

Study of the Conceptual-Theoretical Evolution of Absorptive Capacity in the Hospitality Field



Estudo da Evolução Conceitual-Teórica da Capacidade Absortiva no Campo da

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RESUMO

O conceito de capacidade absorptiva (ACAP) é fragmentado e com diversas definições na literatura. Ao examinar a literatura sobre ACAP no contexto da indústria hoteleira, encontramos apenas um estudo classificado como revisão sistemática elaborado por Shawa & Williams (2009), contudo com enfoque em investigar como a gestão do conhecimento pode influenciar no desempenho de empresas hoteleiras. Há escassez de estudos mais amplos sobre a evolução conceitual-teórica da ACAP e suas respectivas dimensões na indústria hoteleira reforçando a necessidade de novos estudos deste tipo. Por meio de uma

Revisão Sistemática de literatura, este estudo tem por objetivo mapear a evolução conceitual-teórica das dimensões da ACAP em organizações da indústria hoteleira, identificar os principais temas emergentes e apresentar uma agenda para estudos futuros. Realizou-se levantamentos de artigos sobre ACAP e hotéis nas bases de dados *Web of Science*, *Scopus* e *EBSCOhost*. Foram selecionados 47 estudos após a aplicação de critérios de inclusão e exclusão, que foram classificados de acordo com suas perspectivas teóricas, metodológicas e temáticas. Os resultados possibilitam afirmar que os estudos foram elaborados com base em uma diversidade de teorias, além da abordagem da capacidade absorptiva, teorias do conhecimento e de competitividade também foram utilizadas para analisar os processos que formam a capacidade absorptiva de forma isolada. Foi constatado que aproximadamente 80% dos estudos da amostra utilizaram métodos quantitativos. A principal contribuição teórica do estudo é a apresentação da evolução conceitual-teórica da capacidade absorptiva no campo da hotelaria. Além disso, ao analisar em profundidade os estudos da amostra, foi possível codificá-los em três temas principais: aquisição de conhecimentos em clusters (distritos) de hotéis, inovação em serviços e ACAP e o impacto no desempenho de empresas hoteleiras. Em termos gerenciais o estudo retrata aos gestores como os processos da capacidade absorptiva podem influenciar o desempenho organizacional.

Palavras-chave: Capacidade Absortiva, Hotelaria, Inovação, Revisão Sistemática da Literatura

ABSTRACT

The concept of absorptive capacity (ACAP) is fragmented and has several definitions in the literature. When examining the literature on ACAP in the context of the hotel industry, we found only one study classified as a systematic review prepared by Shawa & Williams (2009), however with a focus on investigating how knowledge management can influence the performance of hotel companies. There is a dearth of broader studies on the conceptual-theoretical evolution of ACAP and its respective dimensions in the hotel industry, reinforcing the need for further



studies of this type. Through a systematic literature review, this study aims to map the conceptual-theoretical evolution of the dimensions of ACAP in organizations in the hotel industry, to identify the main emerging themes and to present an agenda for future studies. Surveys of articles on ACAP and hotels were carried out in the Web of Science, Scopus and EBSCOhost databases. 47 studies were selected after applying inclusion and exclusion criteria, which were classified according to their theoretical, methodological and thematic perspectives. The results make it possible to state that the studies were developed based on a diversity of theories, in addition to the absorptive capacity approach, theories of knowledge and competitiveness were also used to analyze the processes that form the absorptive capacity in isolation. It was found that approximately 80% of the studies in the sample used quantitative methods. The main theoretical contribution of the study is the presentation of the conceptual-theoretical evolution of the absorptive capacity in the field of hospitality. In addition, when analyzing the sample studies in depth, it was possible to code them in three main themes: knowledge acquisition in hotel clusters (districts), service innovation and ACAP and the impact on the performance of hotel companies. In managerial terms, the study portrays to managers how the processes of abortion capacity can influence organizational performance.

Keywords: Absorptive Capacity, Hospitality, Innovation, Systematic Literature Review

INTRODUCTION

The absorptive capacity (ACAP) is a fragmented concept and with several definitions found in the literature. Although the fragmentation of the concept, there is consensus when referring to the capacity of organizations to acquire and to use external knowledge with the purpose of obtaining a sustainable advantage. It is about a complex concept, which is formed by the acquisition, assimilation, transformation dimensions and usage of



knowledge (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Lev et al., 2009; Zahra & George, 2002; Zhang et al., 2019).

The early studies on the concept investigated the role of Research & Development (R&D) in the enhance of innovations, the appearance of the concept in literature was introduced by Cohen & Levinthal (1990). Although the initial focus relates the absorptive capacity and innovation through the area of R&D, the following studies broadened the relation of the phenomenon in organizational and inter-organizational level (Tsai, 2001; Zhang et al., 2019).

Throughout the evolution of the concept of absorptive capacity, an interlocking occurred with other organizational phenomena, such as, for the example, the management of knowledge and organizational learning. Studies related to these theme have proliferated in the literature, including those with several areas of knowledge, among them applied social sciences and economy. Despite this exponential growth, focused studies on investigating the evolution of such concept in the hospitality literature are seldom, due to the this it is possible to state that studies are still incipient in the literature and, consequently, do not contribute effectively for the management area (Enz & Way, 2016).

The literature on absorptive capacity in the hospitality field only presents some studies. However, such studies were focused on analyzing separately the impact of internal sources in harvesting internal knowledge in organizational performance (Binder, 2019) or on the influence of external sources of knowledge in organization performance (Hon & Lui, 2016).

The hospitality industry is characterized by the constant use of new knowledge, which means, the organizations inserted within this industry must harvest and process external knowledge to implant improvements in the provided services. Part of these information are harvested through the interaction with guests who due to their previous experiences and



expectations on the service, suggest improvements. This interaction is through an extensive production process and sharing of knowledge, such process may be better understood by the view of absorptive capacity (Hallin & Marnburg, 2008; Noerchoidah & Harjanti, 2019).

The result of an effective process of absorption of knowledge is the innovation, whether incremental or disruptive, since it impacts positively competitiveness and the success of enterprises inserted in the hospitality industry (Binder, 2019; Enz & Way, 2016). The human activity among the collaborators and guests that occurs in an intensive way in hostel enterprises promotes innovations. The collaborators and guests are simultaneously immersed in the process of creation and application of such innovations (Cadwallader et al., 2010; Chang et al., 2011).

Within this context, the collaborators who interact with the guests have a critical role to ease the implantation of improvements suggested by guests (Cadwallader et al., 2010; Chang et al., 2011). The role of collaborators in the line of front is essential, but in addition the processes of acquisition, assimilation, transformation and application of the external knowledge should be prioritized by the organization to happen effectively. This is what defines the capacity of absorption of external knowledge by the organization (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Lowik et al., 2012; Noerchoidah & Harjanti, 2019).

