

Available online at www.sciencedirect.com

ScienceDirect

Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 221 (2016) 294 – 301

Procedia
Social and Behavioral Sciences

SIM 2015 / 13th International Symposium in Management

Measuring Service Quality in Tourism Industry

Mihail Aurel Țîțu^{a*}, Andreea Simina Răulea^a, Ștefan Țîțu^b^aLucian Blaga University of Sibiu, 10, Victoriei Bd, Sibiu, 550024, România^bUniversity of Medicine and Pharmacy "Iuliu Hațieganu" Cluj Napoca, 8 Victor Babeș Street, 400012, România

Abstract

The expansion of the service sector, the stronger competition resulting from globalization and deregulation, and the emergence of new information technologies have accelerated the shift toward a knowledge-based and innovation-driven economy. With the increasing role of tourism in global economy and the growing competition in the global tourism market, the importance of developing quality tourism products has been recognized by both the public and the private tourism sectors. In order to develop quality tourism, organizations need to know what their competitive advantage is and what capabilities they need to grow and maintain. The aim of this paper is to analyze the customer satisfaction in the tourism area in order to emphasize the need for better quality and innovative services.

© 2016 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Peer-review under responsibility of SIM 2015 / 13th International Symposium in Management

Keywords: tourism, quality, quality management, customer satisfaction, learning organization.

1. Tourism - an industry in continuing evolution

Tourism is the world's largest industry and makes a major contribution to the economies of most developed and developing countries because it is being used as a ubiquitous vehicle for economic development and diversification and an integral element of economic development policy at a local, regional and national level (Sharpley, Richard and Telfer & David J. 2002).

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: mihail.titu@ulbsibiu.ro

Over the past six decades, tourism has experienced continued expansion and diversification, becoming one of the largest and fastest-growing economic sectors in the world.

Quality service has become a serious issue in the hotel industry. This arises due to the fact that operators of the industry still find it difficult to understand what tourist needs “are” at a particular time.

Since tourist will make decision and taking an action based on their perceptions, there is urgent need for the organization or hotel industry to take an effort in comprehending and understanding tourist’s expectation in order to provide good quality services to tourist.

The aim of this paper is to explore the complex issue relating to the customer satisfaction when it comes to the service quality of tourism industry. In order to accomplish that, we developed a diagnostic study to identify existing problems in respect of all classes of processes. Performance evaluation of hotel services, through the proposed questionnaires in the research carried out present the advantage of taking into account a multitude of criteria and quantification there of depending on the relevance of these criteria for the companies surveyed.

Tourism was an important factor in developed economies starting with the middle of 19th century. Surely, nothing stays in place, and now tourism is a business or a globalised industry (Meethan, K. 2001). Tourism is nowadays, by its content and role, a distinct field of activity, one of the most important components of the economic and social life for a growing number of countries in the whole world. Receptive to the changes of the contemporary civilization, tourism evolved under their impact, its dynamics integrating to the general development process. At its turn, by the vast human and material potential used in its development, as well as by the beneficial effects over the interference fields, tourism is a stimulating factor of progress.

Regarding the specialized literature in the tourism domain, it was written much about the relationship between tourism and development, despite the increasing social and economic significance and the use of tourism as a development strategy in developing countries. Writings on tourism, which refer to development, they are most times written from the perspective of the impact of tourism on the environment in which it unfolds. This is surprising, given the fact that tourism remains an important area of economic policy for development in many regions and in many nations.

Tourism includes a wide variety of destinations and products, and implies many different interested parties from public and private sector, with highly decentralized competence areas, at local and regional level. Tourism is a strategic economic activity and its importance will probably increase in the next few years. Tourism has a great potential in what concerns the contribution to the accomplishment of several major objectives of the European Union, as the lasting development, economic growth, and human resources development, economic and social cohesion. The strategic approach of the process is to create conditions and to provide the basis of a lasting Romanian tourism, of high quality and competitiveness. The strategy for accomplishing this objective is based on a number of points, the most important being to follow an approach based on knowledge, to know how to better exploit the existing information, to obtain and develop the know-how, and to innovate by developing new processes.

