

Measuring the quality of services in hotel business. Case study: The southern Albanian Region.

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Abstract

The tourism industry is an industry of service delivery and every service is offered by people to people. Hotels face increasing competition from other hospitality units. This increased competition has forced hotels to find ways to keep current customers and attract competitive customers. It is very important for hotels to know how to measure these consumer outlook constructions in order to better understand their needs and so satisfy them. Quality of service is considered very important because it leads to higher customer satisfaction, profitability, cost reduction, customer loyalty and keeping it. The aim of this work is to investigate how SERVQUAL model applied in hotels in southern Albania, thus describe how hotel customers perceive the quality of services and how satisfied they were with the quality of services offered in these hotels.

Thirty hotels from the Saranda region, the Ksamil region and Himara region served as subjects in our study to investigate the quality of services provided. The survey was conducted in the period May 2016 - September 2017. Questionnaires were distributed by hotel customers. To measure the quality of services provided, we use the SERVQUAL model, which is a strategic marketing tool. Based on the results of this research, the OSQ gap was positive. This shows that the quality of the services offered at the hotels of the South Region in Albania is high, so the perceptions of the clients are greater than their expectations.

Keywords: Tourism, SERVQUAL, Service quality, Customer satisfaction.

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Introduction

For Albania, the tourism industry is the most important industry, it is a major driver of the development of the national economy. Analyzing the total contribution of tourism to GDP and employment for 2015, which is respectively 21.1% of GDP and 19.3% of employment in Albania, we note that tourism activity is an important factor in Albania's economic development. (Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2012, Albania) Also the number of tourists coming to Albania in 2016 compared to 2010 increased by 96%, compared to 2005 and 2000, respectively 6 and 15 times (INSTAT 2017).

The tourism industry is an industry that provides services. These services are provided by employees to customers, so the human factor is decisive in this industry. The hotels are constantly faced with increasing competition from other hotels. To remain competitive, hotels must understand that the satisfaction of the customers and the quality of the services offered by them are very important. This competition has forced hotels to find ways to increase the quality of services provided so as to keep current customers but also attract competitive customers. So it is important for hotels to know how to measure their customers' feedback so they can better understand what needs they have and thus meet their needs in the best possible way. Thus, the evaluation of the offered services is subjective and is mainly determined by the clients.

Literature Review

Many researchers have used the SERVQUAL model to assess the quality of service at the hotel, in the hospitality industry, where: Anwar, Sh and Ravichandran, P. (2012) in the city of Chennai, Stefano, N.M. et al. (2015) in Santa Catarina, Brazil, while Marković, S, and Raspor, S. (2010) in 15 hotels in Riviera Opatija (Croatia).

The study of Saleh, F. and Ryan, C. (2006) identified the existence of gaps between customer expectations and the perception of the services provided. An intermediary factor that determines the quality of service is staff responsibility. (Sarangarajan, V. and Tamilenthir, S. 2012)

For Hai-Yan and Baum (2006), the lack of qualified personnel affects the quality of service and the reduction of tourist demand in the future.

Morar, D. and Plaiaş, I. (2014) explore new directions regarding the quality of service and also the definition of quality dimensions as expected by consumers. Authors point out the existing differences between the importance of different dimensions in defining the quality of service.

Murasiranwa, E.T. et al. (2010) shows shortcomings as a lack of quality policy, non-implementation of action plans and unilateral reward schemes. The results in this study suggest that service and quality are sacrificed on the altar of profits as top managers seem hoping for quality but rewarding performance financial.

Characteristics and elements of general hotel product.

The hotel product is called the sum of the goods and services that a hotel offers. The services are intangible and can not be transferred to the customer's ownership. The quality of services is characterized by subjectivity, because each customer receives a different benefit from their consumption. The quality of many hotel services entirely stems from employee behavior, especially when the service as a product is consumed when it is produced.

The hotel size is determined by the amount of available hotel to hotel product economic efficiency and determines the quality of services offered by the hotel. It should be noted that the hotel product is available in a particular country, which can not be changed and the consumption of the service requires the client to be physically present in the country.