When examining the published studies on the absorptive capacity (ACAP) within the context of the hospitality industry, emerged from such research only one study with a systematic review of literature. However, such study, performed by Shawa & Williams (2009), focused on analyzing only the role of management of knowledge and sharing information between collaborators in the internal environment of the hospitality industry. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is dearth of broader studies on the conceptual-theoretical evolution of the absorptive capacity and its respective dimensions in the hospitality industry reinforcing the need of new studies of such type.



The hospitality industry is affected by rapid changes in the external environment, which may become an obstacle for the creation and maintenance of competitive advantages (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2018). In this industry, the management of knowledge may promote the innovation and the organizational performance (for example, the development of new services) playing an essential role in the success of the organizations (Pattanasing, Aujirapongpan & Srimai, 2019; Kim & Lee, 2012).

Therefore, a broad review of literature is important for managers and other professionals who act in the hospitality industry to be well-informed on the latest developments and emerging trends of the field. Regarding the literature, especially for the academy, a review of literature provides mapping of opportunities for future studies, in addition to identifying future challenges of the field (Tranfield *et.al*, 2003).

Despite the review of literature performed by Shaw e Williams (2009), little is known about the dimensions of the absorptive capacity in organizations of the hospitality industry. With the purpose of filling such gaps, the purpose of this study was to highlight the theoretical-conceptual evolution of the dimensions of the absorptive capacity in organizations of the hospitality industry, through a systematic review of the literature (SRL), (Petticrew & Roberts, 2008; Tölkes & Butzmann, 2018).

The absorptive capacity has a secondary role in studies regarding the acquisition of knowledge, a great part of the studies related to the theme has adopted a focus based on management theories and sharing of knowledge (Santoro & Usai, 2018; Zapata & Arroyo, 2017; Garcia-Almeida & Yu, 2015; Brookes, 2014; Kim & Lee, 2012).

Based on this, a broader perspective in the systematization of these types of studies has been adopted, aiming at mapping the theoretical perspectives, methodological perspectives, main emerging themes and presenting an agenda of future studies on the absorptive capacity of the hospitality industry in the SRL (Tranfield *et al.*, 2003).



The study is structured accordingly, this introduction, the next section presents a general view on the foundations and evolution of the absorptive capacity and the current existing theoretical trends. This is followed by a section on methodology, which describes the data gathering and organization process. The two following sections present the empiric findings and a critical analysis of them. The final part of article presents the conclusions and suggestions for future studies.

Theoretical Reference

Absorptive capacity

The concept of absorptive capacity (ACAO) was presented in the early 90's decade, the authors Cohen & Levinthal (1990) stated in their seminal study that the absorptive capacity should be understood as how the organizational capacity may acquire, transform and use for commercial purposes the external knowledge, this enables to maximize sustainable competitive advantages (Zahra & George, 2002; Lev et al., 2009; Gebauer et al., 2012; Dzhengiz & Niesten, 2019).

Other important studies presented in the literature have conceptualized the absorptive capacity as a complex group of specific abilities to code the tactic knowledge explicitly, such codification allows the organization to reconfigure its basis of resources, according to changes and environmental pressures (Mowery & Oxley, 1995; Zahra & George, 2002; Tzeng & Cheng-Hua, 2019).

Knowledge that is deep-rooted in the subconsciousness of individuals is classified as tactic, this type of knowledge is hardly internalized or shared, unlike the explicit knowledge that can be shared and easily transferred once it is verbalized and may be expressed through the individual's abilities (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1997; Polanyi, 1966; Tatto & Bordin, 2016).



One of the main characteristics of the hospitality industry is its high turnover of staff, this causes negative impacts on the transformation of tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge and consequently, affects the capacity of the organization to acquire a sustainable competitive advantage (Hjalager, 2002; Vila et al., 2012). The transformation of tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge and its sharing frequently occurs through imitation practices, observations, informal meetings with staff and practical skills (Okumus, 2013).

The absorption capacity implies in the capacity of recognize, acquire, assimilate, use and even seize the available knowledge in the external environment to develop innovations in the services provided or improve the organizational performance (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Tortoriello, 2015; Tsai, 2001). Therefore, the absorptive capacity depends on the attitude of admitting external procedures to perform internal tasks in the organization.

There are several definitions in the literature of absorptive capacity, it is about a fragmented concept that is understood through different theoretical vies, despite the fragmentation of the theme an influential body of authors defend that the absorptive capacity is a specific type of dynamic capacity, these authors understand that the dynamic capacity of absorption of knowledge is the organizational capacity to recombine and reconfigure resources, practices and routines to attend changes and pressures of the environment, aiming at promoting sustainable competitive advantage regarding its competition, mainly in turbulent and dynamic markets (Gebauer et al., 2012; Pisano, 2017; Teece, 2007; Zahra et al., 2006; Zollo & Winter, 2002).

The seminal study which constituted the theoretical trend that defends the absorptive capacity should be understood as a specific type of dynamic capacity and was elaborated by Zahra & George (2002), the model of absorptive capacity presented in the study of such authors is considered the most influential in the literature, this model makes the absorptive capacity different in two dimensions, the first dimension is called potential capacities



(PCAP), such dimension is formed by acquisition processes of external knowledge and assimilation of such knowledge by the members of the organization and performed capacities (RACAP), which is formed by the transformation processes and application of knowledge in innovations or improvements in products or provided services (Gebauer et al., 2012).

The potential absorptive capacity (PACAP) refers to the organizational capacity in searching for and acquiring new knowledge out of the organizational limits, the acquisition is the starting point to execute the potential absorptive capacity. It is about practices and actions of an organization to extrapolate its geographic boundaries to obtain knowledge considered critical to its competitiveness, there are three characteristics of the acquisition practices of external knowledge, which are capable of influencing the absorptive capacity of the organization: intensity, speed and direction (Zahra & George, 2002; Gebauer et al., 2012; Denicolai et al., 2016). The process of assimilation involves attempts of organizing knowledge outside its borders, the assimilation is composed by practices and routines that enable to analyze, to process, to interpret and to comprehend the information obtained from external sources (Szulanski, 1996; Zahra & George, 2002; Gebauer et al., 2012).

The performed absorptive capacity (RACAP) is the second dimension of the absorptive capacity and it is referred to the aptitude of the organization in altering and applying the new knowledge, the absorptive capacity performed is composed by two dimensions, transformation and exploitation (Zahra & George, 2002).

After the processes of acquisition and assimilation, the organizations begin the process of transformation, the external knowledge are transformed to fit the internal context within a company, this is necessary since even new knowledge created by other branches from the same organization, are



seldom ready to be applied by the receiving branch through the stiffness inherent to the knowledge itself (Fortwengel, 2017; Szulanski, 1996).

