

Classic service styles in commercial catering: proposal for standardization and clarifications for future research

Serviços clássicos na restauração comercial: proposta de padronização e esclarecimentos para futuras pesquisas

Servicios clásicos de restaurantes comercial: propuesta de normalización y direcciones para la investigación futura

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Abstract: This study aims to summarize the scientific knowledge and the empirical knowledge of the authors of this article about the four main types/styles of individual service in full-service food establishments. In addition, as secondary objectives, it seeks to simplify and standardize the types of classic services in restaurants. These objectives were met through a positivist methodological approach. The research techniques used were the comparative analysis and a summary of the state of the art on the typology of classical services combine to the empirical knowledge of the authors. Subsequently, the validation of the proposal for standardization was made by a panel of evaluators. We came to simplify the services into three basic categories: French Service; Direct English Service and Plate Service. The study herein presented is of an exploratory nature and, thus further scientific studies should be conducted in order to deepen the knowledge on the topic. Particularly, there is lack of research on the *mise en place*.

Keywords: Restaurants. Types of service. Culinary Arts.

Resumo: Esse estudo tem como objetivo principal sintetizar os conhecimentos científicos do referencial teórico com os conhecimentos empíricos dos autores desse presente artigo sobre os quatro principais tipos/estilos de serviços individuais em estabelecimentos gastronômicos de serviço completo. Além disso busca-se, como objetivos secundários, simplificar e padronizar os tipos de serviços clássicos em restauração. Esses objetivos foram cumpridos através de uma abordagem metodológica positivista. Teve como técnicas de pesquisa uma análise comparativa e síntese do estado da arte sobre a tipologia de serviços clássica com os conhecimentos empíricos dos autores. Posteriormente, foi feita a validação da proposta de padronização por parte de um painel de avaliadores. Chegou-se a simplificação dos serviços em três categorias básicas: o serviço à francesa, à inglesa direto e serviço empratado. Entende-se que, por tratar-se de um estudo exploratório, a referida proposta é o início da pesquisa científica sobre o tema, tendo de ser averiguada com maior profundidade em estudos posteriores. O campo de pesquisa referente ao *mise en place* mostra-se, conseqüentemente, o que mais carece de pesquisas dessa natureza.

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Palavras-chave: Restauração. Tipos de serviços. Gastronomia.

Resumen: Este estudio pretende resumir el conocimiento científico de lo teórico con el conocimiento empírico de los autores de este artículo sobre los cuatro principales tipos/estilos de los distintos servicios en los establecimientos gastronómicos de servicio completo. Además, se busca, como objetivos secundarios, simplificar y estandarizar los tipos de servicios clásicos de la restauración. Estos objetivos se cumplen a través de un enfoque metodológico positivista. Tenían como técnicas de investigación un análisis comparativo y la síntesis del estado del arte sobre la tipología de los servicios clásicos con el conocimiento empírico de los autores. Posteriormente, la validación de la propuesta de normalización fue realizada por un panel de evaluadores. Llegamos a simplificar los servicios en tres categorías básicas: el servicio a la francesa, el inglés directo y el servicio plateado. Se entiende que, debido a que es un estudio exploratorio, la propuesta es el comienzo de la investigación científica sobre el tema tuvo que ser investigado con mayor profundidad en futuros estudios. Se muestra el campo de la investigación para la puesta en su lugar, por lo tanto, lo que la investigación más necesidades de esta naturaleza.

Palabras clave: Restaurante. Tipos de servicios. Gastronomía.

1 INTRODUCTION

It cannot be emphasized enough the importance that food has to human beings at so many different levels, from the satisfaction of physiological needs to the most hedonistic and artistic wishes. The act of feeding and the permanent changes of this process go hand in hand with the human evolutionary leaps. The evolution of our eating habits "led to the improvement of social and economic relations, [one of the bases] for the displacement of various groups and their regions of settlement", (Krause & Bahls, p. 434, 2016). Food as a tourist attraction is a recent field of study within the applied social sciences, and it emerges as an "answer to the urgent need for research to assess performances, identify the shortcomings, efficiency, and potential improvements" (Scarpato, p. 51, 2004). Currently, food goes beyond the simple tourist attraction, and becomes a key element of tourism, forming together with accommodation and transportation, an inseparable triad (Krause & Bahls, 2016). Therefore, the approach to the concept of quality is inherent to this new field of research. Previously, the quality was considered a distinctive feature, nowadays it is critical to the survival of a tourism food service establishment.

The Expectancy-Disconfirmation Paradigm (EDP) was the inspiration for the topic chosen for this study. Regardless of its limitations, intrinsic to any scientific model, the EDP has been considered an adequate model to assess customers' satisfaction with accommodation and tourism services (Johns & Pine, 2002). In short, the EDP posits that the human response of satisfaction is not possible without comparison and "concludes that the expectations play a key role in the satisfaction response because the expectations dictate a reference to assess the product performance, in the future" (Oliver, 1996 *apud* Ameer, p. 77, 2014). In the context of the food experience in tourism, the relationship between the customer and the entrepreneur resulting in the fulfillment of the customer's expectations may be considered satisfactory. On the other hand, if the difference between expectation and performance of service is

perceived as negative, where needs, wants, wishes, and ambitions were not met, the experience will be of a low quality or unsatisfactory. Fundamentally, in the catering world it is of great importance the understanding between the parts involved in the process and the balance between the quality in the preparation of food and beverages with the service performed subsequently. It must be clear what is being served and how it is served. It is of no use a high production, with the correct use of culinary techniques and first-class ingredients if, subsequently, the service to customer is carried out in an unthoughtful or inadequate manner or if it does not meet customers' expectations.

The quality of service in catering, despite the strong, and maybe preponderant, subjective nature (Krause, 2014), is not circumscribed to the result of the interpersonal relationship, welcoming and cordial, between the customer and the restaurateur, or to the preparation of food. There is, also, an essential component to the food service provision: the techniques and the classic methods of presenting and delivering the food to the customers, called here types or styles of service. Despite being a topic briefly addressed in the most various domains, some topics considered fundamental to catering remain without further detailed studies. Therefore resulting in lack of cohesion between some terms, concepts, and procedures used, inherent to an immature field of knowledge.

