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THE ANALYSIS OF THE SERVICE QUALITY IN HOTEL INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

The quality of service in hotel industry is an important factor of successful business. Service quality is a way to manage business processes in order to ensure total satisfaction to the customer on all levels. Today the quality is the result of growing of diverse needs of the consumers, along with market globalization, increasing competition and the development of modern technology. If we consider the last years, there is an increasing tendency to improve the tourist facilities and to attract the tourist market which is interested for activities in open nature and relax in fresh and pure air. SERVQUAL model is very important for managers of hotels. They do not know the expectations of their guests, the dimensions of service quality they consider most important, do not match those that are most important for clients. Since there is a connection between the quality of service and the satisfaction of clients in hotel industry, it is important for the hotel to spot a gap in the quality of service. This paper gives a better recognition of critical success factors of quality management implementation in hotels which have some advantages to provide better service to customers. The benefits of offer higher service quality have influence on both hotel sector and customers. Data was gathered from designed questionnaire and statistically analyzed. The development of tourism is very important for the region, because it is a branch which improves the incomes of the community. The aims of the paper were to evaluate perceptions of hotel guests and to test using of the SERVQUAL model in hotel industry and to evaluate perceptions of tourist for attributes of the destination. This analysis will help in the adaption of needs of tourists with hotel product.

KEYWORDS

hotel industry; service quality; SERVQUAL model; tourist destination.

1. INTRODUCTION

Quality is considered to be of very great importance in the **hospitality industry**. Mill (1986) identifies the aim of service quality as being able to ensure a satisfied customer. However, the focus of quality initiatives has been primarily on selection and training of front line staff (for example, Gober & Tannehill, 1984; Mill, 1986; Cathcart 1988). The issues of measurement and process improvement have been largely neglected.

How is service **industry** different? According to Enrick (1986) "Modern methods of quality control were developed and matured in manufacturing **industries**. These involve the processing and fabrication of materials into finished durable and nondurable goods". Service, however, is a relatively distinct non-manufacturing activity. Work is performed for someone else.

The major distinctions between service and manufacturing organizations are that the product:

- ✓ is intangible and ephemeral;
- ✓ is perishable;
- ✓ frequently involves the customer in the delivery of the product;
- ✓ is not perceived as a product by employees.

In manufacturing **industries** the product is highly visible and therefore identifiable whereas in service organizations the 'product' is frequently 'invisible' and the customer cannot easily be identified. Often a person in a service **industry** has no perception of their work being a product and that the way in which his job is performed has an impact on the success of the organization as a whole.

How do these differences impact on the implementation of TQM in a service organization? Looking again at the Quality Triangle, it is clear that the 'Focus on the Customer' is very much a part of the provision of a service. The further development of identifying internal customers and building the concepts of 'Teamwork' is less immediate. The intangible nature of the product may make it harder for each individual to see that they are contributing to a common goal: Whereas a person making a physical object can usually readily identify the next step in the process, and identify their contribution to the final product and its quality, a clerk in the accounts receivable section of a hospital may find it difficult to identify their customers and see how the quality of their work will affect the final product. However, the difference is one of degree and simply requires, as in manufacturing, that each person be made aware of the value of their role in producing a quality product and be allowed to contribute to continuous improvement in the product.

Service quality is a way to manage business processes in order to ensure total satisfaction to the customer on all levels. The management's perceptions of the consumer's expectations is the guiding principle when deciding on the specifications of the quality of service that the company should follow in providing service. (J. Grznic, 2007). It is important for the company to spot a gap in the quality of service, because there is a direct connection between the quality of service and the satisfaction of clients in hotel industry.

The SERVQUAL model offers a suitable conceptual frame for the research and service quality measurement in the service sector. The model is based on the definition of quality as a comparison of the expected and the obtained as well as a consideration of gaps in the process of service provision.