In other words, transformation is the capacity of the organization to develop and to prime the routines which ease the combination of existing knowledge and knowledge acquired and assimilated by the organization (Zahra & George, 2002; Gebauer et al., 2012; Denicolai et al., 2016).

In addition, once the transformation process is full of attempts and meaningful mistakes, a higher level of trust among the members of the organization may contribute to the performance of such process (Argote & Guo, 2016). At last, the process of exploitation of knowledge refers to the ability of the organization in using the external knowledge for commercial purposes (Tzeng, 2019; Zahra & George, 2002).

The formalization and the organizational routines, are complementary tools to the process of exploitation of external knowledge, once they amplify and empower the use of external knowledge, this occurs through the construction of regular and predictable organizational actions to obtain benefits of the external benefits (Martinkenaite & Breunig, 2016; Paraponaris et al., 2015). In this sense, the formalization is related to the level that the external knowledge is coded and transcript in rules, regulations, procedures or guidance (Chaudhary 2019; Salunke et al., 2019).

Once formalized, the external knowledge is stored in the organizational memory and may be easily accessed, distributed and recovered, therefore, it may guide the collaborators in using knowledge the best way possible. The formalization is possible due to the routine, which refers to the degree in which the execution of organizational activity in the organizational environment is uniform, invariable and consistent. Therefore, if the organizations are able to implement routines to better control the behavior of collaborators, in accordance to the already coded knowledge in rules and procedures, so they may use such knowledge in a more frequent way (Prior



et al., 2018). The PACAP and RACAP dimensions from the model of absorptive capacity proposed by Zahra & George are presented in Figure 1.

Dimensions	Components	Role and Importance	References
Acquisition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Previous investments ▪ Previous knowledge ▪ Intensity ▪ Speed ▪ Direction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Scope search ▪ Perceptive scheme ▪ New connections ▪ Fast learning ▪ Quality learning 	Boynton, Zmud, & Jacobs (1994); Cohen & Levinthal (1990); Keller (1996); Kim (1998); Lyles & Schwenk (1992); Mowery, Oxley, & Silverman (1996); Van Wijk, Van den Bosch, & Volberda (2001); Veugelers (1997)
Assimilation	Comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interpretation ▪ Comprehension ▪ Learning 	Dodgson (1993); Fichman & Kemerer (1999); Kim (1998); Lane & Lubatkin (1998); Szulanski (1996)
Transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Internalization ▪ Conversion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Synergy ▪ Re-codification ▪ Bi-association 	Fichman & Kemerer (1999); Koestler (1966); Kim (1997b, 1998); Smith & DeGregorio (em imprensa)
Exploitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use ▪ Implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Main competences ▪ Resource gathering 	Cohen & Levinthal (1990); Dodgson (1993); Kim (1998); Lane & Lubatkin(1998); Szulanski (1996); Van den Bosch, Volberda, & de Boer (1999); Van Wijk, Van den Bosch, & Volberda (2001)

Figure 1 – Dimensions of the Absorptive Capacity

Source: Zahra & George (2002)

The context in which a hotel is inserted demands the search of constant learning (Zapata & Arroyo, 2017) therefore, when stimulating the absorptive capacity, introducing new knowledge and using those in the operation, the organizational performance may be improved. The elevated staff turnover rate in the hospitality field (Hjalager, 2002), may affect the knowledge retention and existing knowledge in the organization. The staff interaction with guests in the front line is an important source of information on the market and the business itself, in a way that the staff turnover rate is harmful and may cause significant loss of knowledge. Thus, another reason is presented for the



knowledge management and transference be implemented in a professional form in the hospitality field (Gjelsvik, 2002; Tzeng, 2019; Yang & Wan, 2004).

The process of acquisition and knowledge transference certainly involves several collaborators, one of them is withholder of the knowledge and the other is the addressee of the knowledge. The result of the knowledge acquisition depends on the effort of both parts from which receptors may play a more important role (Tzeng, 2019). The classification of the theoretical perspectives from the studies will be performed based on the model of Zahra & George (2002), which states that the absorptive capacity is a multidimensional construct composed by the potential capacities (PACAP) and performed capacities (RACAP) and with the four processes, being acquisition and assimilation PACAP and transformation and exploitation RACAP.

The absorptive capacity pursues a secondary role in the production of researches. Knowledge is considered by business researchers as the most valuable resource a company may have. The management of knowledge is essential in all organizational strategic planning, since it may provide a growing economical development (Santoro & Usai, 2018). In this sense, Idrees *et al.*, 2018, highlight that that sharing allows hotels to gather information on possible future employees who work in similar hotels.

This type of informality refers to the fact that such relations are not establish or maintained by written consent, balancing the competition with knowledge sharing. Such experience may help the current senior staff to progress, transferring them to their associates, in addition to avoiding expenditures and preventing the hotel to obtain a negative reputation, which could compromise future job candidates (Idrees *et al.*, 2018).

The absorptive capacity supports in a complementary way the commitment of quality management, contributing to activities related to improvement, learning and innovation at work, focused on the client. In the same way, the cooperation with suppliers, the process management and



better coordination of collaboration between members of the supply chain allow organizations to share and generate new ideas to be explored and assimilated (Pertusa-Ortega et al., 2021; Daghfous & Barkhi, 2009).

Methods

Data gathering

The present study is defined in methodological terms as a systematic review of literature, the techniques that compose a systematic review were introduced by researchers from several fields, including political sciences, social sciences and biological sciences, such techniques were developed with the purpose of overcoming limitations, prejudice and lack of accuracy of traditional reviews of literature, once so-called traditional reviews of literature do not employ systematic methods that enable the comparison with the methodological accuracy level of a systematic review (Chalmers et al., 1993; Gough et al., 2012).

The elaboration of the systematic review of literature should be based on standardization, transparency and possibility of replication, being necessary that the researcher presents clearly which data banks were used, languages included, keywords used as search strings and inclusion criteria and exclusion of articles from the sample (Farrington et al., 2017).

The systematic procedures of a systematic review recommended by Tranfield *et al.* (2003) are widely accepted by researchers to identify and examine the relevant literature, the procedures suggested by such authors enable the reduction of the subjectivity of researcher and provides recommendations on how to develop logic conclusions referred to what has already been learned and what still needs to be learned on a specific phenomenon (Farrington et al., 2017; Omerzel, 2016). Following the recommendation of such authors, the adopted procedures in this study



include the steps for data gathering, analysis of the pertinence of the study on the theme and conclusions. .

In this research we performed an analysis and summary of studies which compose the sample through an analysis of content from these studies. The purpose of the proposed systematic review in this study is to highlight the theoretical-conceptual evolution of the dimensions of the absorptive capacity in organizations from the hospitality industry presented in the literature. Including the mapping of the main trends in studies, the used methods, agenda of future researches and main theories used in the studies from the sample (Petticrew & Roberts, 2008; Tölkes & Butzmann, 2018).