Some concepts and classic techniques in the provision of food service, such as *mise en place* (types and setting of tableware), the typology and the performance of service, have always been the reference to assess the quality of the service of a restaurant. In this sense, the classic typology of service is considered here as the presentation, arrangement, and delivery to the customer of a dish, or a set of dishes which compose a meal or part of it (Lang, 1995). Among them there is the French service (*à la française*), which has been used for centuries, although it remains a vague nomenclature and procedure, requiring further studies and whose variations cause incoherence in the service provision. What we see often is the provision of something different from the service expected, i.e. the communication between customer and restaurateur is full of misunderstandings, thus, causing discomfort to the parties, and impacting negatively the perceived quality of service. For example, "most Americans consider the French service as a highly sophisticated service entailing tableside preparations as well as a variety of cutlery, a service that is, in fact, a combination of French, English, and Russian styles" (Martinage & Martinage, p. 120, 2013). Besides the discrepancy between essential aspects of each service, such as the correct way of serving a dish, for example, there are different nomenclatures for the same type of service. Cândido (2010) names the Russian style as indirect English service, which makes the understanding even more difficult, causing dissatisfaction to the customer, who does not know what to expect from each service.

Despite the socioeconomic importance of food to tourism, there is no scientific paper on the subject, according to the parameters established for this study, i.e. clarifying the classic service typology and the rationale upon which the operationalization is based. The theoretical

framework of the typology of service comes exclusively from a few books, which shows the lack of scientific research on this topic, essential to the quality of food service provision in tourism. Therefore, to achieve high standards of quality and satisfaction it is necessary to clarify and inform the core concepts through a literature review aiming to understand the essence of the topic (Bressan, 2008; Marconi & Lakatos, 2011; Martins, 2009).

This research applied the so-called “state-of-the-art” technique to survey the studies, identify the discrepancies, and gaps in research studies on the topic under analysis. This is not a paper in the “state-of-the-art” format, however that approach was used to delimit the theoretical framework. The review studies are essential to the development of applied social sciences, as is the case of Food Tourism, and extremely important for studies of an exploratory nature, as is the case of the present study. This approach allows “maps, critical analysis, which seek to highlight the issues and focused topics, methodological approaches, procedures and analysis, [...] as well as the gaps that can stimulate the production of new research” (Vosgerau & Romanowski, 2014, p. 167). Furthermore, these studies favor the definitions of certain fields of research, assisting the understanding of subjects not well-established scientifically, “pointing out the need to improve the methodological and theoretical status, and event the research trends. [These studies can point to] methodological theoretical contributions and their understanding in different contexts; indicate methodological procedures used in the area, and pointing out trends in the approaches of educational practices” (Vosgerau & Romanowski, 2014, p. 168).

Therefore, the main objective is to summarize the scientific knowledge of the theoretical framework and the empirical knowledge of the authors of this paper about the four main types/ styles of individual services in full-service restaurants. These are the French, Russian, English, and American Services (Payne-Palacio & Theis, 2012; Kotschevar & Luciani, 2007; Dahmer & Kahl, 2009; Martinage & Martinage, 2013; Lang, 1995; CIA, 2013). The secondary objectives are to simplify and put forward the standards of classic services in restaurants. The study is concluded with the proposal of simplification and standardization of the types of classic services in restaurants, aiming to fill the gap in communication between the customer and the food entrepreneur, caused by the discrepancy between the concepts under study. The standardization give rise to three basic types of full services: French Service, Direct English Service, and Plate Service (the others are variations of these, e.g. the Russian Service), which are presented in a summary table in the final results section. As a result of this study it is expected that it fosters food service research, aiming to improve its quality as an integral part of tourism.

2 METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a positivist perspective, among other aspects, it is considered that the verified data, perceived by the senses, is empirical evidence; thus, the positivism is based on empiricism, aiming the production of practical results (Macionis & Gerber, 2011). The topic of this study is critical to the quality of food service provision, however it remains unexplored from a scientific perspective. Hence, it is proposed the integration of science (drawing on the theoretical framework) and empiricism (drawing on the authors' academic and professional experience). Aiming to shed light on some aspects overlooked by the literature.

The methodological approach chosen for the research was a comparative study, which examines the similarities and differences between groups, peoples, countries, and/or events, to better understand a given phenomenon and/or widen the knowledge about a specific event (Marconi & Lakatos, 2003; Martins, 2009), insofar as "by using a type comparative study it is possible to discover regularities, and to notice displacements and transformations, build models and typologies, identifying continuities and discontinuities, similarities and differences, as well explaining the widespread determinations that govern the social phenomena (Schneider & Schmitt, 1998, p. 01).

Literature review was adopted to compose the theoretical framework. The survey was carried out between August 2015 and May 2016. Scientific papers were retrieved from databases, such as EBSCOhost, ScienceDirect, SciELO, CAPES/MEC Portal of Journals, and Google Scholar. The survey of thesis and dissertations was done through the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD).

The study was carried out from 1938 to 2016 (78 years). The starting point was the year of the first edition of the *Larousse Gastronomique*, 1938, considered a benchmark of the scientific literature on gastronomy (Booklist Online, 2010). Usually, a time frame of 15 years is considered current (Gonçalves, 2008). However, that interval was enlarged because the initial results within a time frame of five years were insignificant. The keywords used (in Portuguese and in English) were: *tipos OR estilos de serviços AND gastronomia AND restaurantes* types OR styles of service AND gastronomy AND restaurants.

