

Measures to improve the quality of hotel services

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Abstract: *This article aims to exemplify how, starting from the evaluation of customer satisfaction on service quality, the hotel units' management, can apply different measures and strategies to improve it. To achieve the target, a marketing research survey is conducted based on a sample of 120 customers of Hotel „Kronwell” at the end of 2013. After analysing customer' responses a series of measures have been taken to improve the quality of services offered by this hotel, then at the end of 2015 a new research was achieved, based on the same questionnaire. The results of this research highlight the increasing of customer satisfaction as a result of improving the quality of hotel services, supported by growth in net profit, turnover and decrease of employees' number.*

Key-words: *quality, hotel services, customer satisfaction, marketing research*

1. Introduction

The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford, 1950) - defines tourism as „Theory and Practice of field trips; being a pleasure trip” and the tourist „The one who makes a tour or more rounds, especially one who does this for recreation; one who travels for pleasure or for cultural reasons, visiting different places for their interesting targets for landscape or others like.”

Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language proposes the following definition: „Service activity that deals with organizing and carrying out recreational and leisure travelers or for other purposes” (DEX online).

The tourism as a business, capitalizes the output of both branches of the material production and the services sector. The tourism industry has a great variety of activities and sectors of the economy whose primary function is to meet the tourists' needs through tourist services offered (Witt, St. et al. 1995, p. 24).

The travel service aims to provide the conditions to restore working capacity, at the same time with the fun and educational spending of free time. Following the completion of tourist consumption, individuals must acquire extra knowledge, thus increasing the quality of life. Therefore the organizers of tourism have to diversify

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and increase the attractiveness of traditional leisure tourism events, considering that tourism was turned into a mass phenomenon, and the frequency of leisure outside the permanent residence has increased.

World Tourism Organization understands that tourism quality as „The result of a process that involves meeting all the needs, demands and legitimate expectations of the consumers in terms of product and service at an acceptable price, in compliance with the contractual terms of a mutual agreement, and adjacent determinations of the quality that are security and protection, hygiene, accessibility, transparency, authenticity and harmonization of tourism activity with the human and natural environment” (WTO Support Committee for Quality 2003). It can be mentioned that the quality in the tourism service industry is the main pawn that serves to differentiate one hotel to another, the quality of service delivery being the most important element in this equation. This is appreciated after customer experience based on both satisfaction and perceived value. Customer satisfaction is a direct result of the quality. Because services and their value are difficult to assess, companies in the tourism industry must know that customer perceptions can be anticipated and measured through specialized questionnaires.

Clients want to have confidence in the company's ability to provide the required quality and to maintain this quality (Neacşu, 2015). The quality of products or services is an objective of the firm's market strategies, and a way of action throughout the design, technological readiness, operating production and service provide, control inspections, analysis, testing, up to product distribution. Using this strategy, the company's management aims to: meet the needs of beneficiaries; determining the level of quality in relation to competition; to integrate the quality in the company's mission and objectives etc.

The choice of the strategic alternative in order to maintain sales volume depends on the position that the company holds in the market, each aiming in fact to get a placement as advantageous as possible to their competitors (Bărbulescu, 2016).

2. Hotel Kronwell description

To highlight the economic environment where Kronwell hotel operates, will be presented some statistics about the evolution of tourism in Braşov County, in the period 2010-2014 (Table 1).

Braşov County	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Accommodation capacity in operation (thousand places-days)	5341,6	6041,2	7436,0	8916,5	8919,9
Arrivals (thousand tourists)	510,2	642,8	737,8	835,0	862,05
Overnights (thousand)	1078,3	1329,8	1486,5	1754,3	1774,8
Indices of net use of capacity in operation (%)	20,2	22,0	20,0	19,5	19,9

Source: INSSE Brasov

Table 1. *The evolution of tourism in Braşov County in the period 2010-2014*

From the table 1 it can be seen that both the number of arrivals and overnight stays and accommodation capacity in operation in Braşov County, increased considerably. Compared with 2010, the number of arrivals increased from 510.2 to 862.05, i.e. more than 300 000 arrivals, the number of overnights increased by more than 700 000 in the last four years, from 1078.3 to 1774 8. Taking into account the indices of net capacity in operation use, there is an increase by 0.4% in 2014 compared to 2013, but not compared to 2010. The reason of this development is the increasing number of hotel establishments in Braşov County in this period. Despite this, there is a slight rise in 2014.

Kronwell Hotel is a 4 star hotel, which was opened in February 2013. The hotel offers a stylish à la carte restaurant, accommodation with modern facilities and free wireless internet. With the opening of the hotel was inaugurated Belaqua Spa & Health Center.