In the first phase of this systematic review, a wide search for relevant literature was performed. The bibliographic research was based on three important scientific data base, as follows: *Web of Science*, *Scopus* and *EBSCOhost*. Such data basis cover a great number of peer-reviewed journals related to the absorptive capacity, organization learning, knowledge management and organizational knowledge and are generally chosen for systematic reviews of literature (Omerzel, 2016; Oh & Kim, 2017; Farrington et al., 2017).

First, a search aiming at identifying studies on the absorptive capacity in hospitality industry was performed in the base Web of Science, search strings were inserted in the field topic (title, abstract and keywords) "*absorptive capacity**" and *hotel**, were added the asterisks to capture the terms both in singular as well as in plural, being found 58 articles, aiming at the replicability, four studies published in 2020 were excluded, once more articles on the theme may be published after this study, being the results limited to the year 2019 and a total of 54 studies.

The type of studies searched to compose the sample of the present study were articles and reviews, being six articles excluded from the initial sample of 54 studies, resulting in 48 articles. Only studies published in areas related to the scope of this research were selected, in this case, business,



management and hospitality leisure sports tourism, resulting in 41 selected studies. In this data base it was not necessary to apply language filter, once the 41 selected studies were published in the English language.

A similar search was performed in the Scopus data base. The search strings were inserted in the title, abstract and keywords field, “*absorptive capacity**” and *hotel**, were added with asterisks to capture terms both in singular as well as in plural. 21 articles were found, aiming at replicability, two studies published in 2020 were excluded, since more articles on the theme may be published after this study in this data base. Therefore, the results limited to the year 2019 were 19 studies.

The searched studies to compose the sample from the present research were articles and revisions. Therefore, four articles were excluded from the initial sample of 19 studies, resulting in 15 Only studies published in areas related to the scope of this research were selected, in this case, *business, management and accounting* resulting in 12 studies that were selected in this data base. It was not necessary to apply any language filter, once the 21 selected studies were published in the English language.

At last, a similar search was performed in the EBSCOhost data base, search strings were inserted in the filed abstract “*absorptive capacit**” and *hotel**, asterisks were added to capture the terms both in singular as well as in plural. 15 articles were found, aiming at replicability two studies published in 2020 were excluded, since more articles on the theme may be published after this study in this base. Therefore, the results limited to the year 2019 were of 13 studies.

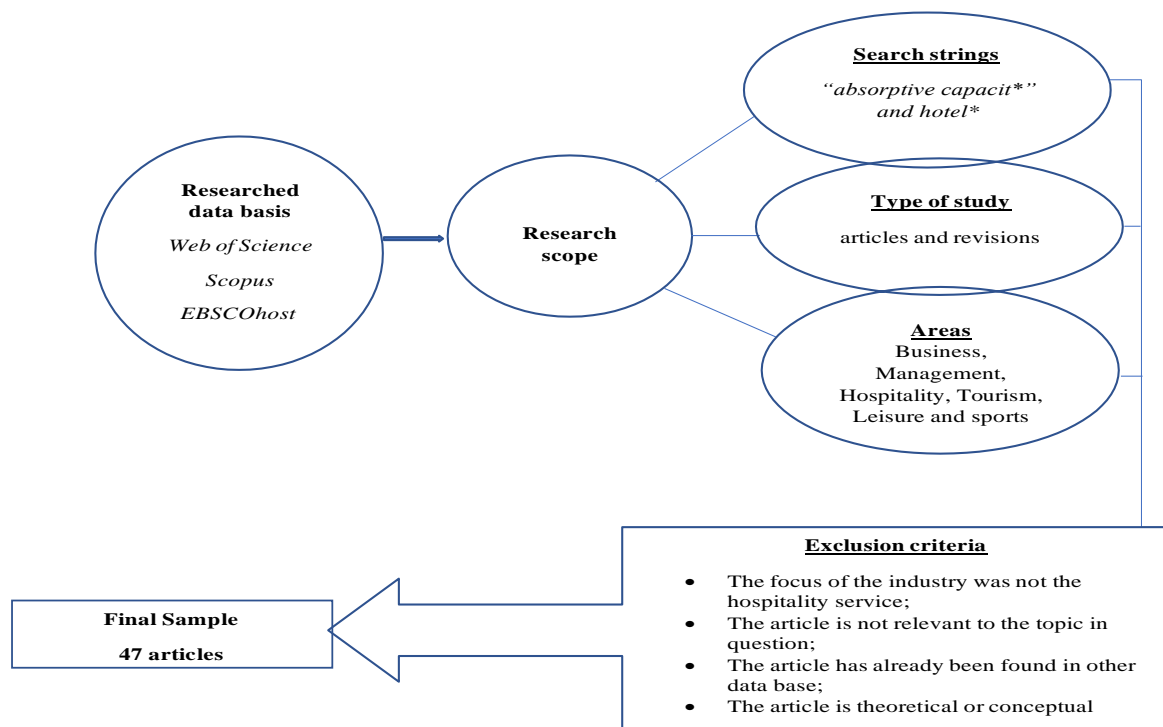
The 41 articles from the *Web of Science* data base, the 12 studies from the *Scopus* data base and the 13 studies from the *EBSCOhost* data base were grouped through download of the software *State of the Art through Systematic Review (StArt)*, developed by the Research Laboratory in Software Engineering (LaPES) from the São Carlos Federal University (UFSCAR). The early research produced a total of 66 articles, which were posteriorly



analyzed by the title analysis and abstract of each article, using the following exclusion criteria:

- the focus of the industry was not hospitality;
- the article is not relevant for the topic in the review;
- the article has already been found in other data base;
- the article is theoretical or conceptual.

Applying such criteria, 47 articles were left, which were posteriorly submitted to a profound reading. Since this study is a systematic review which also aims at analyzing the employed methods in the studies, which means, only empiric elaborated articles with the adoption of qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods were considered. The procedures used for the selection of



the sample are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Selection of the sample and employed criteria

Source: The authors

Sample

The sample was composed by 47 articles, published between 2003 and 2019, in 32 journals (Table 1). The journals *Tourism Management* (5), *International Journal of Hospitality Management* (5) and *Service Industries Journal* (5), present the majority of the articles in our sample. Approximately 50% of the articles from the sample were published in specific tourism journals and the rest in management journals, production engineering and services journals.