After the quantitative and qualitative selection, the survey of the state of the art resulted in a bibliography which can be divided into classic and contemporary. In this study, for comparative and synthesis purposes, the works considered classic are the ones published between 1938 and 2001. From then on (2002 until 2016) the works are considered contemporary. The classic bibliography is composed by the following six (6) works, in order of publishing date: the encyclopedia LAROUSSE GASTRONOMIQUE (Librairie Larousse, 1ª ed. 1938), didactic book FOODSERVICE MANAGEMENT (Payne-Palacio & Theis, 1ª ed. 1938), the guide PRESENTING SERVICE (Kotschevar & Luciani, 1ª ed. 1996), the manual ASSOCIATE HANDBOOK (Federation of Dining Room Professionals, – FDRP, ed. Martinage & Martinage, 1ª ed. 1996), the book REMARKABLE SERVICE (Culinary Institute of America – CIA, 1ª ed. 2001) and the guide RESTAURANT SERVICE BASICS (Dahmer & Kahl, 1ª ed. 2001).

The works included in the contemporary list are mostly scientific papers which discuss customer satisfaction and service quality from various perspectives. The results show that there are several models which seek to measure the level of customer satisfaction and the ways service quality can be assessed. However, there is no result among those papers regarding the topic proposed by this study. Other works are books, online documents, academic slide presentations, corporate information, among others. The main are, in order of publication: the manual THE WAITER & WAITRESS AND WAIT STAFF TRAINING HANDBOOK (Arduser & Brown, 1^a ed. 2005); the website HOSPITALITY-SCHOOL.COM (2014); the guide SERVIÇOS DE ALIMENTAÇÃO E BEBIDAS (Eleutério, 1^a ed. 2014); and the book RESTAURANTE – ADMINISTRAÇÃO E OPERACIONALIZAÇÃO (Cândido, 1^a ed. 2010).

The theoretical framework encompasses the scientific knowledge. The empirical knowledge comes from academic and professional works compiled over 22 years by the authors. The synthesis of that knowledge was presented to a validation panel composed of six professionals from the food sector. The number of reviewers was considered acceptable due to the exploratory and qualitative nature of this study. The specialized literature on the subject (Bressan, 2008; Marconi & Lakatos, 2011; Martins, 2009) does not indicate an ideal number of participants in the panel. Such authors posit that, in certain cases only one reviewer is valid, depending on their representativeness of the community. Despite the relatively small number of reviewers, the panel is considered representative because it includes professionals with vast experience on the topic under study, in national and international restaurants, some of them with Michelin stars.

At the end of the results section we present a summary table with the various types of food services, obtained through specialized literature, complemented with the authors' personal and professional considerations and empirical aspects. This methodology is bold insofar as it proposes the integration of empiricism and science aiming the broadening of knowledge. A second study, a field research, will be carried out to examine how theoretical concepts are approached by the Brazilian food service market.

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The meal service should prioritize the customer's comfort and convenience, be efficient and meet the expectations of the final consumer. Historically the services called French, English, and Russian Styles "corresponded to complete and individual types of meal services" (Martinage & Martinage, p. 120, 2013). As time went by, and with the stabilization and unification of Europe those styles ended up combined. When they migrate to the American Continent the mingling of styles continued and, eventually, they gave rise to the American Service

(Martinage & Martinage, 2013). At this point it is important to clarify the chief aspects related to those four main individual full services and their variations, as well as the discrepancies between the different theories and, therefore, where the theoretical framework falls short of services standardization.

3.1 French service or Diplomat service

The initial observation point of this study is the reign of Louis XIV, wherein the service à la Française reached its peak. The French service is the continuation of a ceremony carried out by the French royal family in the seventeenth century, called the *grand couvert*, given its high cost, initially, it was used by the royalty in special occasions and for dining in public, (Lang, 1995). Subsequently, Louis XVI started having a *grand couvert* daily for dinner, at 10 pm (Chateau de Versailles, 2016), and fixing some aspects of the service, today known French style.

This type of service within the standards established historically is not the most used. It had its peak and refinement around 1690 and its last years were around 1830, when it was substituted by the Russian service (Lang, 1995). Traditionally, a meal served à la Française was divided into three separate courses: “the first course included from soups to roasts, including hors d’œuvre and starters; the second, from roasts [...] and vegetables, until the sweet dishes; and the third consisted of pastry, *petit four*, desserts, ice-creams, and fruit. The order of the menu depended on the number of starters; the number of items served on the first course must be equal to those of the second. The first course was already set up on the table (in hot dishes or covered warm, if necessary) before the guests arrive”, while the other plates were placed in the place of the previous ones, and each guest served themselves as they pleased from the moment the items were set on the table; every 15 minutes the dishes were swiftly replaced (Lang, p. 967, 1995). After the guests finished a service “they got up and left the table, while it was cleaned and reset for the next service” (CIA, p. 39, 2013).

Besides the high cost of a service like this, it fell into disuse because of the ostentation and extravagance to the detriment of comfort and satisfaction of guests (Payne-Palacio & Theis, 2009). Diners could not satisfy their appetites and enjoy the main dishes still warm, given that the options were innumerable and there was very little time to try each dish, so

that the highest number of items could be served in one meal (LANG, 1995). This service expanded, modified, and adapted over time in various locations, acquiring some recognizable contemporary features, particularly, the preparation or completion of some dishes tableside in the *guéridon* or "flambé trolley". However it is worth mention that the traditional French service is still used, in few occasions, in French Embassies all over the world and in the presidential palace of France (Martinage & Martinage, 2013).

The main features of this type of service are: the use of the *guéridon* and, consequently, the completion or full preparation of some items at the customer's tableside by the "*chef de rang* (chief or experienced waiter), assisted by a *commis* or maybe a *commis* or *commis debarasseur* (*debarass* means clean or remove); and, in a second moment, the presentation of the platters, from which the customer help themselves, from the left side (Cândido, 2010; Eleutério, 2014; Dahmer & Kahl, 2001; Martinage & Martinage, 2013). However some authors (Payne-Palacio & Theis, 2009; CIA, 2013; Arduser & Brown; 2005) do not mention the side for serving.