2. Statistics and facts on the global tourism industry

Examining the facts and the stats, there are the obvious economic impacts in the areas of jobs and expenditures by tourists and tourism businesses, but there are also more subtle benefits that we want to communicate as well. In some circles, tourism gets a bad rap as some say it creates seasonal, low-paying jobs and while that may be true in some instances, expenditures by tourists and the tourism business community are critical to the overall economic health worldwide.

The travel and tourism industry is one of the world’s largest industries with a global economic contribution of almost seven trillion U.S. dollars in 2013. The direct economic impact of the industry, including accommodation, transportation, entertainment and attractions, was approximately 2.2 trillion U.S. dollars in 2013. (Fig. 1)

The global hotel industry generates approximately between 400 and 500 billion U.S. dollars in revenue each year, one third of that revenue is attributable to the United States. Some of the biggest hotel chains are the InterContinental Hotels Group, Marriott International, Hilton Worldwide, Accor, Starwood Hotels & Resorts, and the Wyndham Hotel Group.

Intrinsically linked with the travel and tourism industry, an industry which contributed seven trillion U.S. dollars to the global economy in 2013, the hotel industry is certainly a profitable one. Travelers who are on the road for

more than one day need a place to sleep and rest and there are various types of lodging across the world to accommodate for this.

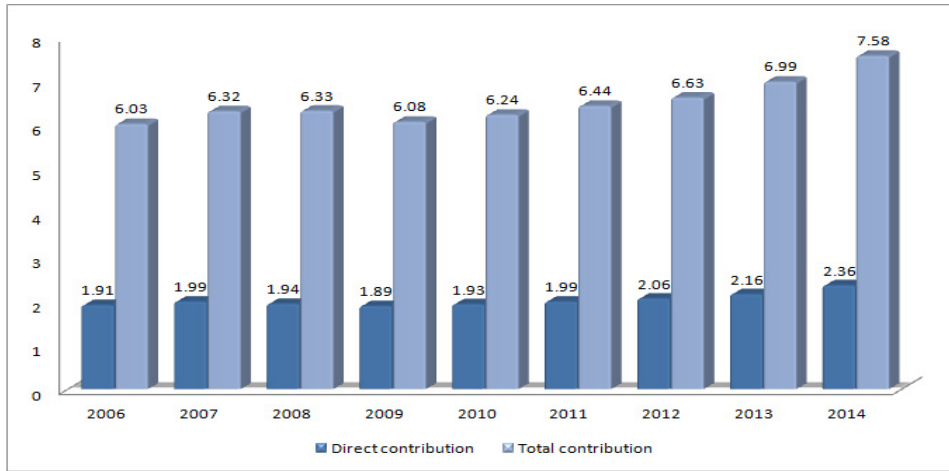


Fig. 1 Direct and total contribution of travel and tourism to the global economy from 2006 to 2014 (in trillion U.S. dollars)

Source: Statista 2015

<http://www.statista.com/statistics/233223/travel-and-tourism--total-economic-contribution-worldwide/>

A number of countries, such as France and the United States, are consistently popular tourism destinations, but other, less well-known countries (Namibia, Montenegro, Zambia, Angola) are quickly emerging in order to reap the economic benefits of the industry.

In 2013, global international tourism revenue reached approximately 1.16 trillion U.S. dollars, having almost doubled since 2005.

In 2014, the occupancy rate of hotels in all global regions had increased year-on-year for the past couple of years, suggesting more demand for the industry. Europe was the region with the highest occupancy rate in 2014 at 68.8 percent, closely followed by the Asia Pacific region at 68.6 percent. In the same year, the Middle East and Africa was the most expensive region for hotels with an average daily rate of 165.97 U.S. dollars. The Americas is generally the cheapest region each year (fig. 2).