Table 1
Journals and Impact Factor

Journals and impact factor of the sample				
Journal	Sample	Impact factor		Qualis
		JCR - 2019	SJR - 2019	
Tourism Management	5	7.432	3.068	A1
International Journal of Hospitality Management	5	6.701	2.217	A1
Service Industries Journal	5	Only in Scopus data base	0.629	A2
Cornell Hospitality Quarterly	2	3.833	1.053	A2
Journal of Business Research	3	Only in Scopus data base	1.871	A1
Asian Business e Management	1	Only in Scopus data base	0.460	A2
International Journal of Innovation and Learning	1	Only in Scopus data base	0.220	A3
Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality and Tourism	1	Only in Scopus data base	0.632	A2
Academia Revista Latinoamericana	1	0,739	0.315	A3
Anatólia International Journal of Tourism	1	No JCR	No SRJ	B1
Current Issues in Tourism	1	4.147	1.404	A1
International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	1	5.667	2.200	A1
Journal of Knowledge Management	1	4.745	1.752	A1
Asian Pacific Journal of Tourism Research	1	Only in Scopus data base	0,720	A2
International Journal of Knowledge Management	1	No JCR	0.223	A3
Academy of Management Journal	1	7.571	11.190	A1
European Journal of International Management	1	2.145	0.750	A3
International Entrepreneurship and Management	1	3.472	1.164	A2
Academy of Management Review	1	8.413	7.482	A1
Journal of International Business Studies	1	9.158	4.994	A1
Administrative Science Quarterly	1	8.391	11.493	A1
Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology	1	2.792	0,894	A2
Journal of Cleaner Production	1	7.246	1.886	A1
Asian Social Science	1	No JCR	0.120	A3
South Asian Journal of Business Studies	1	No JCR	0.208	A2



Management Research Review	1	No JCR	0.510	A2
Pasos-Revista de Turismo Y Patrimonio Cultural	1	No JCR	No SRJ	B1
Tourism Economics	1	1.819	0.611	A2
International Journal of Hospitality and Tourism	1	No JCR	0.557	A2
Organization Science	1	2.790	5.557	A1
Technovation	1	5.729	2.795	A1
Tourism and Hospitality Management - Croatia	1	No JCR	0.290	A3

Source: The authors

Procedures of analysis

To perform the data analysis the study followed the procedures recommended by Pickering e Byrne (2014) primarily the articles that compose the sample were organized according to the year of publication, posteriorly by author(s), title and SJR impact factor from *Scopus (Elsevier)* data base and JCR from the *Web of Science (Thompson Reuters)* data base. It was necessary to use a series of analysis to extract the theoretical perspective from each study, method of research employed and the themes presented in such studies.

The theoretical perspectives were summarized based on theories, approaches, frameworks and theoretical models presented in the theoretical foundation section from the studies. With the purpose of increasing the comprehension, the grouping of the theoretical perspectives was performed in a broader approach, as presented in Table 1.

To perform the grouping as well as the methodological perspectives were considered elaborated studies with the adoption of quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods, in this step the analysis of the study of Martínez-Martínez *et al.* (2018) was excluded since this study was classified as theoretical-conceptual. For example, an article was considered quantitative if employed in the analysis statistical testing, such as factorial analysis, ANOVA, modeling of structural equations and linear regression. At last each study from the sample was grouped based on the theme that was approached predominately.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and the discussion of the present research will be presented in this section, the finding will be discussed in three specific points. First, the methodological perspectives from the studies will be presented and discussed, including the techniques used for the data analysis of the studies from the sample, posteriorly the theoretical perspectives from the studies and at last the theme perspectives.

Methodological perspectives

Table 2 presents the studies that employed qualitative methods, Table 3 quantitative methods and Table 4 mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative). The analysis of the methods employed in the studies have shown that the predominant approach employed was quantitative, from the sample of 47 studies, 39 used quantitative methods, corresponding to 83.2% from the total of the sample, only six studies were coded as qualitative, representing 12.7% of the sample and only two studies were elaborated through mixed methods, corresponding to only 4.1% of the selected sample in such research.

Table 2
Studies classified as qualitative

METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES – QUALITATIVE METHODS					
Studies	Strategy	Unit of analysis	Sample	Cut	Technique of data analysis
Idrees <i>et al.</i> (2019)	Foundation theory	Hotels	1	transversal	Does not present
Brookes (2014)	Single case study	Master franchise of hotels	1	transversal	Content analysis
Pajouh <i>et al.</i> (2012)	Single case study	Hotels	1	longitudinal	Content analysis and data triangulation
Pace (2016)	Multiple cases study	Hotel consulting	14	transversal	Content analysis
Tzeng (2019)	Foundation theory	Hotels	1	longitudinal	Codification of the foundation theory



Abdelkader & Belkhodja (2019)	Multiple cases study	Hotels	9	transversal	Content analysis and cross-data analysis
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Source: The authors

The studies coded as qualitative (Table 2) were elaborated with three strategies employed in qualitative studies. The studies of Brookes (2014) and Pajouh *et al.* (2012) were elaborated through a research strategy of a single case study, on the other hand the studies performed by Pace (2016) and Abdelkader and Belkhodja (2019) adopted the study of multiple cases and at last the studies of Idrees *et al.* (2019) and Tzeng (2019) chose to adopt a foundation theory. Each one of such strategies correspond to 33.33% from the sample of six studies coded as qualitative.

Although the six qualitative studies use three different research strategies, the instruments of data gathering adopted in all qualitative studies were semi-structured interviews and secondary data. The predominant technique of data analysis in the qualitative studies was content analysis, with 66.66% of the studies mentioning that used such technique of analysis, however, one study did not present in the methods section what the technique of data analysis employed was, Idrees *et al.* (2019).

Regarding the unit of analysis, four qualitative studies (66.6%) from the sample of coded studies as qualitative focused on studying hotels. Regarding the cut only two qualitative studies chose by a longitudinal analysis, this can be understood due to difficulties in the elaboration of such type of studies.

Table 3 presents the studies coded as quantitative, which was the choice of over 80% of the studies that compose the sample of the present study. However, several techniques of data analysis were used in the studies coded as quantitative. Two techniques were predominant, modeling of structural equations was the main chosen technique in 18 studies (46.2%) and linear regression in 12 studies (30.8%), the other studies used as main techniques, factorial analysis (5), correlation (2), multiple regression (1) and analysis of coexistence (1).



Although it was not the main analysis, the factorial analysis was used in addition to other techniques in 33 studies from 39 studies coded as quantitative (representing 84.6% from the total of the sample). The study of Rodríguez *et al.* (2019) used the technique of coexistence, its use is not common when comparing to the other techniques presented.

Regarding the unit of the analysis from the studies classified as quantitative, 29 studies focused on the investigation of hotels, corresponding to 74.3% of the sample of quantitative studies. Four studies used as unit of analysis hotels and restaurants (10.2%), the other nine studies from this samples investigated hotel receptionists (2 studies), hotel managers (1), travel agencies (1), tourism districts (1), guests evaluations (1). Unlike the several units of analysis used in the quantitative studies, the instruments of data gathering adopted in these studies are similar, since 32 studies (82.1%) gathered research data through questionnaires and seven studies (17.9%) through secondary data.