The hotel product is sensitive due to the great variety of its composition and presents the following peculiarities:

- It is multiforme and complex. So it is, a product made up of different products that are different from each other. These products are offered at different times, in different countries and from different people.
- Consumed for several days and customer feedback about the overall quality is completed after leaving the hotel.
- Not stored, transferred and not distributed in different markets, but forces the customer to transfer it to the destination where the hotel was built.

Hotel product is dependent and from many external factors such as atmospheric conditions, terrorist attacks or other factors that negatively affect the quality of the product. Expected quality of services provided has a direct relationship with the hotel product cost.

The hotel, due to the subjective assessment of the product, may extend its offer by using additional services in order to improve the expected quality.

The concept of service quality and its organization

In service literature, the quality of service is usually determined based on customer assessment. Parasuraman et al. (1985) defined the quality of service as, "a measure of how well the level of services provided matches the expectations of consumers." By providing quality services, it means confirming customer expectations on a sustainable basis. If what is perceived is under way, the customer judges this low quality service and if what is perceived exceeds the reception then the customer sees this high quality service.

Parasuraman et al. (1988) defined the quality of service perceived as "a global judgment or attitude related to service superiority". Thus, the author defines the expectations as the expectations of customers for the service to be provided, while the client's perception of performance is what he experiences.

For Parasuraman et al, (1985) elements of a service such as indivisibility, inviolability, heterogeneity and breakdown, are critical determinants that affect the quality of service perceived by a customer. As a result of these features, the client finds it difficult to understand the nature of the service to be received, before buying the service. This requires the service provider to determine the level of service inviolability and try to include in the service the tangible elements on the menu to help the client conceptually conceptualize his expectations.

These service elements make it difficult to measure the quality of service because it deals with expectations and perceptions of consumers that it is difficult to determine because of the complexity of human behavior.

Zeithaml (1988) described the quality of service as "judgment of the customer about the perfection or superiority of the product".

Kotler and Armstrong (1996) defined the quality of service as "the set of features of a product or service that carry its ability to meet stated or implied needs."

Among the quality of service and customer satisfaction, there is a strong link, which emphasizes the importance of customer satisfaction when defining the quality (Wicks and Roethlein, 2009).

Therefore, any type of business can be categorized as of a high or low quality and this depends on how well it serves its customers. Thus, a high quality product should meet the needs and expectations of customers with the most favorable value offered for the price it pays.

Obviously, to achieve a high quality in a service, it must meet:

- Customer needs and expectations,
- the most favourable link between the price paid by the customer and the offered value,
- the right time and place required,
- the life cycle during its use.

Measuring of customer satisfaction. Models SERVQUAL.

The role of service quality in the success of a hotel business can not be denied. It is vital for hotel managers to understand exactly what their customers want. The determination of customer expectations, the quality of service quality, and the importance of customer service for every segment of the tourism industry or hotels would help managers improve service quality.

Modern businesses, regardless of industry and the markets in which they operate and offer their services, should:

- Measure the quality of their services,
- To better control or evaluate the perception of their clients regarding the quality of services provided to them.

One of the most popular and most used models of quality assurance companies is the SERVQUAL model. The model identifies the dimensions of service quality, proposes a scale for measuring service quality (SERVQUAL) and suggests the possible causes of service quality issues. SERVQUAL is a multidimensional research tool, a strategic marketing tool used to measure service quality as the difference between performance expected by consumers and

performance achieved through five dimensions that are believed to represent the quality of service:

- Reliability - Ability to perform the promised service with certainty and accuracy.
- Security - Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey confidence.
- Tangibles- The appearance of physical objects, equipment, personnel and communication materials.
- Sensitivity - Provide care, individual attention to the client.
- Accountability - The will to help customers and provide quick services.

The service quality model is built on the expectation paradigm, which implies that customers perceive quality, how well a offered service meets their expectations for that service. Thus, the quality of service can be conceived as a simple equation:

$SQ = P - E$ where;

- SQ- is the quality of service
- P- is the individual's perception of service delivery
- E - is the expectation of the individual for a particular service

When customer expectations are greater than their perceptions of service received, the quality of service is considered low. When customer perceptions exceed its expectations, then the quality of service is high.