The hotel has a capacity of 81 rooms, of which 62 business rooms, 6 executive rooms, 12 lifestyle rooms and a Lifestyle suite. All units are equipped with telephone, radio, satellite TV, cable TV, flat screen TV, safe, desk, ironing facilities, seating area, hair dryer, bathrobe, toilet articles, Slippers, minibar, Wake Up service and the air conditioning.

The Cigar bar located on the ground floor, offers to the customers a wide range of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, alcoholic and non-alcoholic cocktails and a selection of cigars. The bar offers about 50 seats and it is perfect for refined travelers in search of privacy and special private events.

The Adagio restaurant, located on the third floor of the hotel Kronwell is open to both hotel guests for breakfast and for various events. The restaurant provides customers a menu à la carte. It is open from 7:00 to 10:00 for breakfast.

The Couchette Traveller's Bistro restaurant is defined by simplicity and refinement in each occurrence, and when it comes to dining, Couchette Traveller's Bistro has its own style inviting guests to enjoy healthy food and a varied menu. Italian and French cuisine are creatively combined with artistic touches of Asian cuisine as one of the most exclusive restaurants in Brasov.

Belaqua Active Wellness is considered the most advanced gym in Romania, due to the programs and facilities available to customers: cardio fitness, aerobics

studio, modular studio realryder, indoor cycling, powerplate studio etc. In addition, the gym is equipped with the latest equipment and a complete team of highly experienced trainers, mostly specialized abroad.

Belaqva Beauty Elements is a unique project in Brasov, Belaqva Spa representing the perfect getaway from everyday life. Belaqva spa has the Collarium solarium, the most modern tanning method, combining collagen with UV light. Another reason Belaqva Spa is famous in Brasov, is because they were the first to introduce the Voya product line and Aromatherapy Associates on Romanian market. Belaqva Thermarium area has a pool, Finnish sauna, wet sauna, salt cabin Thalasso, Frigidarium ice-cave, Scottish shower, emotional shower, relaxation area.

Being a business hotel, it features conference rooms equipped with audio and video high generation with a capacity of 1,600 people, with seats specially adapted to meet all requirements.

The hotel also has three rooms for events and ceremonies. The Ceremonies Kronwell room, located on the second floor, has a capacity of 550 people, the largest hall for organizing weddings, various anniversaries or presentations. The second room is called Carnegie Hall, it is located on the third floor of the hotel and has a capacity of 150 people. The third is called Banqueting hall event room and has a capacity of 150 persons, and it is located on the second floor of the hotel.

For the children, the hotel arranged Kronwell Happy Shark, a specially designed playground for children, with interactive games, all under the supervision of qualified personnel.

Because it is the first business & lifestyle hotel in Brasov, customers are majority businessmen traveling for work, including participation in various meeting sites or events, trips, corporate meetings, etc. Among business clients are included also the practitioners of liberal professions (sales agents, sales representatives, employers, business women traveling unaccompanied, business meeting participants, including delegates). Thus, the businessmen represent approximately 70% of the Kronwell hotel's clients, including both Romanian and foreigners citizens. Besides businessmen, the hotel attracts many tourists, traveling for the purpose of relaxing and visiting the city and its surroundings.

The hotel's Kronwell activity is marked by the presence on the market of several competing hotels. The main competitors are:

- Aro Palace Hotel - 5 stars - With a history of over 70 years, was inaugurated in 1939, it is the only 5-star hotel in Brasov. In terms of location holds a privileged position being located in the historic city center. The hotel has 312 rooms.
- Ambient Hotel - 4 stars - It is ideally located in the city center, just minutes from the historical monuments, offering a fabulous view of the entire city. The Ambient Hotel is dedicated to tourist sophisticated style. The hotel has 15 rooms.

- Ramada Hotel - 4 stars - Located at the entrance to Brasov, close to the commercial area, it is the first and only hotel belonging to an international hotel chain that excels in quality and professionalism of the services offered.

3. Measures to improve the quality of services offered by the hotel Kronwell

To assess the customer satisfaction and identify any of their discontent at the end of 2013 it was conducted a quantitative market research, among them.

The main method for obtaining primary data survey was based on questionnaires applied to a sample of 120 customers.

The general hypotheses of the research were:

- 1 The decision-making process, service and product quality is the most important aspect taken into account by potential tourists
- 2 Most tourists choose accommodation according to the price charged or services offered.
- 3 The tourists considered as services of better quality at 4 and 5 star hotels as against one, 2 or 3stars hotels.
- 4 Most tourists tend to return to the accommodation, where service and product quality met their expectations.

The research objectives

1. To identify the factors that influence the choice of the hotel, in terms of offered products and services.
- 2.To determine the role of hotel product and service quality in decision making.
3. To identify the customer satisfaction.
4. To identify why tourists chose to stay in that hotel.
5. To identify customer dissatisfaction.