Table 3
Studies classified as quantitative

QUANTITATIVE METHODS			
Studies	Unit of analysis	Sample	Data analysis technique
Pattanasing <i>et al.</i> (2019)	Hotels	109	Factorial analysis, ANOVA and modeling of structural equations
Batra & Dey (2019)	Hotels	127	Linear regression
Rezvani <i>et al.</i> (2019)	Guests evaluations	241.521	Correlation and linear regression
Marco-Lajara <i>et al.</i> (2019)	Hotels	2003	Modeling of structural equations
Wilke <i>et al.</i> (2019)	Hotels	151	Factorial analysis and correlation
Pongsathornwivat <i>et al.</i> (2019)	Hotels	84	Correlation and linear regression
Lee <i>et al.</i> (2019)	Staff from the line of front in hotels	227	Modeling of structural equations
Nieves e Osorio (2019)	Hotels	109	Factorial analysis and modeling of structural equations
Chang <i>et al.</i> (2018)	Hotel receptionists	294	Factorial analysis, linear regression and modeling of structural equations
Marco-Lajara <i>et al.</i> (2018)	Hotels	2003	Multiple linear regression
Nieves e Diaz-Meneses (2018)	Hotels	134	Factorial analysis and multiple linear regression
Liu <i>et al.</i> (2018)	Travel agencies	324	Does not present
Santoro e Usai (2018)	Hotels	129	Linear regression
Zapata e Arroyo (2017)	Hotels	141	Modeling of structural equations



Marco-Lajara et al. (2017)	Tourism districts	113	Linear regression
Marco-Lajara et al. (2016)	Hotels	2003	Factorial analysis and linear regression
Peiro-Signes et al. (2015)	Hotels and travel agencies	Does not present	Factorial analysis and ANOVA
Garcia-Almeida e Yu (2015)	Hotels	31	Correlation and linear regression
Thomas e Wood (2014)	Hotels	259	Factorial analysis and modeling of structural equations
Nieves et al. (2014)	Hotels	109	Factorial analysis and ANOVA
Nieves et al. (2014)	Hotels	109	Factorial analysis and multiple linear regression
Kim e Lee (2012)	Hotel staff	327	Modeling of structural equations
Aizpurua et al. (2011)	Hotels	244	Factorial analysis and modeling of structural equations
Garcia-Almeida et al. (2011)	Hotels	105	Factorial analysis and modeling of structural equations

Source: The authors

Mixed methods were employed only in two studies from the sample, such studies are presented in Table 4. The authors of these studies combined qualitative and quantitative techniques in the steps of data gathering and analysis. For example, Durmus & Podubnii (2019), used qualitative methods, more specifically multiple cases studies and semi-structured interviews with nine hotel managers to elaborate a questionnaire on the relation between the potential absorptive capacity (PACAP) and the absorptive capacity (RACAP) in the performance of five-star hotels with sustainable label in Cyprus, posteriorly, the questionnaire was applied to 74 managers from other hotels.

In the study of Hufei *et al.* (2018) the authors built the questionnaire used in the qualitative step through a multiple cases study. The qualitative was developed with data gathering through semi-structured interviews with managers from 18 hotels in China on the strategies used to obtain competitive advantage, after the formulation of the questionnaire, it was applied to 734 hotel managers with operations in China. The two studies classified as mixed in methodological terms presented in the results a qualitative step through content analysis of the interviews.



Table 4
Studies classified as mixed methods

MIXED METHODS					
Studies	Strategy	Unit of analysis	Sample	Cut	Technique of data analysis
Durmus & Podubnii (2019)	Multiple cases study	Hotels	9 interviews in depth and 74 questionnaires	transversal	Content analysis and linear regression
Hufei <i>et al.</i> (2018)	Multiple cases study	Hotels	18 interviews (Delphi method) and 734 questionnaires	transversal	Content analysis and ANOVA

Source: The authors

Theoretical perspectives

The basis of the theory that were used in the elaboration of the studies from the samples are presented in Table 5. Most studies (13) constituted the theoretical basis from management theories and knowledge sharing, such as Santoro & Usai (2018); Zapata & Arroyo (2017); Garcia-Almeida & Yu (2015); Brookes (2014); Kim & Lee (2012). Despite the authors investigated one dimension of the absorptive capacity (acquisition, assimilation, transformation and application of knowledge), such studies focused on analyzing the transference of knowledge between collaborators, among units from the same hotel network and among hotels belonging to the tourism cluster. In this sense, the studies may not be conceptually classified with the focus on absorptive capacity, this way, it was possible to identify that the ACAP has a secondary role in studies related to the acquisition of knowledge.

Table 5
Base theories from the studies of the sample

Base theories from the studies of the sample		
Base theories	Sample	Studies
Resource based vision (RBV)	3	Pongsathornwivat <i>et al.</i> (2019); Brown <i>et al.</i> (2003); Al-Shami <i>et al.</i> (2019)
Dynamic capacities	3	Pattanasing <i>et al.</i> (2019); Liu <i>et al.</i> (2018); Rodríguez <i>et al.</i> (2019)
Vision based on knowledge	5	Marco-Lajara <i>et al.</i> (2019); Nieves & Osorio (2019); Nieves & Diaz-Meneses (2018); Nieves <i>et al.</i> (2014); Nieves <i>et al.</i> (2014)
Theories from industrial/clusters/ industrial district agglomeration	4	Marco-Lajara <i>et al.</i> (2018); Marco-Lajara <i>et al.</i> (2017); Marco-Lajara <i>et al.</i> (2016); Peiro-Signes <i>et al.</i> (2015).
Innovation	3	Chang <i>et al.</i> (2018); Petrou & Daskalopoul (2008); Guisado-González <i>et al.</i> (2013), Kumar <i>et al.</i> (2008)



Knowledge management and organizational knowledge sharing	13	Santoro & Usai (2018); Zapata <i>et al.</i> (2017); Garcia-Almeida & Yu (2015); Brookes (2014); Kim & Lee (2012); Pajouh <i>et al.</i> (2012); Aizpurua <i>et al.</i> (2011); Garcia-Almeida <i>et al.</i> (2011); Yang (2009, 2010); Abdelkader & Belkhdja (2019); Idrees <i>et al.</i> (2019); Avdimiotis (2016)
Absorptive capacity	8	Tzeng (2019); Thomas & Wood (2014); Pace (2016); Durmus & Podubnii (2019); Binder (2019); Hufe <i>et al.</i> (2018); Mao <i>et al.</i> (2016); Wilke <i>et al.</i> (2019).
Organizational learning	2	Boronat-Navarro & Garcia-Joerger (2019); Rezvani <i>et al.</i> (2019)
Innovating behavior	2	Elidemir <i>et al.</i> (2019); Lee <i>et al.</i> (2019)
Other used theories		
Quality management	1	Daghfous & Barkhi (2009)
Competitive intelligence	1	Bao (2019)
Theory from the system of transitive memory	1	Batra & Dey (2019)

Source: The authors

Among the coded studies in the group that adopted the management theories and knowledge transference for theoretical foundation, there is a diversity of analysis. The study of Garcia-Almeida & Yu (2015) analyzed the determinants for success in knowledge transference in the international expansion of hotel companies in Spain, the study concluded that the cultural compatibility empowers the success in knowledge transference in hotels from hotel networks which operates in several countries. Which means, knowledge transference between collaborators from the same organization.