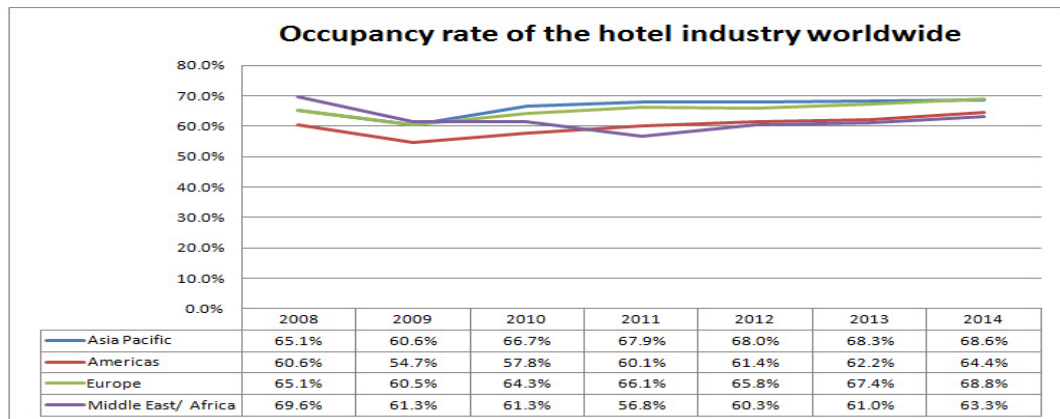


Fig. 2 Occupancy rate of the hotel industry worldwide from 2008 to 2014, by region

Source: Statista 2015

<http://www.statista.com/statistics/266741/occupancy-rate-of-hotels-worldwide-by-region/>

3. Quality management and competitive advantage in tourism industry

Quality management is a management system entailing the development of a number of practices for the management of organizations. The most common practices identified in the literature are leadership, people management, planning, information and analysis, process management, supplier management, focus on customers/stakeholders and design (Nair, A. 2006).

In the hotel industry, have been made analyses on the relationship between quality management and competitive advantage. The literature examines the implementation of quality management initiatives in hotels through theoretical and empirical studies. Among the empirical studies, both qualitative and quantitative, mention must be made of those analyzing the level of implementation of quality management in hotels, without establishing a relationship with performance and competitive and those which investigate the effects of quality management on the performance and competitive advantage of hotels. Qualitative and quantitative studies show that hotels may successfully adopt quality management practices, like many manufacturing firms. In the case of those studies showing positive results, it may be pointed out that such benefits are related to improved satisfaction among customers, employees and other interest groups, an improvement in operational results, improved efficiency, which in turn leads to an improved hotel image and differentiation from. Thus, as was the case with the general studies on quality management, some of these analyses show that quality management has positive effects on competitive advantage. This indicates that quality management may improve the internal functions of the hotel, which leads to increased productivity of workers and facilities, improved efficiency, and a reduction in errors and waste when providing services. In turn, it may also have positive results upon customer satisfaction, which may make it possible to increase sales and market share, reinforce guest loyalty, attract new guests, increase tourist satisfaction and improve the hotel's image. In this way, quality management may increase quality performance, and in turn, may improve the competitive advantage of hotel establishments (Jose F. Molina-Azorin, Juan Jos_e Tari, Jorge Pereira-Moliner, María D. Lopez-Gamero & Eva M. Pertusa-Ortega. 2015).

4. Analyzing customer satisfaction in tourism industry

Some countries that in the past were rarely visited, especially from the Central or Eastern Europe, among which Romania, are becoming more and more attractive, due to the economic transition and opening of the borders, which offer a huge potential for tourist development (Bedrule – Grigoruță, V., Corodeanu, D. T. 2007).

The modern society is increasingly oriented towards services, with many opinions saying that it is a society of services and tertiary sector is growing. The services sector dominates each sector having an important role in ensuring the use of labor.

Service excellence is the key issue for the improvement of the relationship between customers and suppliers but can be achieved only if the customer needs are known in detail. According to Badler services are an important element of business that must be improved in order to survive today and in the future (Badler, H. 2004). Quality and related services are standard requirements of today's customers, which in the future will be the decision factor for customers.

Increasing quality importance is determined mainly by increased competition, customer requirements and complexity of products and processes made in order to achieve them (Oprean, C., Țițu, M., Bucur, V. 2011).

To identify viable solutions to improve the quality of services provided by organizations in the hotel industry, we carried out a diagnostic study to identify existing problems in respect of all classes of processes of these organizations. Performance evaluation of hotel services, through the proposed questionnaires in the research carried out present the advantage of taking into account a multitude of criteria and quantification thereof depending on the relevance of these criteria for the companies surveyed.