In the original SERVQUAL, Parasuraman et al, (1985) define service quality through ten dimensions which they sum up in five in 1988: reability; assurance; tangibles; empathy; responsiveness. But there is some theoretical criticism about his model: (J. Grznic, 2007)

- ✓ *Pattern objections:* SERVQUAL is based rather on an affirmation pattern than on the pattern of understanding
- ✓ *Gap model:* there is little evidence that the consumer evaluates service quality in the sense of perception-expectation gaps
- ✓ *Dimensionality:* the five dimensions of SERVQUAL are not universal; the number of dimensions that encompass service quality is connected to the context.

The most important criticism of SERVQUAL was the usage of gap analysis results (difference between expectation and perception of the received service) in measuring service quality (Cronin and Taylor, 1994).

The quality is one type of measurement that has been viewed by hospitality organizations in terms of product and service efficiency. In 1980s, many of the hospitality organizations were forced to move away from idea of the efficiency and put more importance on customer needs.

(O. Stromgren, 2007)

A well-known philosophy, which gives total overview on quality, is Total Quality Management (TQM). Many researches has been done about service quality, but the hospitality industry has only been receiving modest attention (Harrington & Akehurst, 1996)

Different authors have given various definitions of TQM (M, Shahbazipour, 2007). So, Kanji (1990) defined it as: A way of life of an organization committed to customer satisfaction through continuous improvement. This way varies from organization to organization and from one country to another but has certain principles which can be implemented to secure market share, increase profits and reduce costs.

Berry (1991) defined the TQM process as a total corporate focus on meeting and exceeding customers' expectations and significantly reducing costs resulting from poor quality by adopting a new management system and corporate culture. Kanji shows the concept of TQM: quality-to satisfy customers' requirements continuously; total quality- to achieve quality at a low costs; total quality management: to obtain total quality by involving everyone's daily commitment.

Managers within the hospitality industry make frequent reference to TQM principles. The extent to which these principles are applied effectively within the human resource management area of hospitality however remains under-researched.

There are some TQM models, but there are several elements common to them:

- ✓ the final goal of quality management is customer satisfaction
- ✓ quality management must be systematic
- ✓ -a belief for continuous improvement.

Determining customers' needs is the start; translating these needs in the organization and satisfying them is a major challenge.

General Principles of TQM

Many hotels have subsequently attempted to apply TQM requirements to their operations, with particular emphasis on its application within and through the human resource management function (Boella, 1986; Umbreit, 1987; Redman & Mathews, 1995; Roberts, 1995; Go, Monachello & Baum, 1996; Soriano, 1999).

In practice, relatively few properties have become what might be described as "TQM hotels" (Lyons, 1993; Quality Australia, 1993; Breiter, Tyink & Tuckwell, 1995; Carter, 1996; Partlow, 1996; Breiter & Bloomquist, 1998) O. Stromgren, 2007 shows that critical success factors for implementation are:

- *Customer focus* is when in an organization embracing the principles of TQM, both actions and functions are designed and performed with the aim of meeting the needs of customers, who also determine their value.

- *Customer satisfaction* is the degree to which customers of an organization's products are pleased with those products or services. This is a fundamental aim of TQM, to continually increase the customer satisfaction.

- *Employee training* is an important factor of TQM.

- *Top management and leadership* must direct the entire Total Quality process

- *Teamwork* is another aspect for the organization to be committed to learning and to the changes produced by quality improvement.

- *Employee involvement* regards the involvement of the employees and is considered as the bottom line in TQM processes. Employees assume responsibilities to achieve quality in accomplishing their tasks and actively take part in the process of continuous improvement.

- *Continuous improvement and innovation* is the one of the concepts of TQM.

- *Quality information and performance measurement* concerns the means of gathering data to co-ordinate and support the process of making decisions and taking actions throughout the organization.

2. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF TOURISM IN ALBANIA AND AUTHENTIC ALBANIA QUALITY MARK

Albania is a country with ancient cultural tradition and a brilliant history. Albania is an important connecting bridge of Mediterranean Countries and as a such country, it has favorable conditions for the development of tourism 457 km of the total 1094 km national border line is a wonderful coastline. The nature has reserved a favorable climate to Albania, 120 sunny days, virgin and unexploited lands which inspire curiosity, a perfect nature and diversified relief forms. International experts have uttered that Albania contains the necessary potentials to be a unique centre of European ecological tourism (www.albanian-guide.com). Due to its favorable geographic position, Albania has been called "the Balkan's Gate". It has some particular characteristics where are intertwined the geographical and geological features, the landscapes and relieve.

According to the 2011 Travel and Tourism Economic Impact for Albania prepared by World Travel and Tourism Council, the future of the Albanian tourism sector is positive. Key indicators of growth are as follow:

The total contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP, including its wider economic impacts, is forecasted to rise by 5.4% from ALL 344.2 bn (26.3% of GDP) in 2011 to ALL 582.7bn (29%) by 2021.

While figures on tourist arrivals are growing year after year in Albania, the country has remained highly dependent on Balkan region tourist.

The Ministry's Tourism Development National Strategy 2007-2013 replaces the 2002 Tourism Strategy. It presents the following vision statement (Vision 2013):

"Albania is a safe, high-value tourism destination featuring an unparalleled variety of world-class natural and cultural attractions in a small geographic area, managed in an environmentally and socially responsible manner, easily accessible to European tourism markets."

Authentic Albania Quality Mark to support Tourism Businesses in Albania

The Authentic Albania quality mark awards program supports enterprises in Albania's tourism industry by establishing quality hotel standards and building opportunities for tourism businesses. This program is the country's first system that rates accommodation facilities in Albania.

Gold, Silver and Bronze Authentic Albania awards were determined based on the Authentic Albania quality mark framework which evaluates facilities using seven key dimensions that together address the travelers' requirements for professionalism, safety, cleanliness and comfort, as well as demonstrate responsible tourism practices. These businesses represent a select group of Albanian accommodations that will be able to bear Authentic Albania quality mark symbol and benefit from promotion and marketing services provided by the ATA. All Authentic Albania quality mark awards are valid for two years, after which the accommodations must undergo a new assessment to remain in the program. The Authentic Albania quality mark framework was developed based on the 37 standards of the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria. Quality standards and accreditations give travelers the confidence of staying in accommodations run by owners who are serious about providing customers with good value and high quality experiences.

The Authentic Albania Quality mark was developed to raise awareness among Albanian accommodation providers to deliver a product travelers value and appreciate. It evaluates facilities using seven key dimensions which are:

-Business & Governance	10%
-Customer Service/Satisfaction	21%
- Cleanliness Safety & Security	12%
- Management & Workforce	10%
- Responsible/Sustainable tourism	22 %
- Marketing & Promocion	10 %

The performance of a business today is appraised, including ways in which it can be even better tomorrow, along three award categories: must have, improving to: more is better, and for true excellence: deghter.

3. TOURISM IN THE KORÇA REGION AND TQM IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY

The city of Korca is situated in southeastern part of Albania. The area occupied by the city today is a former Illyrian settlement. The potential for tourism development in Korca and the surrounding area is high thanks to its historical, cultural and natural wealth. Korca is mentioned as a castle in 1280 and in 1431, as an inhabited castle. After 1484, the city started to expand and development gaining the feature of an urban and regional centre. The city has participated historically in intensive exchange of culture and trade with Byzantium and Greece. Korca's region illustrates and encompassed three of these areas: historical tourism; archaeological tourism, religious tourism. Korca's region is well-known for old churches and monasteries, such as Orthodox Cathedral, which is the biggest in the Albania.

Korca destination as a city should not be seen as separate from the touristic villages surrounding it, since tourists coming to the city also demand to visit the touristic villages around, to take part in their activities or to enjoy their accommodations and traditional dishes. Municipal programs concerned with transforming Korca into "The City of Holidays" do not only help to increase the vibrancy of community life, but they also aim at making Korca a famous city in Albania and the neighboring countries. In other words, these activities help to increase the number of foreign and domestic tourists in rural areas, especially in summer time owing to their favorable climate and fresh air.

