

# THE IMPORTANCE OF THE QUALITY OF ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS ON TOURISM PRODUCTS. AN APPLICATION OF THE KANO MODEL

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**Abstract:** *Quality evaluation in the field of tourism services is given by the result of the comparison between what the customer expected and what he or she really received. If there is a lack of correspondence between tourists' expectations and the managerial understanding of these expectations, the quality of the tourism service will be mediocre. The Quality Model, elaborated by the Japanese professor Noriaki Kano in the '80s, is based on the concept of product quality and offers a framework which highlights differences among standard and personalised offers according to the way in which customers do or do not express their wishes and expectations related to the offered product. This model can be applied in the tourism field, for example for analysing the relationship between tourism and environment.*

**Keywords:** *tourism, management, quality evaluation, attributes, environment*

The adoption of a quality management system by an organization dealing with tourism is a strategic decision with long-term implications that would bring it advantages, such as: increasing customer satisfaction, decreasing costs, enhancing competition, strengthening employees' responsibility and satisfaction as regards their work.

Tourism must be seen as a "horizontal" activity, implying a real coordination among different economic, social and cultural activities. Being connected with all the major economic sectors, tourism must be considered a powerful economic catalyst. Anyway, regional tourism can be threatened by globalization, so it must be used as a means of conserving regional identity.

The concept of "quality" has undertaken a long way starting with "inspection", passing through the stages of "control and assurance"; today it has taken its present form of "total quality" [4].

In the specialty literature, several definitions of quality have been provided. Thus, it can be considered: "customer satisfaction" or the skill of being in accordance to the use. Juran considers that a quality good or service is the one having "fitness for use" [6].

ISO 9000 standards define quality as "the degree to which a set of intrinsic features fulfil the demands" [ISO 9000:2000].

Feigenbaum defines quality as "all the market, design, production or maintenance features of a compound product or service,

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through which the product or service used responds to customer expectations”.

Quality evaluation, especially in the field of tourism services, is given by the result of the comparison between what the customer expected and what he or she really received. If there is a lack of correspondence between tourists' expectations and the managerial understanding of these expectations, the quality of the tourism service will be mediocre [5].

*The Quality Model*, elaborated by the Japanese professor Noriaki Kano in the '80s, based on the concept of product quality and offering a framework which highlights differences among standard and personalised offers according to the way in which customers do or do not express their wishes and expectations related to the offered product, can be applied in tourism, too.

*The features – attributes of the product* are divided by Kano into three groups [3]: “*basic attributes*” that are taken for granted from the offered product or service. These basic features are not given a particular importance by the client, who takes their existence for granted. „*Performance attributes*” are features – attributes expected and demanded by customers, being directly connected to their degree of satisfaction and “*excitement*” representing features – attributes unexpressed, but offered in the demanded product or service, producing a high degree of satisfaction to the client, many times bringing out wishes and latent needs, unknown even to the customer.

In the model presented in Figure 1 and Figure 2, we will replace the terms features – attributes with that of services, because of the particularities of the touristic product.

A competitive touristic product must have all the basic services, maximize the

offer of expected and demanded services and include in the offer as many unexpressed and unexpected services as possible.

We can state that in tourism there are many other services (attributes) that cannot be included in the three categories proposed by Kano because of the complexity of this type of product.

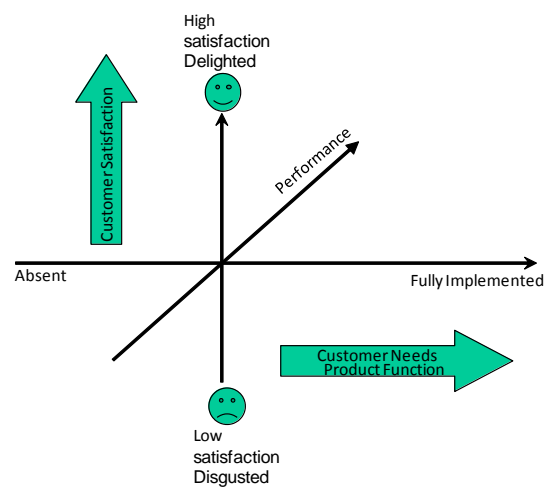
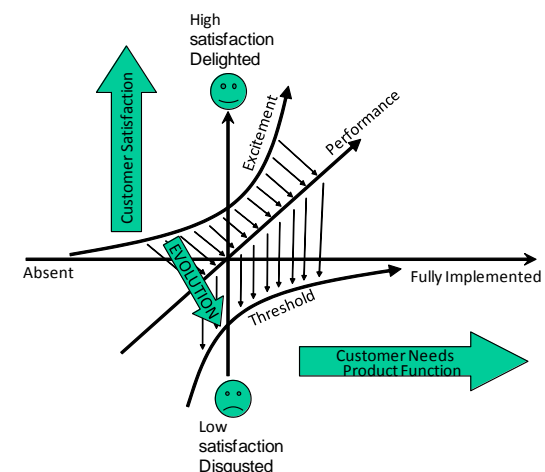