For the implementation of the research has been used as an instrument of research in order to allow both the collection of relevant data and information and the processing thereof, in order to have a consistent and relevant basis to the analysis and conclusions.

For data collection we have developed two questionnaires, with a total of twenty-seven namely nineteen questions that subjects could respond in about twenty minutes. In developing the questionnaire we had made that the questions circumscribe to the specific objectives of the research and the main goal.

The population of interest for the study was made up of tourists who stayed in two hotels in the period between 20.06.2014 and 5.02.2015.

As regards the age of respondents, it is apparent that predominant tourists aged between 18 and 29 years, they maintained a percentage of 36,90%. As regards tourists aged between 30-45 years old it can be seen that they have roughly the same percentage and tourists aged between 45-60 years old and those over the age of 60 years represent a percentage in the inferiority of 7.54%, respectively 2.38% (figure 3).

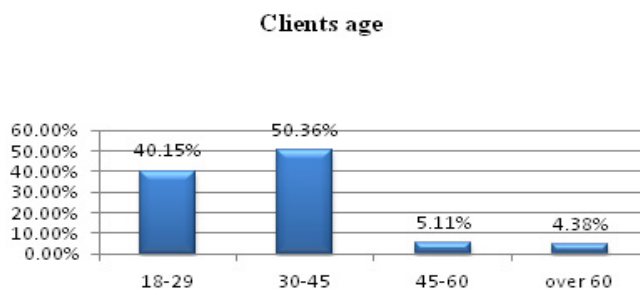


Fig. 3 Clients age

Income of the tourists housed in the two units analyzed, is predominant within the range 2000 to 4000 ron, respectively 62%, while tourists with income smaller than 1000 ron represents 9%, those with incomes ranging between 1000 and 2000 ron represents 16% while those with income greater than 4,000 ron represents only 13%.

To the question "what is the primary factor for you in making a decision related to the chosen hotel" 57% of the x hotel clients considers that the rate per room per night is the most important factor in making a decision regarding the choice of a hotel while 58% of the clients of hotel y considers comfort and quality of services the main factor in the justification of a decision regarding the choice of a hotel. At the same time, 33% of clients considered the

services provided the primary factor in choosing a hotel and 30 percent of hotel customers judges rate the primary factor which determines the choice of a hotel at the expense of another (figure 4).

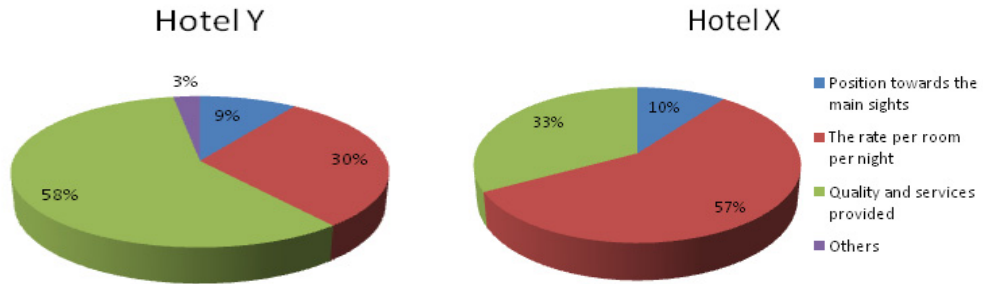


Fig. 4 Primary factor in making a decision on choosing a hotel

We believe that the price, the comfort and quality of services are important decision makers and managers of the two hotels would need to focus attention on these issues and should make considerable efforts to provide quality and comfort at appropriate rates.

As regards overall customer satisfaction is apparent that 63% of the clients of hotel x declared themselves satisfied by the hotel as a whole while only 38% of the clients of hotel y said the same thing. However, 37% of the x hotel's clients and 62% of y hotel's clients have declared themselves unsatisfied of the hotel, which means that they will not return and this can translate to losses over a period of time (figure 5).