Besides preparing the food, the *chef de rang* dishes up and places the garnish. Heated plates are used for hot food. The plate is prepared and, next, handed to the *commis* who presents it to the guest" (Kotschevar & Luciani, p. 111, 2007). Common sense dictates which courses are prepared beforehand, because "only the food which can be cooked, assembled, or finished in a relatively short time are prepared in front of the guests. Typical specialties which can be served in French style are *La Salade César* (Caesar Salad), *Le Tournedos au Poivre* (fillet of beef with pepper sauce), and *Les Crepes Suzette* (crêpes with orange sauce)" (Dahmer & Kahl, p. 19, 2001).

The *guéridon* is an auxiliary component, a small round table, and adapted to the table service. It is often, "equipped with *réchaud* (a heating element) and a large silver dome or cloche for covering food" (CIA, p. 40, 2013). The *guéridon* should contain all of the tools needed for the preparation, conclusion, and service of food to the customer, it can be used for mixing and serve salads, deboning fish, or carving meat. The most common variation of this type of service is the use of platters instead of the *guéridon*. In this case, "the food is fully and partially cooked in the kitchen, placed on a platter, and carried to the dining room by a

waiter. The platter is then placed on a *guéridon* or heating table and plated” the waiter present the platter to the customers who serve themselves (CIA, p. 40, 2013).

The tasks and techniques more commonly performed by the chief waiter are: Toss and Mixing; Plate Presentation and Sauces; Deboning and Carving; and Flambéing (Kotschevar & Luciani, p. 113, 2007). Contemporarily, the use of *guéridon* is almost exclusively reserved to formal and traditional French service (CIA, 2013), since it takes more time and requires skilled personnel. Therefore is more cost-effective to bring the food cooked from the kitchen to the table (Cândido, 2010).

3.2 Russian service or Indirect English Service

The prince Alexander Borisovich Kurakin, the Russian ambassador to France (between 1810 and 1812) during the second Russian Empire, is known to have introduced the first modifications to the French Service to the point that this became a new style of service called *à la Russe*, by the French high society (Lang, 1995). Since then, it became widespread, popularized by Urbain Dubois, the creator of some of the French classic dishes. The French chef introduced the Russian style to middle-class households in France (Lang, 1995). He defined the new service style as less formal and ostentatious. The objective was to allow the guests, contrary to the French service, to have “the hot food as hotter as possible; instead of letting the guest choose from a vast array of dishes, the order was previously established and the dishes were served one at a time” (Lang, p. 968, 1995). Luxury and extravagance were replaced by conviviality and practicality. However, the presentation and looks of food were still of importance.

The service *à la Russe* is similar to the French service in many aspects, and was modified over the years until it became an entirely different style. It is a very formal and elegant service, in which guests get personal attention. It is considered the most popular and it is used in the most exclusive restaurants and hotels around the world. The simplicity, compared to French service, made the Russian style a popular substitute for the latter. Still, it uses a table setting similar to the service *à la française* (Lang, 1995; CIA, 2013; Payne-Palacio & Theis, 2009; Martinage & Martinage, 2013; Dahmer & Kahl, 2001; Kotschevar & Luciani, 2007).

The two major differences are that only one server is needed and that food is fully prepared in the kitchen. The food is arranged in silver platters, and the server (host, maître, waiter, etc.) brings them to the dining room and presents them to the guests. The dishes are prepared in the kitchen, and the use of *guéridon* is optional and only for heating and finalizations (Martinage & Martinage, 2013). Compared to the French service, it is less labor intensive, and requires less skilled and experienced servers, thus it is less time-consuming and less expensive. It requires less space, is adequate for large groups eating the same meal, and it still is grand style. Like in the French service, the diner is given a considerable personal attention (Lang, 1995; CIA, 2013; Payne-Palacio & Theis, 2009; Martinage & Martinage, 2013; Dahmer & Kahl, 2001; Kotschevar & Luciani, 2007).

This service is based in one principle: everything should be carried out in the minimum possible time, so that the dish is presented promptly without modification of flavors. The guests are divided into groups of eight, ten, or twelve people, and each group is served by a maître d'hôtel (French word for "master"). The first guest to be served is defined before the beginning of the service, and the others are served clockwise (Lang, 1995).

To serve, the maître carries the platters of food to the dining room and presents them to the guests at the table, next "standing to the left of the each guest and holding the platter in the left hand, the server shows each guest the food and then, using a large spoon and fork with the right hand, dishes up the desired portion on the guest's plate" (Dahmer & Kahl, p. 21, 2001). Some authors (CIA, 2013; Arduser & Brown, 2005), confuse and/or do not mention which should be the side to serve, causing confusion between the types of service.

Following the conception regarded as correct, "the portions of food are lifted from the service dish by the right hand by placing a large spoon with the bowl facing up under a portion, and a fork is placed on top of it to hold it in place. A spoon is used to serve vegetables and many other items" (Kotschevar & Luciani, p. 116, 2007). The service continues clockwise around the table and the remaining food returns to the kitchen. The wine follows the same sequence of service, however it is first served to the host (Lang, 1995). The *guéridon* may be used in the service *à la Russe* provided the food is prepared in the kitchen, and not finished at the table, but only transferred to the guest's plate (CIA, 2013).

3.3 English Service (traditional)

English service, also known as “host service” (Arduser & Brown, 2005), originated in the traditional homes of the British aristocracy, where “the host carves and serves the portions to the family and guests assisted by the domestic staff” (Martinage & Martinage, p. 123, 2013). Subsequently, this type of service spread to the country clubs in the United Kingdom (CIA, 2013). The English service is less formal, less labor intensive and, thus, less expensive and considerably faster. It is a style of service more intimate and personal, creates a more communal atmosphere close to genuine hospitality, referring to family and to British households. For this reason it is graceful and adequate for intimate groups, and can be used occasionally for a special dinner served in a private dining room of a restaurant (CIA, 2013; Martinage & Martinage, 2013). Like in the Russian service, all the food is prepared in the kitchen and brought to the dining room to be placed and served to the guests/customers (CIA, 2013; Martinage & Martinage, 2013; Dahmer & Kahl, 2001; Kotschevar & Luciani, 2007).

