

QUALITY FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF TOURISM DESTINATION

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Abstract

Service quality initiatives are high priorities in many tourist destinations, with expenditure seen as long-term investment for future growth and profitability.

My study's goal is to explain the quality dimensions from the viewpoint of tourism destination.

When we start to discuss about tourism quality supply, the main problem we have to consider is the structure of tourism supply as a complex of tangible and intangible elements.

Analysis of the quality problem, their measuring and monitoring and marketing strategies based on quality, needs to be built on the specificity of tourist offer, regarding the level of goods and services. Because of this, the level of quality and customer satisfaction of quality is very hard to measure and to control.

The first major feature of quality programs development is typically, to identify the key components or dimensions of quality from customer and employee research, i.e. their needs and expectations.

Key words: customer perceptions, expectations, service quality, tourist destination.

JEL classification: L83, Q01.

1. INTRODUCTION

Quality is the main topic and issue of the modern economy and market change. Contemporary changes in the market on demand influence the level and structure of customers' desires and wishes. The unavoidable consequences of this, is that suppliers have a smaller and smaller chance to create competitive advantage.

The dynamic nature of tourism industry demand improvement of service quality among all internal and external stakeholders. All organizations in the industry would understand the importance and they know their employees.

Service quality has been increasingly identified as a key factor in differentiating service products and building a competitive advantage in tourism. The process by which customers evaluate a purchase, thereby determining satisfaction and likelihood of

repurchase, is important to all marketers but especially to services marketers.

The problems of quality level, are position regarding the possibility to be source of the competitive advantage or prerequisite for competition is more and more interesting, for the production and facility sectors.

2. CONCEPTS OF QUALITY VERSUS. BUSINESS ORIENTATION

Analysis of the quality problem, their measuring and monitoring and marketing strategies based on quality, needs to be built on the specificity of tourist offer, regarding the level of goods and services. Models and methods for quality measurement are distinct for the goods and services, because of their diversities, but we have to consider them all, thanks to the fact that the tourism offer includes production and service dimension.

In production companies, when we want to measure the quality of goods, we can, more or less precisely define features or dimensions of quality, compare them and position them into competition.

Service quality programs require identifying customer needs and expectations which relate to:

- ❖ The service being offered: both core services with facilitating and supporting services, and the augmented service offering to include the service process and interaction between customers and the organization.

- ❖ Delivery systems and procedures which operate efficiently and effectively, and which are responsive and reliable.

- ❖ Delivery environment that includes both physical design and access aspects, and also emotional or atmospheric impact, which is experienced by both customers and employees.

- ❖ Technology which is integral to tourism and hospitality services, the environment and delivery; advances having made major contributions to facilitating customer-company exchanges and increasing levels of service.

- ❖ Employees: their role in creation and provision of service quality cannot be overstated and includes their personal qualities, ability to understand and satisfy customer needs, and their skills and knowledge.

Now, if we take into consideration the tourism quality, we can use the next dimensions and concepts of quality.

Table 1. Concepts of quality

Aspects of Quality	Elements of Quality
Working products	Reliability Duration Specification
Excellent Design	Esthetics
Better Satisfaction	Performances Product Features Services
Accessible Quality	Perception of Quality

2.1. Services characteristics

The quality concept within the market orientation is on its way to answer the problems we face whenever we have to measure service quality. Service quality is a very important feature for tourism. Because of the services specificity, the level of quality and customer satisfaction of quality is very hard to measure and to control.

The most important specificities of the services authors need to consider are:

- intangibility and very high level of risk in the purchasing process and of course the herewith implied consequences;
- heterogeneity and problems with standardization of quality;
- perish and problems of seasonality.

Tourism managers also need to take into consideration the characteristics of the tourism's demand and the hierarchy of needs – e.g. placed on the Maslow hierarchy -, until they satisfy even the tourist's desire to try something new.

2.2 Quality models for services

Authors use different model in order to tackle with these problems, such as: service quality model, SERVPERF model, KANO model of gap analysis.

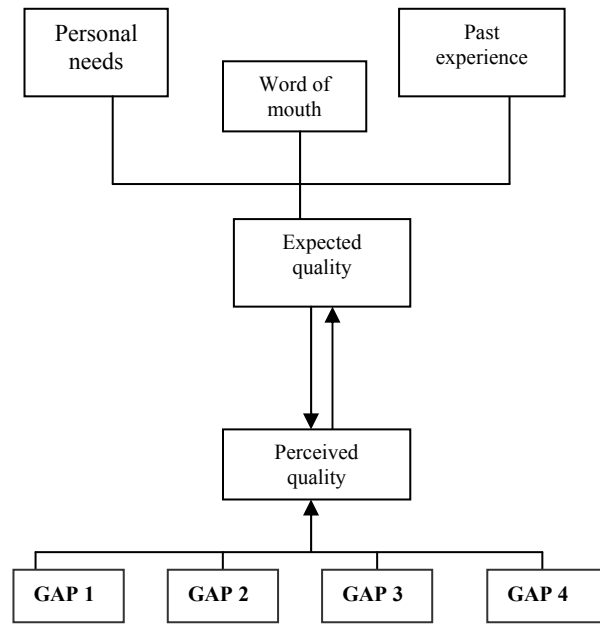


Figure 1. Model of gap analysis

KANO model, because they stress the customers' or clients' position and preferences for decision-making. A company can create a marketing strategy for specific customer segments by using the above mentioned models.