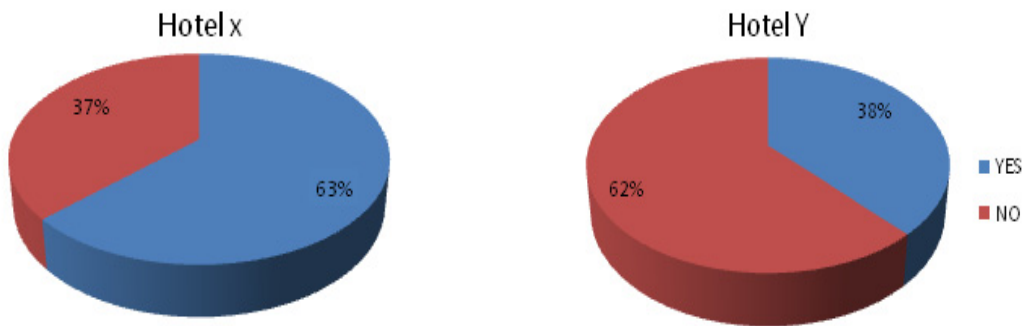


Fig. 5 Overall level of satisfaction

Taking into account the results of the research carried out, we conclude that the two hotels does not focus on stability, efficiency and on meeting the needs of clients although, as Peter Drucker said "the most important thing to remember about making returns is that the results do not appear amongst the sides of them. The result is represented by a satisfied customer " (Peter Drucker. 2006). We believe that since the majority of clients who responded to the two questionnaires have not been satisfied in very large extent.

As can be seen from the results of the questionnaires, both organizations need to be more careful with their customers since they declared themselves unsatisfied or satisfied in a small extent about the cleanliness issues of the hotel rooms, the equipment from the rooms, the diversity of services offered in the SPA and perhaps most importantly, many clients were satisfied in a very small extent of the personnel and the way they considered to carry out the duties and responsibilities.

We believe that the organizations should focus their attention to improving the conditions of accommodation since there were very many customers unhappy with the fact that many irregularities were found in the hotel and restaurant, at the level of equipment, cleanliness and the range of services provided. Also, there was a considerable percentage of customers unsatisfied with the range of the two organizations in relation to the quality offered, a considerable percentage of subjects declaring that their expectations have not been met.

According to the opinions expressed, we consider that the information system of the employees with respect to the vision should be improved, policies, strategies and objectives of the medium and long term, but also as regards the characteristics of the clients of the hotel because it is one of the major problems of the employees that affects the customers.

Also, we consider it appropriate to develop a program of continuing education of staff and promote teamwork as well as the introduction of a rating system for each employee, in conjunction with the satisfaction of its clients so as to bring about awareness of employees with regard to their responsibility in organization in which customer needs are the focus and the main goal. The culture of the organization should be focused to the customer. The small improvements applied to key processes will generate the major multiplication of the company's profit while constituting a secure way to obtain the clients' loyalty/fidelity (Oprean, C., Titu, M. 2008). The way in which requirements are established, the needs, expectations, preferences of customers and markets, how relations with customers are key factors that lead to attracting, satisfying, and finally to customer retention. The client should remain the main element of all the activities, organizations and client satisfaction should be the primary objective of the organization.

Today's clients evaluate organizations from all points of view, not just in terms of product or service supplied. They reflect a lot before making a purchasing decision, pursuing the ads, read articles, share experiences with friends and all this data will form an image before they buy a product or service. This image may correspond to reality or not but it's the only thing that could influence the decisions of potential client. Therefore, we believe that organizations should focus to a greater extent on their image and how are perceived by customers. Also, should be taken into consideration that organizations operate in a increasingly uncertain environment where changes are happening rapidly (Țițu, M., Oprean, C. 2007).

Customer satisfaction, gaining a privileged position in the market through quality products and services, allow obtaining favorable economic and financial results (Țițu, M., Oprean, C., Boroșiu, Al. 2011) so, managers have to focus on this aspects.

5. Conclusions

Quality issues have never been alien to tourism. In fact, quality tourism has become one of the future global tourism policy issues in the light of the rapid growth of the tourism industry, which is to become one of the major economic sectors by the year 2000 and beyond. Concern with quality tourism has been shown by various private organizations at all levels: international, national, regional and entrepreneurial. However, the increasing number of dissatisfied tourists demonstrates that the recent initiatives aimed at quality improvement in tourism have not been effective. This leads to a question of the reasons for current quality problems in tourism, and possible ways of quality enhancement in tourism.

