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# Spa Operations Management

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## Introduction

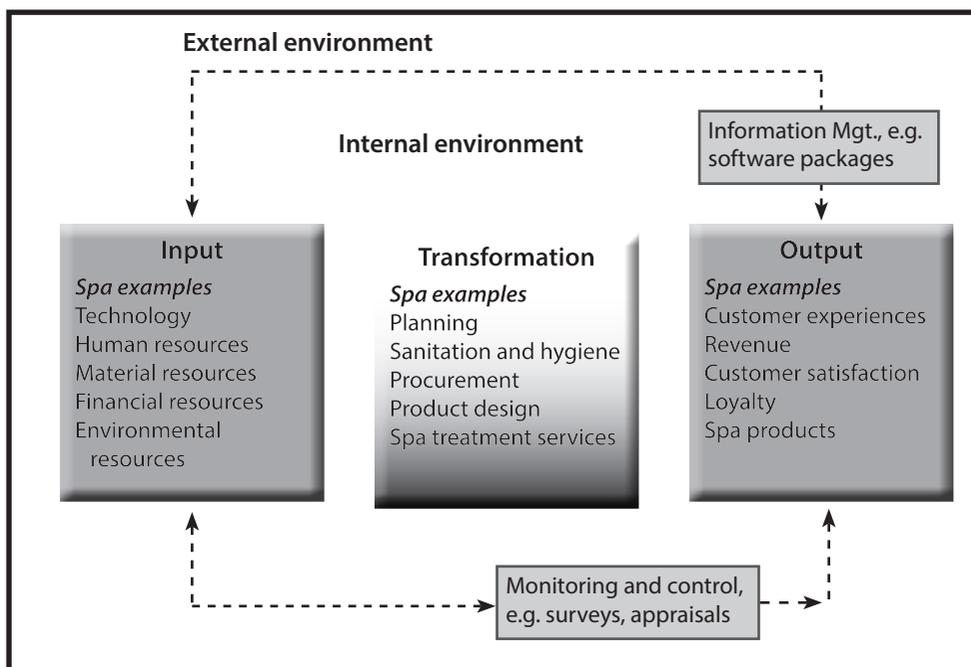
Slack *et al.* (2004) define operations management as a process used in organisations to produce goods and service. This process based notion of operations management, confirmed by Karlson (2009), is then made more explicit by Roth and Manor (2003) who argue that operations management transforms inputs into goods and services based on customer needs and interests with obvious associations with spa products (see Chapter 9). Porter (1991) and Slack *et al.* (2013) then present a view that operations management is the activity of managing the resources that create and deliver services and products creating a specific guest experience. The rationale is that to achieve the ultimate customer satisfaction, the spa organisations need to operate as unified systems combining various operational processes and procedures to deliver a complete customer experience. This chapter, therefore, examines spa operations management from a systems perspective.

## A systems perspective of spa operations management

The role and function of operations management involves the coordination of a broad range of spa processes and procedures in an effort to meet the needs and interest of the consumer. For example spa pools, aromatherapy rooms, sauna and steam rooms allied to treatment offers such as sports massage, Thai massage, Watsu, and all dependent on the type of spa, whether it is a health club facility, a

day spa, a destination spa or even a wellness centre or wellness incorporated in with the spa environment. Spa facilities and treatments will also be dependent on geographical area and consumer type for that specific spa. A systems perspective provides spa operations with the methodology to convert inputs such as materials, labour, proprietary information into outputs such goods, services and value-added products. This then constitutes the design and development element to achieve the ultimate guest experience. This perspective requires a detailed examination of the theory from a framework initially developed by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy (1968) and later developed by other scholars including Lovelock and Wirtz (2003) and then refined by Senge (2014)

### Systems Analysis Thinking Theory



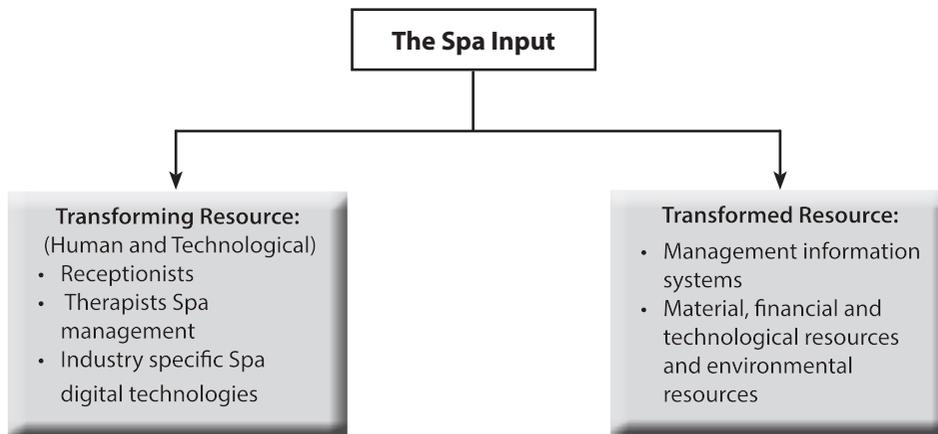
**Figure 8.1:** The systems analysis thinking perspective and its application to spa operations.

A systems thinking perspective perceives an organisation as a complete system consisting of inputs, transformation, outputs, monitoring and controlling, as well as information management processes. These elements exist in an internal environment which is the organisation itself. However, the organisation exists in a larger and external system often described as the external environment (Porter, 1991; Senge, 2014). The organisation can therefore be viewed as a subsystem of the external environment, but as each spa is essentially different, e.g. location, type, age, size etc. then each subsystem must be different. This means that each spa must produce its own subsystem to survive in the service economy.

## ■ The input element of the spa operations

The input element consists of resources to develop products and deliver the customer services. Slack *et al.* (2013) and Mullins and Dossor (2013) break down resources into two major categories, namely the transformed and transforming resources (see Figure 8.2). Transformed resources include material and product, management information systems including customer databases, financial, and environmental resources. Transforming resources refer to those human and technological resources capable of manipulating other resources in the process of developing the necessary customer experiences. These include the spa staff and management including related digital technological applications of spa therapies performing specific operational tasks.

In order to establish transferred resources to outputs requires adequate efficient and professional staff training, sufficient and efficient resources both human and technological for example the staff delivering and maintaining services and operations in order to produce consumer satisfaction which equally could build customer loyalty.



**Figure 8.2:** Categorisation of spa inputs

Human resources includes managers and employees who work within various areas of a spa delivering specified experiences and treatments. These include front of house operational staff, such as receptionists and spa hosts, as well as different levels of therapists such as senior therapist to treatment therapist, who deliver various treatments whilst some specialise in specific treatments. Services dependent on the type of facility can range from, and include, different types of body and facial treatments, hand and feet treatments, holistic and wellness treatments and programmes to incorporate health and wellness such as nutritional and detoxification programmes. Back of house staff include cleaners, contracted personnel maintaining the facilities and accountants, human resources and marketing staff, who may not always be visible to the guest.