Encoding of questionnaires

SERVQUAL dimensions are the main variables used in this study, so I encode these dimensions.

OSQ- Overall service quality = $(TA + RE + RS + AS + EM) / 5$

Tangible (TA) = $(TA1 + TA2 + TA3 + TA4) / 4$

TA1 = Do decoration and aesthetics of the main part of the hotel and the surrounding area, meet your expectations?

TA2 = Does employees' outward appearance please you?

TA3 = Do employees have their name and their profession written in their labels clearly?

TA4 = Uniformity, outward appearance and overall staff behavior are professionalism.

Reliability (RE) = (RE1+RE2+RE3+RE4+RE5)/5

RE1 = Does the employee fulfill his service within the specified time?

RE2 = Do you think that employees perform their duties (each one from their position)?

RE3 = Services offered at the hotel are perfect from the beginning.

RE4 = Do the employees have the necessary training to provide the right services?

RE5 = Do the services offered at this hotel correspond to those advertised?

Responsiveness (RS) = (RS1+RS2+RS3+RS4)/4

RS1 = Are employees ready to give immediate solution to your every problem?

RS2 = Do employees provide the right information you need without having to ask?

RS3 = Are employees willing to help customers solve their problems at their own initiative?

RS4 = Can employees answer customer questions instantly?

Assurance (AS) = (AS1+AS2+AS3+AS4)/4

AS1 = Does the employee's service make you feel confident and secure?

AS2 = Are employees adequately equipped with the professional information they need?

AS3 = Do employees have good and sleek behavior?

AS4 = Do you trust the information of employees for your entertainment?

Empathy (EM) = (EM1+EM2+EM3+EM4+EM5)/5

EM1 = This hotel analyzes your problems from the customer's point of view.

EM2 = When clients complain or feel dissatisfied, do employees solve your problems with patience?

EM3 = Do employees take into account the specific needs of each client and care for each client individually?

EM4 = Do employees respect the rights of clients?

EM5 = Can employees understand the needs and desires of clients?

Tabela 1: OSQ according to questionnaires.

Dimension	Statement	Expectation Score	Perception Score	Gap Score
Tangible (TA)		4.113	3.989	- 0.124
	TA1	4.260	4.515	+0.255
	TA2	4.100	4.205	+0.105
	TA3	4.045	3.310	-0.735
	TA4	4.045	3.925	-0.120
Reliability(RE)		3.562	3.659	+ 0.197
	RE1	3.505	4.150	+0.645
	RE2	3.610	4.175	+0.565
	RE3	3.530	3.205	-0.325
	RE4	3.570	3.265	-0.305
	RE5	3.595	3.500	-0.095
Responsiveness(RS)		4.071	4.080	+ 0.009
	RS1	4.195	4.335	+0.140

	RS2	4.270	4.265	-0.005
	RS3	3.920	4.040	+0.120
	RS4	3.900	3.680	-0.220
Assurance(AS)		3.947	4.413	+0.466
	AS1	3.685	4.370	+0.685
	AS2	3.780	4.380	+0.600
	AS3	3.980	4.550	+0.570
	AS4	4.345	4.350	+0,005
Empathy(EM)		4.373	4.604	+0.231
	EM1	4.325	4.445	+0.120
	EM2	4.480	4.605	+0.125
	EM3	4.385	4.530	+0.145
	EM4	4.335	4.695	+0.360
	EM5	4.340	4.745	+0.405
OSQ		4.013	4.149	+0.136

Expectations and perceptions are measured using the 5-point liqueur scale with which the highest numbers indicate a higher level of expectation or perception. The OSQ gap resulted positive in our study. This indicates that the quality of the services offered to South Albania hotels in Albania is high, so the perceptions of the clients are higher than their expectations. The negative result of the channel is: TA3, TA4, RE3, RE4, RS2, RS4.

These results are explained by the fact that the hotels in Saranda, Ksamil and Himara region are new and with modern technology, they have all the conditions. In spite of the fact that in our region there are high and high schools for tourism, hotel managers do not pay much attention to

the training of their staff. This is because the season is too short and they see training for their employees as an additional expense.

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