The host or hostess, in particular occasions represented by the head of the house, serves the food from the platters, bowls and/or vessels which are brought from the kitchen and placed before him or her at the head of the table (CIA, 2013; Martinage & Martinage, 2013; Dahmer & Kahl, 2001; Kotschevar & Luciani, 2007). Traditionally he or she carves, debones, fillets or portions the main course, dishes it up with the garnish on individual plates and serves it to each guest. Alternatively, the host only carves and put the portions on the plates, handing over the plate to the person sat to his or her left (generally the second person in the house hierarchy) who serves the garnish and passes the dish to the guest of honor and to the other guests. The host determines the order of precedence of the guests (Martinage & Martinage, 2013; Dahmer & Kahl, 2001; Kotschevar & Luciani, 2007). Another option of service, less formal and more contemporary, the host or hostess, hands over the dish to the closest person who passes it to the guest sat next to him or her, and so forth until all the guests are served (CIA, 2013).

3.4 Direct English Service

The English service (traditional) is not commercially viable. However, with adaptations and modifications it can be commercially useful for events or in restaurants reserved to private groups. After the food is brought from the kitchen, part of the dining room brigade dishes up food and the others carry, present, and deliver each plate to the diners. In restaurants, the English service techniques are adapted in a more formal way (Martinage & Martinage, 2013) inasmuch as to have this service adapted to a normal operation and not only in events or for private dinners. In this case, that variation is called Direct English Service and it is characterized by two aspects. First, the food comes fully prepared and assembled from the kitchen in suitable containers, and there is no tableside food preparation, in front of customers. Second, the server presents the serving dishes from the left side of the customer, and using the serving cutlery (spoon under the fork, both facing upwards, as tongs) serves a portion of food directly on the customer's plate (Martinage & Martinage, 2013). However some authors posit that the food should be served from the right" (Arduser & Brown, 2005), give rise to discrepancies of concepts and between the customer and server.

3.5 American Service or Plate Service

The American service (considered as a mix of the three above-mentioned styles) is less formal, less expensive, and more efficient than French, Russian, or English styles and, it still has a certain level of elegance (CIA, 2013). Maybe it is, currently, the most widespread in the commercial catering world and, thus, it has various names and variations, called the simple service, plated or plate service, executive and, also, *A l'assiette* (Cândido, 2010; Lang, 1995; Dahmer & Kahl, 2001; Martinage & Martinage, 2013; CIA, 2013; Kotschevar & Luciani, 2007). Despite the names they share a common feature. Essentially, all cooking and plating is done in the kitchen and then the individual plates are set before the diners (CIA, 2013; Dahmer & Kahl, 2001; Kotschevar & Luciani, 2007; Lang, 1995; Martinage & Martinage, 2013). Given the fact that the food is prepared, assembled and plated up in the kitchen by the chef or "under the supervision of professional chefs, the food may be presented in a very attractive way [...] Many chefs prefer the American service because it gives them the opportunity to showcase

their creativity, plating the food individually in a visually attractive manner” (Kotschevar & Luciani, p. 116, 2007).

This kind of service suited United States’ need for cost optimization, efficiency, allowing for a fast turnover and high-volume operations (CIA, 2013). Other advantage of the American service is the possibility to adapt it to various situations and needs, from breakfast, to lunch, or dinner services (Kotschevar & Luciani, 2007).

Some authors (Payne-Palacio & Theis, 2009) do not determine the order of service, although the general rule is that the server approaches the guest from the right side, with the prepared dish brought from the kitchen on the left arm, and sets it in front of guests with the right hand (CIA, 2013; Dahmer & Kahl, 2001). Furthermore, adding to the controversy Kotschevar & Luciani (2007) present the service from the guests’ left, without justifying it. Martinage & Martinage (2013) posit that this style of service should prioritize, contrary to the other types of service, the predominant hand of the server, in order to expedite service. The same authors claim that the “violation” of that rule is acceptable, and even welcomed, in case of a left-handed server, allowing them to carry up to three plates with the less used arm and serve them with the predominant hand, ensuring that the plate is set before the diners more swiftly, safety, and precisely (Martinage & Martinage, 2013).

4 RESULTS

Given that the traditional English service is not commercially viable and the present study focus on commercial catering, that service is reserved to private or family occasions and, thus, it is not considered in the final results, the same with the Russian service. Therefore, the four classic services turn into: French service, direct English service (being the indirect style a variation of this with the use of *guéridon*,) and plate service. This research proposes a dialogue between two distinct subjects: one, from the theoretical framework perspective, and the other, from the empirical perspective (professional and academic) of the authors of this study, trying to summarize, simplify, and standardize the definitions about types of services in restaurants (Table 2). This overview was partially tested by a small panel of evaluators,

aiming to validate, partially validate, or disprove the results put forward. The panel is composed of six evaluators, three chefs and three hostesses (the person receiving the customer and helping the service), all of them have national and international professional experience in full service restaurants, some of them with Michelin stars.

This proposal is built upon the premise that the service procedures prioritize right-handed people and aim to facilitate the use of the service tools and operation. The service should not cross in front of the customer, so it must be determined from which side should the plates and drinks be served, as well as the removal of dishware. The results of the validation panel are presented in Table 1.

