly through digital innovation, contributes to improved operational efficiency and enhanced customer experience. Leadership learning was also found to strengthen managerial adaptability, employee commitment, and the organization's overall capacity to respond effectively to change.

Furthermore, stakeholder involvement in change processes promoted inclusiveness, trust, and smoother implementation of organizational reforms, thereby reducing resistance to change and improving organizational cohesion. Collectively, the study established that technological change, leadership learning, and stakeholder involvement positively influence hotel performance, as reflected in increased productivity, profitability, customer satisfaction, and competitive advantage within the hospitality industry.

Based on these findings, the study concludes that contemporary hotels operating in dynamic environments such as Kigali City should continuously invest in digital transformation initiatives, strengthen leadership development programs, and enhance stakeholder engagement mechanisms to sustain long-term performance and organizational resilience. The study also highlights the need for future research to conduct comparative analyses across different hotels and regions of Rwanda and to examine additional factors, including organizational culture and external environmental conditions, that may influence the effectiveness of change management practices.

The study concludes that integrated change management strategies are essential for sustaining growth, competitiveness, and long-term success in Rwanda's evolving hospitality industry.

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