

APPLIED INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION SOFTWARE IN ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY REVIEWS OF HOTEL SERVICES FROM ROMANIA

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Abstract: *Services represent the industry branch with the highest rate of growth in the world, and tourism has the highest increase in the demand. Service quality is the result of comparing the various customer expectations expressed after the actual delivery of similar services from different service providers. Information and communication software in tourism, invites the customers to express their complaints inside the management sector of the offering service unit. The paper focuses on measures that effectively regain the customer trust and brand loyalty in hotel services aided by ICT.*

Keywords: *applied software in tourism, customer complaints, online customer feedback, simulation of services, quality management.*

1. Introduction in the Quality Concepts in Tourism Services

Quality as a concept is in many ways an abstract and often fluctuating concept that has many influences based on the formation background of the person analyzing it. Products quality was for many years a concern especially in the goods area and it is even more cumbersome in the services area [2]. There are many definitions that try to define quality but most of them are abstract and difficult to implement on a practical situation that could provide a monitoring value. Juran J.M. defines the quality by the level of utility or the usefulness degree of a product [6] while Crosby Ph. expresses a quality concept by a degree of conformance to the customer's requirements [3].

Thus, quality is characterized by the degree the service is as close as possible to the needs of the customer [6]. Each client has individual expectations from the tourist service he contracts which can be satisfied by different components of the service quality. In order to satisfy the needs of the client it is important to have a strong relation between quality and customer since in the end the customer decides and declares what is the quality [8]. This relation is only achievable by implementing software that enhances the communication between the client and the company by making the tourist to express his needs and unfulfilled expectations, so that corrective actions could be taken to improve quality [7].

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2. Opportunities to Improve the Quality of Tourist Services

Quality in hotel services is different from one unit to the other, from a region to another and from country to country. The assessment mark of each hotel (number of stars a hotel has) is usually given based on the variety of services offered (technical factors) but the performance, hospitality culture and professionalism degree of the employees (hospitality factors), will strongly affect the perception of quality by the customer.

The cumulus of these factors will characterize the quality of the tourist service offered by a hotel unit and a good balance of these factors can make a huge difference in the perception of the quality by the client. Technical factors are expressed by the number of services a client can choose during his travel experience, but hospitality factors that depend on employees approach to the demands of the client can bring a positive or a negative impact even if a certain service was available or not.

Customer complaints or reviews are the main tools and opportunities that a company has in order to address quality problems of the services offered. By welcoming client complaints to the company the quality managers can detect problems unknown to them or can enhance the service by adding new attributes requested by the clients. The lack of a complaints or a review channel with the client is a major deficiency in the quality management [1].

Most of the clients avoid to make complaints or reviews due to a cultural or educational formation or because they are not encouraged by the hotel unit to express their complaints or reviews by simplified and attractive methods to do this. Software tools that facilitate the gathering of the reviews of services

experienced are a solution that makes communication and evaluation much more simple and dynamic [4].

About 80% of the complaints or reviews made by customers remain unaddressed because of large time delays between the review and the management reaction to it. Companies that simplify and encourage complaints from their customers will be able to diversify and grow their tourism business by acknowledging the clients demands in quality.

Clients that will not complain to the company will do reviews or complaints elsewhere in the community and doing so will build up a negative perception on the services offered by that company. A fast response to the reviews of the clients is one loyalty tools often used with success by companies with clients that initial were discontent and complained directly to the company.

2.1. Quality Reviews Methods to Expand and Promote a Tourist Service

Discontented clients that do not make complaints are a large number and could provide a source of crucial information that could make a service successful and desirable by correcting the problems encountered by the clients. The lack of complaints signals the fact that a certain company either reached a level of utopia quality or the few reviews it receives are just a small fraction of the complaints due to the lack of a working communication channel with the clients.