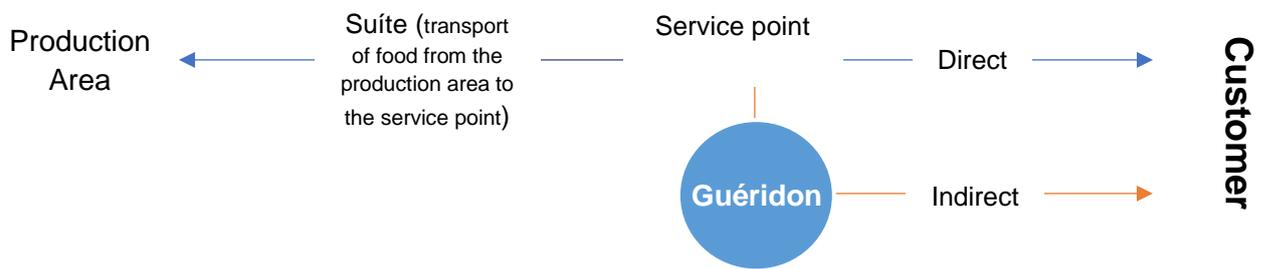
Table 1 – Results of the validation panel

	French service	Direct English service	Plate service
<i>Evaluator 1</i>	Completely valid	Completely valid	Completely valid
<i>Evaluator 2</i>	Partially valid	Completely valid	Completely valid
<i>Evaluator 3</i>	Partially valid	Completely valid	Completely valid
<i>Evaluator 4</i>	Invalid	Completely valid	Completely valid
<i>Evaluator 5</i>	Invalid	Completely valid	Completely valid
<i>Evaluator 6</i>	Invalid	Completely valid	Completely valid

Source: The authors (2016)

The only disagreement between the proposal put forward in this study and the evaluation of the panel relates to the French service. However, the panel does not disprove of the methodology to standardize and simplify the service, it only points out that this kind of service with the *guéridon* “is in disuse today, [...] is uncomfortable for the customers [and] it is difficult to execute, both to the diner and to the server” (Autores, 2016). The study sought also to simplify and standardized the names of the services, opting for the French service instead of Diplomat service, because the latter requires a hierarchy and formality that are not used commercially. The designation indirect English service was also preferred over Russian service, because the terms direct and indirect facilitate the understanding and the standardization of the terms. The only difference lies in the fact that in the direct English service (also called suite service) the food comes already prepared from the kitchen and goes directly to the customer’s plate. Whilst in the indirect service the food require some tableside finalization (usually using the *guéridon*) before being served to the customer (Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Classic service flow in restaurants



Source: The authors (2016)

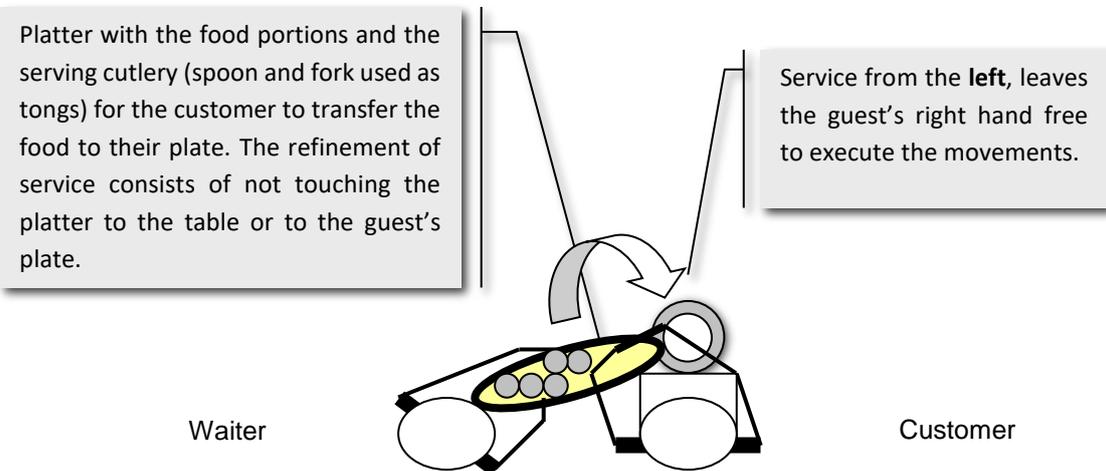
Instead of American we opted for the designation plate service, contributing to the standardization of terms, relating it to its essential feature (the food comes already plated from the kitchen). We also propose that the name of the service is not attached to the country (contrary to the French and English services) was not invented in the United States of America. Furthermore, this type of service is commonly used in Italy and France, in various kinds of food establishments, from standard restaurants to high-end restaurants such as the D.O.M of Chef Alex Atala, in São Paulo. Inclusive in certain circles in the U.S.A. that kind of service is known as plate service.

French service – nowadays, the traditional French service (with the use of *guéridon* to prepare and finish food) is reserved to formal dinner parties and to a few exclusive high-end restaurants (Arduser & Brown, 2005), it requires a high level of sophistication and skills from the serving brigade. Furthermore, “it generally requires a captain to seat the guests and take orders, a sommelier to recommend wines and to serve them, two servers (front and back waiters) to deliver and prepare the food, and a *commis* to bring water and bread” (CIA, p. 39, 2013), as well as to clear and set the tables. The traditional French service, because of its formality, requires a service brigade highly experienced and trained; in the industry is little used because it is time consuming and sometimes it makes customers uncomfortable. It is a service which prioritize hierarchy thus it is more used in diplomatic or state banquets, hence the designation Diplomat service.

Base for execution: in Brazil the French service is done with the food being prepared in the kitchen, portioned and put on a *guéridon* (just to keep the food warm) or in a platter. The fork and the spoon are used to transfer the food to the guest’s plate. The serving cutlery is placed at the end of the platter with the handles out. The waiter holds the platter over a napkin with the left hand, and brings it to the guest’s table. He approaches the guest from the left side holding the platter near the plate without touching the table or the plate. In that position the serving cutlery resting on the platter must be arranged so that the handles are turned to the guest who will transfer the food to their plate (Figure 2). *Additional characteristics:* the French

service is carried out with a waiter to six, maximum eight, guests, and service follows the order of precedence and the host or hostess is served last. In case there is not a protocol list, the guest or older women are served first and then the men are served following the same rule. *The rationale of the operation:* This service is oriented for right-handed people, so it prioritizes the majority of the population. Thus, the service is from the left side of the customer because in this way the right hand is furthest from the platter and, thus more able to perform the movements necessary to transfer the food. The left hand becomes compromised and with limited movements due to the proximity of the serving dish, it functions just as a support to the right hand. In case this was performed from the right side, the majority of guests would have many troubles to execute properly the operation.