On the other hand, the study of Idrees *et al.* (2019) provided a theoretical and practical explanation for the nature and reasons for inter-organizational knowledge sharing in an informal group from competing five-star hotels of religious tourism and hospitality in Saudi Arabia.

The second most used theoretical basis in the studies was absorptive capacity (n=8). In the beginning of the present research, it was expected that this theoretical lens would be predominant, once the search performed for the review of literature based on data was performed with the keyword “*absorptive capaciti**”. However, the results enabled the affirmation that studies grounded on management theories and knowledge sharing used as background conceptual foundations of absorptive capacity, such as assimilation and exploitation of the knowledge acquired in and out of the organization itself (Santoro & Usai, 2018; Zapata & Arroyo, 2017; Garcia-



Almeida & Yu, 2015; Brookes, 2014; Kim & Lee, 2012; Pajouh et al., 2012; Aizpurua et al., 2011; Garcia-Almeida et al., 2011; Yang, 2009, 2010; Abdelkader & Belkhodja, 2019; Idrees et al., 2019; Avdimiotis, 2016).

Despite the studies of Thomas & Wood (2014), Durmus & Podubnii (2019) & Binder (2019), from such group used as basis the model from Zahra & George (2002), which affirms that the absorptive capacity is composed by two dimensions (potential absorptive capacity and performed absorptive capacity) and by the processes of acquisition, assimilation, transformation and application of knowledge. The other five studies (Marco-Lajara et al., 2019; Nieves & Osorio, 2019; Nieves & Diaz-Meneses, 2018; Nieves et al., 2014; Nieves et al., 2014) belonging to this group investigated only the process of acquisition of knowledge from external sources or the process of using such knowledge for commercial purposes.

Some studies used as basis the resource based vision (RBV) and the perspective of dynamic capacities, considered an outcome from RBV. The absorptive capacity is a specific type of dynamic capacities in the vision of Zahra & George (2002). Therefore, the studies that used such theoretical based, the resource based vision (Pongsathornwiwat et al., 2019; Brown, Dev & Zhou, 2003; Al-Shami et al. 2019) and dynamic capacities (Pattanasing et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2018; Rodríguez et al., 2019), investigated dynamic resources and the relation with the competitive advantage in the hospitality industry.

As examples, the study of Pattanasing *et al.* (2019), which analyzed empiric evidences on the casual relations between the effects of dynamic capacities, high performance organization and organizational performance from hospitality companies in a world class tourism destination. The other study, from Brown *et al.* (2003) investigated how the competitive advantage from a company rooted in its tactical knowledge and coded affects its choice of entry way in the external market.



Other theories were also identified in the analyzed studies, clusters theories (agglomeration theories and industrial districts) was used by four studies. Such studies analyzed the benefits for acquisition of external knowledge in hotels installed in industrial districts: Marco-Lajara *et al.* (2018); Marco-Lajara *et al.* (2017); Marco-Lajara *et al.* (2016); Peiro-Signes *et al.* (2015).

The vision based on knowledge was employed in the theoretical foundation in five studies from the sample. The studies classified in this group analyzed the importance of knowledge as a strategic resource to obtain competitive advantage in the hotel industry: Marco-Lajara *et al.* (2019); Nieves & Osorio (2019); Nieves e Diaz-Meneses (2018); Nieves *et al.* (2011); Nieves *et al.* (2014).

At last, the remaining studies from the sample used the organizational learning theory (Boronat-Navarro & Garcia-Joerger 2019; Rezvani *et al.*, 2019), innovation (Chang *et al.*, 2018; Petrou & Daskalopoul, 2008; Guisado-González *et al.*, 2008), innovative behavior (Elidemir *et al.*, 2019; Lee *et al.*, 2019), competitive intelligence (Bao, 2019), quality management (Daghfous & Barkhi, 2009) and theory of the transitive memory (Batra & Dey, 2019). Such diversity in basis theories used shows that the absorptive capacity as previously mentioned is a multidimensional concept, fragmented and that due to its complexity, ends up pursuing a secondary role, in studies involving organizational knowledge concepts and theories of knowledge management.

Theme perspectives

When analyzing the main themes in depth, each article was coded in one of the three main themes: knowledge acquisition in clusters (districts) in hotels, service innovations and ACAP and the impact on the performance of hotel companies. The studies which allowed the summary in these four



themes are presented in Table 6. Only three studies did not allow such classification based on the theme.

Table 6

Themes from the studies of the sample

Codification from the themes of the studies of the sample	
Themes	Studies
Acquisition and knowledge transference in clusters	Marco-Lajara <i>et al.</i> (2018); Marco-Lajara <i>et al.</i> (2017); Marco-Lajara <i>et al.</i> (2016); Peiro-Signes <i>et al.</i> (2015); Nieves & Diaz-Meneses (2018); Mao <i>et al.</i> (2016); Pajouh <i>et al.</i> (2012).
The role of innovation in hotel services in the acquisition of competitive advantage in hotels	Guisado-González <i>et al.</i> (2013); Binder (2019); Petrou & Daskalopoul (2008); Bao (2019); Pace (2016); Al-Shami <i>et al.</i> (2019); Kumar <i>et al.</i> (2008); Nieves <i>et al.</i> (2014); Thomas & Wood (2014); Chang <i>et al.</i> (2018); Nieves & Osorio (2019); Lee <i>et al.</i> (2019); Liu <i>et al.</i> (2018); Elidemir <i>et al.</i> (2019); Aizpurua <i>et al.</i> (2011); Kim & Lee (2012).
Absorptive capacity and the impact on performance of hotel companies	Pattanasing <i>et al.</i> (2019); Batra & Dey (2019); Rezvani <i>et al.</i> (2019); Wilke <i>et al.</i> (2019); Pongsathornwiwat <i>et al.</i> (2019); Garcia-Almeida & Yu (2015); Nieves, Haller <i>et al.</i> (2014); Brown <i>et al.</i> (2003); Durmus & Podubnii (2019); Hufei <i>et al.</i> (2018); Zapata & Arroyo (2017); Rodríguez <i>et al.</i> (2019); Brookes (2014); Tzeng (2019); Yang (2010); Garcia-Almeida <i>et al.</i> (2011); Santoro & Usai (2018); Idrees <i>et al.</i> (2019); Avdimiotis (2016).
Other themes	Daghfous & Barkhi (2009); Boronat-Navarro & Garcia-Joerger (2019); Yang (2009); Abdelkader & Belkhodja (2019).

