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CHALLENGES OF TOURISM AND BUSINESS LOGISTICS IN THE 21ST CENTURY



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PREFACE

The Faculty of Tourism and Business Logistics in Gevgelija, at the Goce Delcev University - Stip, hosted the First International Scientific Conference, "Challenges of Tourism and Business Logistics in the 21st Century".

The conference was held on 24 and 25 October 2017 in Gevgelija with an optional visit to Dojran - Dojran Lake.

32 works of 60 authors from Serbia, Latvia, Turkey, Poland, Bulgaria, Kosovo and Macedonia were presented at the Conference.

The purpose of the Conference is exchange of ideas and experiences of the participants coming from Macedonia and abroad, and establishment of cooperation for further development of tourism and business logistics in Macedonia and beyond.

The results of the Conference are visible through publication in a collection of papers, which is presented to a wider scientific audience and the public.

In this way, we want to promote the Faculty of Tourism and Business Logistics, to promote Gevgelija and Dojran as the most visited settlements in the south-eastern part of Macedonia.

Gevgelija - Stip,
December 2017

Editor
Nikola V. Dimitrov Ph.D. *Dean*

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SERVICE QUALITY IN HOTEL INDUSTRY

Elizabetha Mitreva, Ph.D.¹; Natasha Miteva, MBA²; Dushica Saneva, Ms³

Abstract

Quality assessment is one of the greatest challenges of hotel industry. Given its complex nature, numerous technics help in quality measurement, assessment and management. Following this it can be achieved full quality management and with that sustainable business development to the satisfaction of all stakeholders. In service industries quality is measured according to consumers' expectation and perception. The aim of this paper is to, through literature review, to get the importance of quality in hotel services and its connection with consumers' expectation and perception. The analysis is done on the difference in expectation and perception of consumers in hotel service and their practical implication.

Key words: *hotel industry, quality, quality measurement, expectation, perception, consumers*

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Introduction

Nowadays hotel industry is among the most researched and closely monitored by people from different spheres of interest, including government, economists, investors, academics, travelers, and consumers. Furthermore, it is a broad type of industry including several businesses, such as food and beverage, accommodation, travel and tourism, and depending majorly from service offered.⁴ Hotel industry, a service-oriented industry with the consumer at its center, offers mix of product and service. In order to succeed in the industry, organizations focus on *how they are delivered* and not just at *how many there are*.⁵ To do so, organizations aim at identification of consumers' wants and needs, understanding their perceptions, and gain satisfaction through value added activities and perceived quality.

Defining quality, as a term, is challenging by nature due to the different views when doing so. Given its complexity, there is no just a single definition and most commonly offered in literature include seeing the quality as “conformance to specifications”, “fitness for use”, “value for price paid”, “support services”, and “psychological idea”.⁶ Similar challenge is experienced when defining service as a term, including the characteristics such as “intangible”, “experience”, “benefit” etc. One of the definitions offered by Christopher Lovelock, marketing guru, states that “*services are economic activities that create value and provide benefits for customers at specific times and places as a result of bringing about a desired change in or on behalf of the recipient of the service*”.⁷ Besides the complexity of their definition, service quality is the “tool” organizations use to gain customers satisfaction and therefore assure success and sustainability in the hotel industry.

⁴ <http://www.ehl.edu/en/what-hospitality-industry>

⁵ Chan, Benny, et al. (2013). *Introduction to hospitality*, Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. available at: www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/curriculum-development/kla/pshe/nss-curriculum/tourism-and-hospitality-studies/Hospitality_English_21_June.pdf.

⁶ Reid, Robert D., and Nada R. Sanders. (2012). *Operations management: an integrated approach*, 5th ed., John Wiley et Sons.

⁷ Bhattacharjee, C. (2006). *Services marketing: Concepts, planning and implementation*. Excel Books.

The role of quality in hotel industry

The critical component of consumer's perception about quality is actually the service quality. It is in the nature of existence for a hotel industry to identify consumer needs and meet or exceed expectations, so that it can gain satisfaction. For service oriented and consumer driven industry, consumer satisfaction has been researched for many years and its link with quality, proven. The close relationship between service quality and consumer satisfaction has given them the role of critical success factors for any market-oriented organization. Moreover, it must be a consumer-driven organization for a quality to be assured. Consumer satisfaction as a business philosophy tends to create value for consumers, meet their expectations and satisfy their needs. In the hotel industry, as stated by Parasuraman, consumer satisfaction is the level in which expectations are met or exceeded. (1985) Furthermore, consumers' satisfaction has been conceptualized as a feeling of pleasure or disappointment by many researchers. This statement is a result from the comparison of perceived performance and expectation.

According to Olshavsky quality has many similarities with attitude. This results from its form as an overall evaluation of a product or service, and for that it acts as a global value judgment. Oliver goes beyond attitude and differentiates satisfaction from it stating that "satisfaction is a summary psychological state resulting when the emotion surrounding disconfirmed expectation is coupled with the consumer's prior feelings about the consumption experience". His definitions on consumer satisfaction try to link attitude with perceived service quality, and satisfaction to specific transaction. (Parasuraman, A, 1988)

According to Valdani, organizations exist because they have consumer to serve. (Gunarathne) As a result, the service quality that gains a level of consumers' satisfaction increases the opportunity for return and loyalty, which further increases the organizational profit.

Quality analysis in hotel industry

In order to obtain quality in hotel industry, a consumer-driven industry, the organization has to: measure consumer mood, judge the consumer needs, improve consumer loyalty, listen to the feedback, assure on time service, follow the etiquette of service in the industry, and meet (even exceed) the consumer expectations. There are researches that define consumer satisfaction as a cheapest mean of promotion, proving

its irreplaceable role with quality. Moreover, quality analysis give the opportunity to hotel industry to closely monitor its operations, purchase repetition, as well as differences before and after changes. Given the analysis and information gathered, organizations in hotel industry can identify their standards of service delivery, recognize problems (if any), and act accordingly.