For successful gap management or management that wants to tackle with gaps on the different level, it is necessary to make researches on customer's perception. Later on, the results will be translated towards a proper managing frame. In other words, the first step is to create some understanding between actual and potential clients and their preferences and the management's perception of the customer's preferences.

The other level is the translation of the "management vision" (and company mission built in the internal/external segments) to the specification for the employees. Employees will be able to realize their tasks and duties and to fulfill their roles in the service scenarios only if they are prepared through internal marketing actions. Successful internal marketing actions are a warranty that employees have certain level of knowledge and service culture, necessary to the services process.

Eventually, in order to realize the same level of service, or promises to the customer, the crucial point is to manage internal and external marketing communication – e.g. to prepare employees for every possible situation that may come from the customer during the service process. The other, very important issue is to test all actions and decisions among employees, before they will be involved in the

company's strategies. This implies that employees are the focal point for all the marketing decisions – from new services development to the creating service brand or attracting new segment of customers.

There are steps for closing all relevant gaps: from the management – customer misunderstanding to the gap between giving and realizing promises to the customers.

The other useful model for the tourism quality measure is the KANO model. This one suggest to apply different level of quality dimension – basic, differentiated and exiting – reasons for customer non-satisfaction or satisfaction with the service output or service process.

By detecting specific features customers use for evaluating service quality level, a company that has the possibility to compare its position with others, and, what is more important, to figure out what the most important features for the customers are and what they consider in the quality process evaluation.

From the efficiency point of view, the models we have just mentioned provide the possibility to transfer money efficiently and to exploit it in order to improve quality features.

This is the most important and relevant aspect in leading customers to fidelity relationships.

In the long run, as a consequence of the social and economical development, the customer value system and the customer's level of acceptability has significantly changed.

3. INTERACTION OF TOURIST COMPANIES AND TOURIST DESTINATION

It is necessary to consider that in the tourism sector different institutions use two types of quality measure models, one for visitors and the other for firms. The reason is very simple: so many different actors create their offer on tourist destination.

The relationship between the destinations and the tourist companies is influenced by the image tourists have about it. At the same time, the firms influence the image that destination is trying to give.

It is logical consequences of the specificities that destination and tourist companies on the destination show:

- Destination is a wider geographical space with certain perception of values tourist can have. Tourist companies have the real marketing and profitability goals.
- Tourist companies must cooperate in order to realize unique identify and brand of destination.
- Tourist companies should build a reputation and a position for the destination, because it is the primary frame for the tourist competition.

- Tourist destination has own life cycle and different marketing strategies in each of these phases. Tourist companies do not need to follow these phases through their own life cycle, and mutual harmonization is very difficult to realize.

- Tourist operators may lower the prices – i.e. penetration prices – in order to prepare special offers they can present to the customers.

- The underdevelopment of the destination could be a limit for successful business of tourist companies, for example in the situation where bad infrastructures create limitation for individual business.

On the picture we can see that in the same tourist destination there are different actors – stakeholders – having different business interests.

Stakeholders are responsible for the attractiveness of the destination that has to work as a mechanism.

4. POSSIBLE SOLUTION FOR DESTINATION MANAGING

The coordination of the personnel, company and society goals is only a way towards creating a marketing strategy for tourist destination.

Marketing needs a specific type of company for tourist destination management. The prerequisite is that every company –private or public – has to be provided with work in order to reach its own goals. The second prerequisite is to lessen the competition among companies and to realize the coordination among different actors.

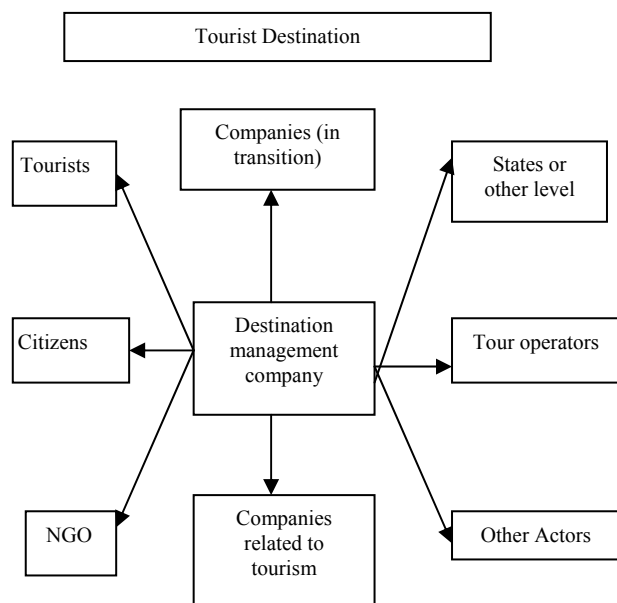


Figure 2: Tourist destination

Nonetheless, the destination itself needs to be competitive.

Integrated planning can help to realize the tasks and fulfill the very role of the company. The integrated planning offers the possibility to public and private stakeholders and to the community itself to act as a whole in tourism's growth and support.

Of course, even though the key component of successful tourism development is financial availability, it is also true that beauty of tourism development is in the eyes of the beholder.

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