Figure 2 – Schematic viewing of French service

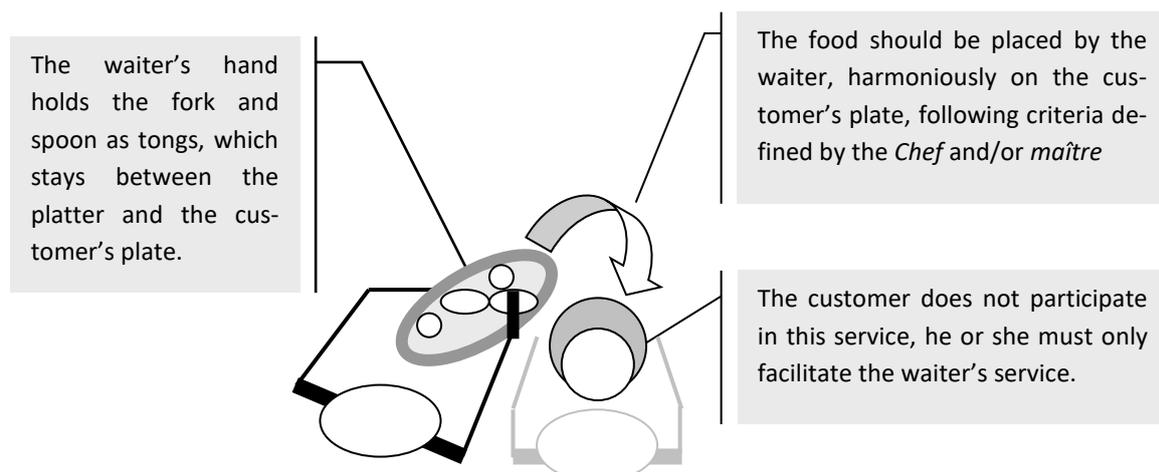


Source: The authors (2016)

Direct English service – it is a variation of the French service, but in this case the transfer of food from platters to the customer's plate is done by the waiter. The indirect service is characterized, simply, by the use of the *guéridon* to finish some dishes and it does not entail cooking. *Base for execution:* the food is placed in the platter in portions, in the kitchen, or portioned by the waiter before service. Sometimes the portioning is done only after presenting the course to the customer as a way to respect the plating up done in the kitchen. From the customer's left side the server brings the platter closer to the plate. Using the serving cutlery in the right hand, as tongs, the server transfer the food to the customer's plate (Figure 3).

Additional characteristics: the standard of this service is a *maître/* waiter for six to eight customers, and one or two *commis* to help. The platter may, initially be presented, from the right side, so that the customer may verify if everything is in accordance with the order. It is also the moment to showcase the plating up. After the approval the server initiates the service from the left side. When transferring the food from the platter to the guest's plate the waiter must create a balanced and attractive plating. Normally, the plating up is decided with the *maître* and the chef, taken into account the best possible way of showcasing the food and its preparation. The skills in handling the serving cutlery as tongs is key to the quality of this service. *The rationale of the operation:* in the case of the direct English service, it is up to the waiter to choose the side for service (because they are the ones serving the food). I.e., if the waiter is right-handed they will use the serving cutlery as tongs in the right hand, and this should be between the platter and the plate. This is the more comfortable way to perform the movement. If it was done from the right side, a right-handed waiter would have the platter between the right hand (with the spoon and fork as tongs) and the customer's plate, which would hinder the execution of the movement. The use of the cutlery as tongs, due to the variations in holding it, allows for the transfer of portion items, garnish (inclusive pasta), sauce and others such as a napkin.

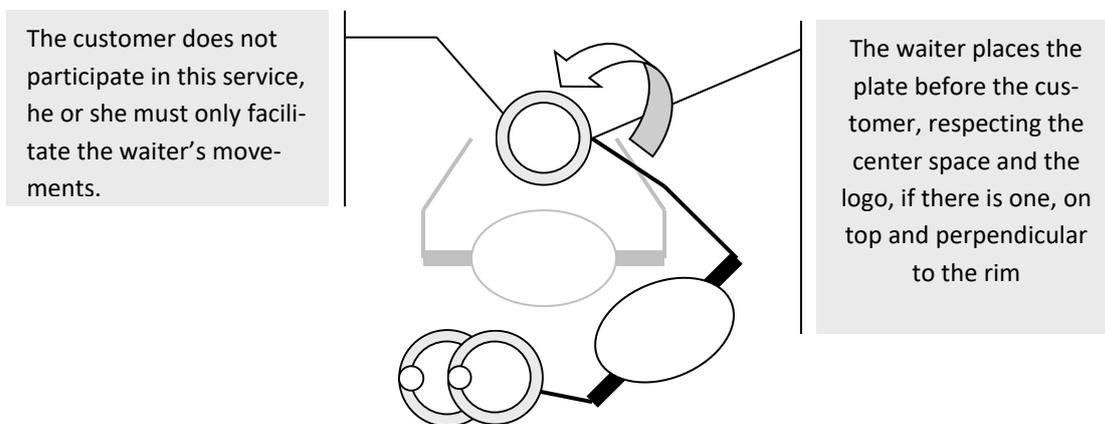
Figure 3 - Schematic viewing of direct English service



Source: The authors (2016)

Plate Service – the name is simplified considering that the main feature of this service is that the food is dished-up in the kitchen and the plate is simply placed before the customer. In this way, the following designations can be included in this type of service: *A l’assiette* – (meaning “to plate”) which is plated service in the kitchen, paying great attention to presentation; Italian style – equivalent to *l’assiette*, however is simpler, but still refined in the presentation, used especially with pasta and risottos; Executive or ‘Prato Feito’ (plated up) – Brazilian designation for *l’assiette*, but in a simpler way, consisting of plating up in the kitchen a large amount of food, without much attention to presentation. *Base for execution:* there are several possibilities, as seen before, however the reference is that the food is set before the customer already plated up; a waiter picks up the plated food and with the right hand and, from the customer’s right side of, sets the plate before the client (Figure 4). All these services have a common feature, the plates are served already prepared, the differences are the plating up, more or less sophisticated, and the place where the preparation takes place. These locations, based on what was seen, may be the kitchen, the *guéridon* or a side table.