Quality analysis in hotel industry is important and seen as a marketing method for every organization that wants to prove its quality delivered to consumers. Most often, organizations in hotel industry use the rating system to analyze the quality offered on the market or in the industry itself. It is considered that the top 10 on the list are certified for their quality service. (Le Na)

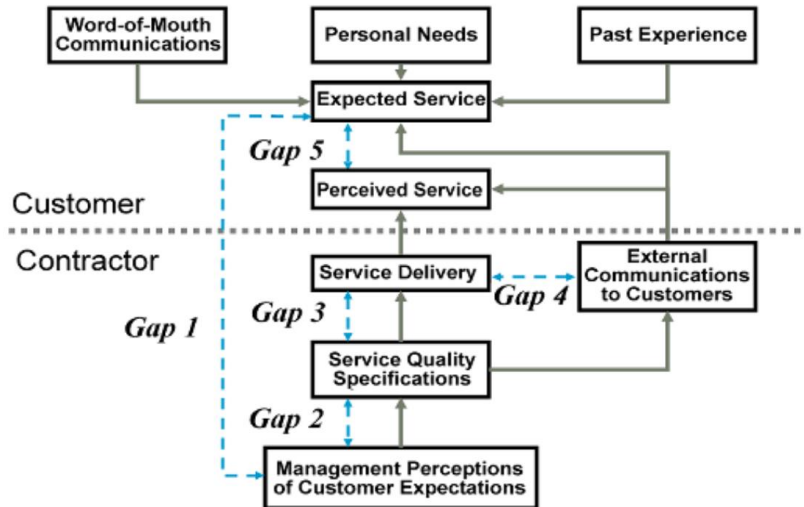
This list of positive aspects of quality analysis is continuously upgraded due to the complex nature and dynamics of hotel industry. Basically, quality analysis gives the opportunity to emphasize market needs, assure better quality performance, meet the competition, and develop adequate communication system. On the other side are the few disadvantages of quality analysis, such as the high cost of doing it, creativity discouragement, employee resistance etc. However good quality analysis will for sure exceed the downsides of it.

Measuring quality in hospitality sector

After putting on point its meaning, role and importance, for a quality to be valid, it has to be measured. The need for measurement has been established with the appearance of gaps when trying to satisfy customer's needs according to their perceptions. Those gaps are identified as: (Parasuraman)

1. Consumer expectation and managerial perception
2. Managerial perception and service quality specification
3. Quality specification and service delivery
4. Service delivery and external communications
5. Perceived service and expected service

Picture 1. Service quality model



Source: Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. A., & Berry, L. L. (1985). *A conceptual model of service quality and its implications for future research*. *Journal of Marketing*, 44.

First gap exists due to the inaccurate perception of what consumers actually expect and there is a need for management processes, market analysis tools and attitude in order to solve it. The second gap exists because of some inability for a management to understand the expectations of the consumer. The third gap emerges due to the lack of support to guarantee high quality service delivery with the given guidelines. Fashioning consumers' expectation by organizations' external communications implies the existence of gap four. The size and direction of the fifth gap represent the services' perceived quality. It turns this gap depends on other gaps related to marketing, delivery and design of services.

Measuring quality, especially in service sectors, is declared as complex and therefore it is a topic of continuous research. However, some models have been found and proven as sustainable among researchers, such as: SERVQUAL, SERVPERF, INTSERVQUAL, INSQPLUS, HOLSERV, DINESERV, CASERV, LODGSERV, INTQUAL and INTERSERVQUAL. Among the most used is the SERVQUAL model based on the gaps mentioned previously, meaning, perceptions and expectations. This model is created so that it can evaluate

the dimensions known as tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Its effectiveness in quality measurement has been tested, adapted and proven in great number of studies and more importantly in different sectors and industries. (Saneva)

As an alternative to SERVQUAL is used the SERVPERF model standing for Services Performance Model where the expectations are not relevant. Instead it is stated that the estimated service quality is equal to customer satisfaction. Additionally, LODGSERV method has been designed, including “contact” as a dimension, in order to get more accurate measure of quality in the hotel industry. Besides, HOLSERV is one more model specifically designed for the hotel industry which is based on measuring three dimensions: reliability, employees, and material component. (Sekulic)

Other models and researches have been done to identify, measure and closely monitor the quality in hotel industry. Their mutuality is in identification of dimensions and components, and related questions.

Conclusion

Assuring service quality in hotel industry leads to satisfied consumers, return and loyalty. Satisfied consumers have been in the focus of many marketing activities due to the fact that satisfied consumers are loud and will spread good experience.

Given that service quality has been a goal to many researches and it will stay in the focus as long as the hotel industry remains dynamic and complex as it is. Service quality and customer satisfaction are in a proven strong relationship and for that quality analysis and measurement methods are of great need and importance. Existing models such as SERVQUAL, HOTELSERV, LODGSERV, etc. have been already implemented in several studies in hotel industry. Results show that use of quality measurement methods is possible and with a little modification organizations can get reliable data and further use it to monitor, maintain or improve service quality. Moreover, with these methods organizations in hotel industry have the opportunity to understand the various dimensions that affect service quality and consumers’ satisfaction.

As a conclusion on this literature review, for a hotel industry, a service-oriented one, the key to success is the consumer service or more precisely high service quality delivered in order to ensure customer satisfaction.

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