This paper has attained its objective but also it leads to further research that implies collaboration between managers that activates in tourism industry and also, a further research could be conducted in order to identify training programs, for the employees of tourism industry, that could lead to improvement of service quality.

Nevertheless, after analyzing customer satisfaction in tourism industry the general conclusion is that in this area a lot of improvements can be done and starting from the aspects mentioned in this article a lot more can be improved.

A limitation of this study was that information was provided by a selected group of diversity customers. This is potentially problematic because clients perceive quality related issues in different ways and because of that additional research in this field is necessary.

Therefore, in order to enhance customer satisfaction, tourism companies have to establish effective relationships with their stakeholders, and especially with their suppliers, defined as those companies operating within the external environment that are responsible for the provision of other components of the total tourism product. However, it's

hardly possible for any tourism company to achieve this goal due to the existence of the tourism quality control gap. The tourism quality control gap relates to the discrepancy between the need for quality control at every stage of the total tourism product delivery and the feasibility of the individual tourism company of exerting actual control over this process. The existence of this gap accounts for an inability of individual tourism companies to offer the total quality tourism product that the customer expects at the beginning of the tourist purchase – consumption process. The tourism quality control gap is also responsible for the increasing number of tourists dissatisfied with their total tourism experience.

From our point of view, managers who work in the hotel sector should pay particular attention to the tangible facilities, hotel design, maintenance of the setting and surroundings, but should be especially focused on the personnel who contribute to the creation of quality services.

What clients experience in the hotel establishments represent only a part of a process that would have improved steadily since the Romanian tourism should concern themselves primarily with the accessibility of "hidden treasures" in terms of information, the promotion of transport solutions and at the same time the improvement of services and facilities for extensive categories of tourists. In the same context, we believe that the attitude towards tourists and lack of infrastructure make Romania a country with potential but without attractiveness to tourists.

We consider that hotel industry should improve communications and relations between management and staff and there is need to focus their efforts on enhancing the intangible aspects of service delivery, such as, interaction between staff and tourist also, as service providers should focus especially on those factors perceived quality that are most important to tourist. Another important thing is that the hotel industry most focus on the level of comfort and convenient offered to tourist, including the flexibility of check-in and check-out times.

To conclude, we consider that service quality has become a crucial aspect in the hotel industry which most tourist desire to be enhance in order to create good image to the industry.

References

- Sharpley, Richard and Telfer, David J. (2002). *Tourism and development* (pp. 221). Channel View Publications.
- Meethan, K. (2001). *Tourism in global society*, Place, Culture, Consumption, New York: Palgrave.
- Nair, A. (2006). *Meta-analysis of the relationship between quality management practices and firm performance-implications for quality management theory development* (pp. 948-975). *Journal of Operations Management*, 24.
- Jose F. Molina-Azorin, Juan Jos_e Tari, Jorge Pereira-Moliner, María D. L_opez-Gamero, Eva M. Pertusa-Ortega. (2015). *The effects of quality and environmental management on competitive advantage: A mixed methods study in the hotel industry* (pp. 43). *Tourism Management* 50, 41-54.
- Bedrule – Grigoruță, V., Corodeanu, D. T. (2007). *Sustainable Tourism in Romania: Tendencies, Opportunities and Threats*. Available at: http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=982329.
- Badler, H. (2004). *Quality Customer Care*, Wandsbeck, South Africa, Reach Publishers.
- Oprean, C., Țîțu, M., Bucur, V. (2011). *Managementul global al organizației bazate pe cunoștințe* (pp.411) Editura AGIR, București.
- Peter Drucker. (2006). *Despre profesia de manager* (pp. 165) Editura Meteor Press.
- Oprean, C., Titu, M. (2008). *Managementul calității în economia și organizația bazate pe cunoștințe*, Editura Agir, București, România.
- Țîțu, M., Oprean, C. (2007). *Managementul strategic* (pp. 11) Editura Universității din Pitești, ISBN 978-973-690-647-3, Pitești.
- Țîțu, M., Oprean, C., Boroiu, Al. (2011). *Cercetarea experimentală aplicată în creșterea calității produselor și serviciilor*, Editura AGIR, ISBN 978-973-720-362-5, București.