The main obstacle in making reviews is the willingness of the clients to spend time in the process of expressing their complaints in the procedures of the company. It is estimated that the real number of complaints from the clients is obtained by multiplying by 50 the number of reviews received [9]. Another way to realize the real situation of customer reviews is to analyze the situation of

complaints with other companies that offer similar services on the market and compare their situation to the number of clients that used the services of company.

It is important to make the employee aware of the importance that the client's reviews are productive and in compliance with the company quality strategy [5].

One method of obtaining customer reviews is to request them to give their review inside a online platform of communication that can record a conversation or receive written text messages. Other ways to request reviews are travel blogs or by using their personal data and upon prior acceptance of the client to use that data, the company calls them directly on the phone or sends e-mails or letters with forms to be filled and sent to the company. These methods only work when these requests are encouraged by various gifts or discounts for future services.

Using the social interaction applications and platforms will make the clients more open for involving in sharing their experience with the services provided and will become a usual habit for them. Analyzing the reviews will help the management team to detect flaws in the policy of the company that could potentially chase away a large number of prospective clients in the near or medium future. The role of the customer relations department is to centralize the reviews and act accordingly to avoid losing the services offered by not taking in account the changes in customer expectations from the offers on the market [5].

3. Overview of the Accommodation Quality in 4 Stars Hotels from Romania

An analysis of the customer reviews from the dedicated web sites that realize travel and accommodation reviews of tourist that express their perception of the service quality provided by 4 star hotels

from Romania.

The aim of this analysis is to develop an image of the national quality stage concerning the hotel services of similar hotels from different regions and how it is impacted by the customer experiences.

The analysis made was conducted at national level based on customer complaints and aimed to present and analyze 4 star hotels.

Based on the comments given in the negative reviews plots were developed by using the customer rating points according to perception hotel personnel, accommodation, kitchen and cuisine, natural background, entertainment and relaxation. Customers also gave an average mark of overall experience perception which was used in the study and plotted as a graph for comparison with other hotels.

4. Results and Discussions

Using the data from the web-based software designed to collect customer complaints from 4 star hotels from Romania an overall mark was established based on the 6 areas of services that the customers came in contact with: hotel personnel, accommodation, kitchen and cuisine, natural background, entertainment and relaxation.

A total number of 43 hotels were analyzed from all 4 regions of Romania and the marks given by the customers were used to determine the average mark of the hotels from Romania.

Negative feedback with complaints posted by tourist on the web platform were selected for the same year studied, and a situation for the year 2010 was determined for each area of hotel services. In Figure 1 the situation of the 43 hotels with 4 star rating from Romania was plotted and represented.

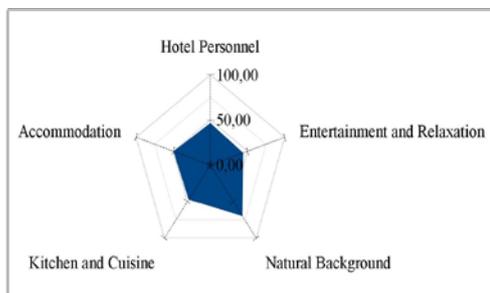


Fig. 1. Average rating scores for 4 star hotel services analyzed for 2010 based on customer complaints

As it can be seen from Figure 1, one of the strongest points of hotels in Romania is the natural surroundings that overpasses the scores of other areas of services. The natural environment of the hotel position favors it on delights the tourist in opposition with the entertainment area which scores the lowest in tourist complaints.

5. Conclusions

Romania is a country that offers a diverse natural environment with places that delights tourists. The most tourists choose a hotel firstly by location and attractiveness of the natural surroundings.

Location is important but is not the only criteria that develop the tourist expectation and it is combined with ratings from other clients of the hotel, marketing and communication of the hotel staff, personal needs and past experiences [5].

In Romania the most complaints of discontented tourist are mainly on hotel personnel with low experience, lack of hospitality and improper room tidiness and poor service of breakfast with a low variety. These aspects are aggravated by the lack of diverse entertainment activities and relaxation programs.

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