After analysing the answers to the important questions, the following conclusions resulted:

- 31% of interviewees stated that in the choosing process of the hotel, service and product quality is the main factor. On the other hand, only 11% of people interviewed considers quality as not being an influential factor.
- 41% of persons accommodated at Hotel Kronwell are satisfied with the products and services quality offered by the hotel during their stay.
- 22.50% of a total of 100% said that the most important criterion on which they made the hotel selection is determined by the quality of services and products, 18.33% of respondents chose the Kronwell hotel because of the spacious and modern rooms, 15.83% due to favorable environment for business, 15.00% due to the unique design of the hotel Kronwell, 11.67% due to cutting-edge equipment,

7.50% due to food units of the hotel, 5.0% due to the prices and only 5.6% due to the hotel staff.

- the vast majority of customers (36,67%) would like to change the location of the hotel for various reasons, 22.50% would improve the hotel staff, 12.50% would change the lighting in accommodation rooms, 10.00% consider breakfast as not tasty, 7.50% are dissatisfied with spa area, 5.83% would ban smoking inside food units, 3.33% are dissatisfied with the toilet in the room and only 1.67% would change restaurant menu

Based on the research results and considering the possibilities of the company, the hotel management has taken a series of measures to meet to a higher extent the customer expectations.

As the majority of respondents were dissatisfied with the lighting of rooms and lack of ventilation in the toilets of the rooms, the hotel management has invested over 1,000 euros for improving the lighting in some rooms, and approximately 16,000 Euro to purchase an efficient ventilation system.

Analyzing the hotel staff, most customers interviewed stated that hotel staff development is needed because not all employees rise to the high-class hotel level. Due to this, the hotel management has become very rigorous in recruitment the hotel staff. Regarding the hotel staff already employed, management has conducted various trainings for specialization which amounted to 12,000 Euro.

Another customers' dissatisfaction was referring to additional services such as spa area. Changes were made such as; introduction of new facilities for single travelers, couples, pregnant women or families (Ayurvedic treatment room, Vichy shower treatment room, four multipurpose treatment rooms, a room specially designed for couples' treatments, VIP couples room including Jacuzzi, Finnish and wet private sauna and relaxing bed, two rooms for facial treatments, relaxation room, Beauty counseling room, treatments specially designed for pregnant women, etc.)

Regarding the hotel's restaurants, customers were dissatisfied because of the breakfast and also of the restaurant's menu. The hotel management has taken steps to improve the breakfast and to diversify the restaurant menu.

4. The results of improving the quality of services offered by the hotel Kronwell

To verify the effectiveness of the implementation of the provided services quality improving and to assess customer satisfaction after the implementation of these measures in December 2015 was conducted a new survey among hotel guests, based on a questionnaire used two years ago.

Analysing the answers to the most important questions, the following was noticed:

- 33.53% of those surveyed considered the products and services quality as an important factor and the reason for choosing the hotel Kronwell, and only 5.83% admit that they are not at all influenced by the service quality.
- Most respondents (72%) are satisfied and very satisfied with the products and services quality that hotel Kronwell offers.
- 25.83% of respondents chose this hotel because of the services and products quality, while only 1.67% due to hotel staff.
- The most people surveyed want a ban on smoking inside food and beverage area, which happened in 2016 with the entry into force of the Law no. 15/2016 regarding the prevention and control of tobacco products consumption.

The results of implementation of these measures to improve the services quality is also reflected in the positive development of turnover, net profit and number of employees of the hotel, as can be seen in Table 2.

	2013	2014	2015
The turnover (Ron)	9.487.286	20.391.181	26.230.883
The net profit (Ron)	-10.034.168	236.728	942.120
The Number of employees	130	343	273

Sursa: <http://www.risco.ro/verifica-firma/iporo-com-cui-5450936>

Table 2. *The evolution of the main indicators of hotel Kronwell during 2013-2015 period*

The employees' number decreasing in 2015 in comparison to 2014, concomitantly with the increase in turnover and clear profit indicates an increase in labour productivity due to existing staff training program and an increased focus on recruiting new employees.

5. Conclusions

Studies show that customer satisfaction is influenced by the quality of services and determines purchase intentions. To get a differential advantage, hotels must exceed the consumer expectations about the quality. At the same time, these results allow improvements in authenticity and innovation which are considered a prerequisite to success (Boşcor and Băltescu, 2016).

The research conducted among Kronwell hotel guests permitted to develop a strategic plan to improve service quality. It has been found that there is an interest of the hotel management to improve service quality. The measures on improving service quality have increased the net profit, the turnover and the decrease of the employees' number. Moreover, on the tourism market the permanent organization of

marketing researches among customers are compulsory, as changes in the content of tourism demand are permanent and fast most often (Băltescu and Boşcor, 2014).

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