Source: The authors

The theme codification of the studies from the sample enabled the classification in three major themes. Studies with the main theme focused on relating some of the processes that form the absorptive capacity (acquisition, assimilation, transformation and application of external knowledge) with improvements in hotel performance were predominant with 19 studies, among such studies it is worth mentioning the study of Durmus & Podubnii (2019).

It is a robust study, once it was elaborated with mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative). This study is the only classified based on the theoretical perspective that elaborated the study based on the absorptive capacity model proposed by Zahra & George (2002). The remaining,



investigated in an isolated form only one of the four processes (acquisition, assimilation, transformation and application).

The second theme that concentrates more studies refers to the role of innovation of hotel services in the competitive advantage of hotels, 16 studies were classified under this theme. In a certain way it is understandable, since the grounds of the absorptive capacity are indissoluble from innovation, nonetheless the phenomenon was introduced by Cohen & Levinthal (1990) in a study that related the organization capacity in developing innovation based on knowledge captured from the external environment and coded aiming at the commercial application by the organizations.

In this theme group, it is worth highlighting the study elaborated by Thomas & Wood (2014), which investigated the innovating at the organizational level with the lens of the absorptive capacity model proposed by Zahra & George (2002), which means, through the processes of acquisition, assimilation, transformation and application of external knowledge to innovate. This is a major study, since it is one of the few from the sample that uses the validated model on absorptive capacity to understand how innovation occur in hotel services.

On the other hand, the remaining studies classified under this theme related the capacity to innovate with several themes related to the absorptive capacity, such as, competitive intelligence (Bao, 2019), knowledge sharing (Aizpurua et al., 2011) and vision based on knowledge (Nieves & Osorio, 2019).

The third coded theme is composed by seven studies, this group investigated the acquisition and knowledge transference in hotel clusters. In such studies, the focus was of relating the presence in cluster to a higher facility in the acquisition and sharing of external knowledge. In this group, it is worth highlighting the study of Marco-Lajara *et al.* (2016), which analyzed until



what degree the internal and external knowledge affects the performance of Spanish hotels situated in tourism districts from the Mediterranean seashore.

The several remaining studies present in this group investigated internal or external sources of knowledge. At last, four studies were coded as “other themes”, such as, strategic management of information technology in hotels and individual aspects from collaborators in the learning of the individual.

CONCLUSIONS

In the present study, we aimed at elaborating a systematic review consistent with the absorptive capacity in the hospitality field, we analyzed the methodological perspectives, theoretical perspectives and the theme that were used in the selected studies on absorptive capacity in hotels. We recommend that new studies be elaborated, mainly qualitative to deeply investigate how the processes of acquisition, assimilation, transformation and knowledge capture in the external environment occur, once we identified in our analysis a lack of qualitative studies on the phenomenon.

The study resulted in several finding that grounded small comments, firstly regarding the employed methods in the studies, quantitative studies corresponded to more than 80% of the analyzed sample and predominant form of data analysis in those studies was the modeling of structural equations: Kim & Lee (2012) and Thomas & Wood (2014). In this sense, it was verified the lack of qualitative studies, this is understandable if we analyze the possibility of generalization of a quantitative study.

However, qualitative analysis are essential to deeply investigate how the process of the absorptive capacity occur in the internal environment from the organizations. The theoretical perspectives of the sample resulted in nine groups, being the predominant adopted basis theory the knowledge management and sharing of the organizational knowledge, with 13 studies, such diversity of theories corroborates that the absorptive capacity is related



to other theories of knowledge and competitiveness and that in many researches it pursues a secondary role in studies concerning the processes of knowledge acquisition.

The theme perspectives were classified in three groups: absorptive capacity and the impact on the performance of hotel companies, the role of innovation in hotel services in the acquisition of competitive advantage in hotels and acquisition and transference of knowledge in hotel clusters.

Despite the classification based on the theme some studies investigated in a secondary form aspects related to another theme. For example, the study of Thomas & Wood (2014) that predominantly analyzed the innovation by the view from the absorptive capacity model of Zahra & George (2002) and in a secondary form inferred that hotels that executed the processes of the absorptive capacity efficiently have a sustainable competitive advantage. This way, it also enters in the so-called absorptive capacity and the impact on the performance of hotel companies. This allows us to state that themes are not necessarily exclusive, but yes, in some cases, complementary.

In addition, the absorptive capacity supports in a secondary form, the commitment of quality management and of knowledge. The quality management contributes to activities related to the improvement, learning and innovation at work focused on the client (Pertusa-Ortega et al., 2021; Daghfous & Barkhi, 2009). While knowledge management is essential in all organizational strategic planning, since it may provide an increasing economic growth (Santoro & Usai, 2018). Knowledge sharing allows hotels to reunite information on possible future staff who work in similar hotels (Idrees et al., 2018). In the same way, the cooperation with suppliers, the management of processes and the better coordination of collaboration between the members of the supply chain, allow organizations to share knowledge and generate new ideas to be explored and assimilated (Pertusa-Ortega et al., 2021; Daghfous & Barkhi, 2009).



Limitations and avenues for future researches

This research presents some limitations that should be presented, which may be including an interesting path to new researches. In first place the study raised articles in only three data basis, *Web of Science*, *Scopus* and *EBSCOhost*, although some of these basis concentrate high impact factor journals, some other journals that have published articles on the absorptive capacity in hotels were dismissed.

Although these journals are not considered very important due to their impact factor, some important study on the absorptive capacity of the hospitality field may have not been identified. In this sense it is recommended that future studies amplify their search scope in data basis considering more basis and using the sampling technique called *snowball*, which consists in identifying all studies on a certain theme for the analysis of relevance through inclusion and exclusion criteria.

The data analysis allows to present another limitation, which refers to the use of only the term absorptive capacity to identify studies. As a chain of authors understands that the absorptive capacity is a type of dynamic capacity (Zahra & George, 2002; Gebauer et. al, 2012) it is recommended that future studies amplify the search using terms considered synonyms or related to the absorptive capacity, such as organizational learning, knowledge management, dynamic resources and dynamic capacities.

At last, when analyzing the methods used in the study, we realized the need of future studies to use qualitative methods and mixed methods, which are scarce in the investigation of the phenomenon. Only eight studies (6 qualitative methods and two mixed methods) from the sample of 47 were elaborated through such methods. Despite the importance of quantitative methods regarding the possibility of generalization, qualitative studies are important to deeply investigate contemporary themes (Yin, 2010). It is also



necessary that future studies adopt in their researches a longitudinal cut to analyze the evolution/development of the phenomenon throughout the years.

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