Figure 4 - Schematic viewing of plate service



Source: The authors (2016)

Additional characteristics: In the plate service, in case there is a table plate in basic *mise-en-place*, this will be lifted simultaneously from the left side while from the right side the plated food is served (this is known as the pendulous). It is an exception given that the plates are always lifted from the right side. *The rationale of the operation:* for the right-handed server the only way of, naturally, set-in the plate before the customer is from their right side. In the

case of carrying three plates, he or she serves first the one in the right hand, and in the sequence gets the one on the left hand and repeats the operation.

Variation: the sophistication of this type of service may be called *a la cloche*. If the plate is covered by a cloche (a tableware to cover a plate), after it is placed before the customer, the server lifts a little of it and then turns it (still over the plate), and removes it from the table turned upward. This operation is done to avoid drops of water from condensed steam on the tablecloth or on the diner. Also, in the case of using the cloche, it is preferable that the server brings one at a time, exceptionally, to meet the volume of orders, may bring two, one on each hand. This service using cloche may be done simultaneously for all diners on a table. In this case the plates are brought to a table side and with as many servers as guests (in this case *commis* and, if necessary, servers from other stations are required). Each will pick a plate with a cloche and from the customer's right side, and at a signal of the maître, they will all simultaneously put the plate before the customer. At another signal from the maître they will all, simultaneously, remove the cloches.

Table 2 – Overview of the classic typologies of catering services

	Main features	Left or Right	Rationale	Variations
<i>French Service</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The food is prepared in the kitchen, portioned and placed in the appropriate crockery 2. The transfer of food to the plate is done by the customer 	The serving dish with the food is presented from the customer's left side.	From the left. In this way the customer's left hand movements are limited, serving only as support. The right hand is free for acting as the dominant hand for transferring the food to the plate	The guéridon can be used to prepare or finalization of some dishes (called traditional <i>à la française</i>)
<i>Direct English Service</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The food is prepared in the kitchen, portioned and placed in the appropriate crockery 2. The transfer of food to the plate is done by the maître/server 	The serving dish with the food is presented from the customer's left side.	From the left In this way the server's left hand movements are limited, serving only as support for the platter. The right hand is free for acting as the dominant hand for transferring the food to the plate	The guéridon can be used for finalization or heating some dishes (called indirect English service)
<i>Plate Service</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The food is plated up on the customer's plate in the kitchen and brought by the server 2. The server places the plate before the customer 	The plated food is set-in before the customers from their right side. The servers use their right hands	From the right, standing form behind the customers without crossing in front of them. In this way the server uses the predominant hand (right) and diners receive the plate also from their predominant side	Can use the cloche to cover the dish and refine the service, causing surprise and expectation (called service <i>à la cloche</i>)

Source: The authors (2016)

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study is of an exploratory and theoretical nature about the classic typology of meal service and needs further research. The present proposal is the beginning of the scientific discussion on the topic. The first step to deepen the knowledge is to include in the validation panel more professionals and academics from the field of culinary arts, in order to validate or refute the proposals put forward or/and modify them according to empirical data from future research. Also, the execution of the full services should be examined in terms of the market. Future field research carried in the major food establishments could reveal how these services are being done currently, looking for the validation of this proposal by the various entrepreneurs.

Adopting the meaning of the consumption of service from the nature (ordinary/ extraordinary) of the consumer's experience the results obtained aim the extraordinary experience of food. This meaning "emphasizes the participation of the consumer in the production of experiences in restaurants, because they are the interpreters of the services offered by the market, although the system of offer put forward by the companies influences their interpretation of the consumed products and services" (Barbosa, p. 84, 2006). In this sense, this study aims to contribute to the mutual understanding between customer and entrepreneur.

The standardization process aiming to improve quality is slow and gradual. To achieve it organizations have to implement service recovery which consists of "the attitudes taken by a company when failures occur in the service provision [...] systematizing recovery actions is the process adopted by organizations that know their processes and realize that, due to the characteristics of service provision, failures occur and it is necessary to stay ahead of these events in order to keep the customer's confidence" (Slack *et al.*, 1996 *apud* Oliveira, p. 26, 2002). That aims, in principle, the adequacy of the dining room brigade to the standardization suggestions exposed here and in future studies. The commercial catering lacks standardization which originates a gap between the server and the served. The authors of this study recommend that the focus of the service should always be the customer. Therefore, in order to standardize the service, it should be always executed from the customer's right and the server must be positioned behind them and place the plate with the right hand. The left-handed server must conform to this rule, it is the entrepreneur's duty to train and adapt the restaurant brigade to standardization.

From the perspective of this study, the field of research which needs further development is the *mise en place*. Research on this topic, from the same perspective, is necessary to complement the standardization of classic services. Without the *mise en place*, the provision of such services remains incomplete. Therefore, in a third moment, a model/ flow chart of the complete operation can be drawn with a practical and applicable approach following the model of recovery of service, because this "is, in general, represented by models constituted

by stages which show the steps to be adopted in case of failure” (Oliveira, p. 28, 2002). However, the “comparison with the models presented in the literature revealed that there is not any model fitting the models obtained for [...] a restaurant à la carte” (Tinoco, 2006). Hence, it is necessary the creation or adaptation of a specific model to assess the quality of service of food establishments using the classic typology of client service.

It is expected that the current study will provide some clarification regarding issues arising from full service restaurants, bringing together scientific and empirical knowledge and validating the latter through a validation panel, aiming the improvement of the quality of the food experience. The proposals put forward herein aim to contribute to the discussion and research on the topic and offer directions for future research.

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