The aims of the research were:

- Evaluate expectations and perceptions of hotel guests on the studied sample
- Evaluate and calculate the SERVQUAL gap.

The respondents were studied concerning the following:

~"How many times have you visited this destination?"

The responses were: 43%- 1-2 times; 24%- visited it for the first time; 33%- more than twice.

So, we are able to notice that there is a continuous interest to visit these areas, enjoy the fresh air and the landscape, and also traditional cuisine that is often the main reason of visiting these rural areas.

~ Tourists that visit the destination, as far as *the nationality of tourists is concerned*, it results that most of them are native: 45% of them are Albanians from Albania; 19% Albanians from Greece; 10% are Albanians from Macedonia and 26% are foreign tourists, mainly Greeks about 10% followed from Macedonians, French, Germans, English and Asian people; about 1% are American people.

These data show that the interest of domestic tourists is still continuous and according the information gathered from the hotels of the area, there is a tendency of tourists to come during winter time to enjoy the snow and be able to skiing.

This research has tested SERVQUAL model for the measurement of service quality of hotel guests in 3, 4 star hotels in Pogradec and Korca, two cities with many tourist attractions.

Visitors were most satisfied with accommodation and least satisfied with the attractions and shopping facilities in the region. This underlines the need to improve the shopping and attractions offer, which would increase the length of stay of visitors.

RATING OF SERVICES RECEIVED

Visitors were most satisfied with accommodation and least satisfied with the attractions and shopping facilities in the region. So, it is important to improve the shopping and attractions offer, which would increase the length of stay of visitors.

TABLE 1: RATING OF SERVICES RECEIVED

RATING OF SERVICES	ALL	INTERNATIONAL	DOMESTIC
	1 to 5	1 to 5	1 to 5
Hotel	3.8	3.7	3.9
Restaurant	3.5	3.4	3.7
Attractions	2.8	2.5	3.1
Shops	3.05	3.0	3.1

TABLE 2: SERVQUAL GAP

Dimensions	Expectation	Perception	SERVQUAL Gap=perception-expectation
Tangibles	6,2	5,5	- 0,7
Reliability	6,5	5,9	- 0,6
Responsiveness	6,28	5,84	- 0,44
Assurance	6,3	5,9	- 0,4
Empathy	6,1	5,8	- 0,3
Total SERVQUAL gap	6,28	5,8	- 0,48

The results show that the average rating for expectations are higher than the average perception rating for expectations are higher than the average perception ratings in all dimensions of service quality. But research shows that there were problems in the dimensions of "reliability" (-0, 6) and "tangibles" (-0, 7) and hotels guests are more satisfied in the dimension of "empathy", which is the narrowest (-0, 3)

4. CONCLUSIONS

The objective of TQM, simply stated, is to: "Do the right things right the first time, every time".

TQM is important in all sector of tourism, especially in hotel industry due to TQM is three main things to judge whether they should stay in this hotel again or should go for another one. The importance of total quality management (TQM) in the tourist industry has risen to an extraordinary level because of the change in preferences of tourists' behavior and the growth of competitiveness of new tourist destinations.

The major difficulty for service organizations in implementing TQM is determining measurements that provide quantifiable data. This study has shown how, by focusing on processes and identifying appropriate quality measures, it is possible to obtain such data.

Once a service organization identifies measurement techniques they should not experience any difficulties other than those faced in the manufacturing sector.

SERVQUAL can be widely applied in practice in various services. In the hotel industry, service quality is crucial to the satisfaction of the client.

According to gathered data and observation, there are some weaknesses about TQM success factors performance in these hotels.

Personnel need to work effectively as a team, in order to eliminate barriers to successful performance.

Hotels must focus on employee job satisfaction, because increased employee relations and satisfaction will lead to successful quality implementation in the service sector. For this, training and education based on total quality must be planned and provided.

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