Fig. 1



Source: Centre of Quality Management Journal, Special issue on Kano's methods for understanding customer-defined quality, Vol 2, No. 4, 1993

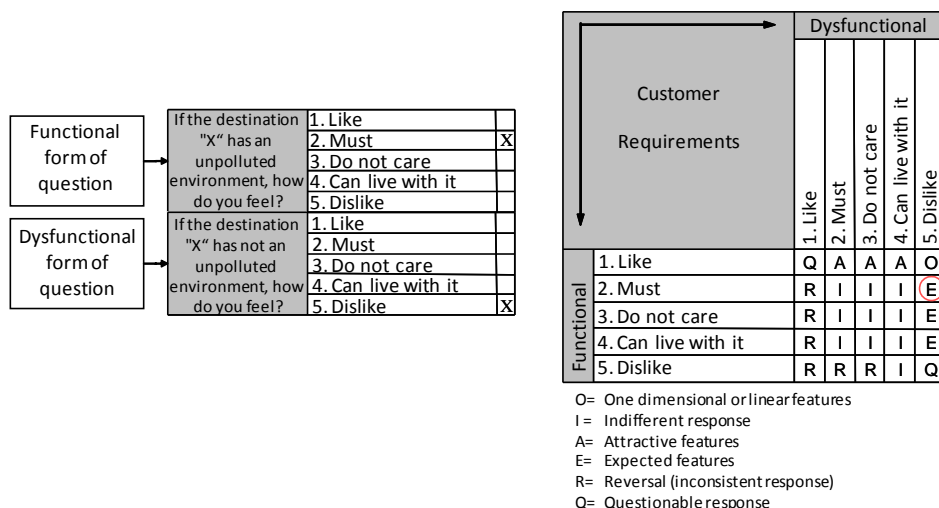
Fig. 2. Kano's model

Figure 1 shows the connection between the way in which customer demands are satisfied and the degree to which they have been satisfied. Customer satisfaction increases directly proportional with the number and the quality of the fulfilled demands. Similarly, the lack of preoccupation with satisfying customer demands leads to losing them. It is known that gaining a new type of client is five times more expensive than maintaining an existing one. Moreover, an unsatisfied client can represent negative advertisement of “bouche à oreille” type [7] for other people, thus significantly affecting the company’s image. Services quality is defined as the difference between customer expectations regarding that service and the perception of service quality after its use. Thus, one can speak of quality only when this difference is negative, more precisely when results exceed customer expectations. Their expectations are influenced by advertisement, personal needs, previous experience and the efficiency of the promotional techniques the company used.

As presented in Figure 2, the evolution

of services offer, as a constitutive part of the touristic product, goes through three different stages according to the features of the tourism offer and the way in which tourists express their expectations. Gradually, apart from the standard offer “directly expressed and expected” by customers (fig. 1), there are also new services, offered as bonuses, that customers have not demanded, but that offer them satisfaction – “additional unexpressed and un-demanded services (bonuses)”. The way in which Kano forecasts the evolution of the offer with “basic expected and unexpressed services” is really interesting. Those services that used to be “directly expressed and expected” in the past are now taken for granted, more precisely they are “basic expected and unexpressed services”. In the same manner, “additional services (bonuses)” become “directly expressed and expected services”.

A relatively simple use of Kano’s model is to conduct research among customers, who are asked to answer two simple questions regarding the features of the tourism product offered [1].



Source: Jacobs, R., Evaluating Satisfaction with Media Products and Services: An Attitude Based Approach, European Media Management, Winter 1999.

<http://www.tukkk.fi/mediagroup/emmr/Previous%20Issues/Satisfaction.htm>

Fig. 3. Kano's model applied in tourism

- How would you feel if the touristic product had the “X” feature?
- How would you feel if the touristic product did not have the “X” feature?

Customers can choose one of the following five alternatives:

1. *I would like it;*
2. *It's a must;*
3. *Indifferent;*
4. *I could get used without it, too;*
5. *I wouldn't like it.*

According to customers' answers, we can determine where this “X” feature ranks among the three categories proposed by Kano.

fig. 3 shows a possible way to apply Kano's model in tourism: the researched issue would be: “the importance of the quality of environmental factors (lack of pollution) in the touristic product offered”. As one can observe from Figure 3, “the quality of environmental factors” represents a basic feature of the touristic product – *the “basic expected and unexpressed features (services)”*.

Tourism also envisages an ecological purpose by including measures of preserving the environment and the fundamental values of human existence into tourism activities: water, air, flora, fauna etc., by contributing to the preservation of fundamental values that characterize local communities where it takes place.

The relation between tourism and environment has a significant importance,

environment protection and conservation being considered the primordial conditions of tourism development. Any uncontrolled intervention can bring damages to the tourism potential, finally becoming a destructive factor for all the stakeholders in this field.

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