An Empirical Study on Quality of Hospitality Services in Durres, Albania

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Abstract

Albania has entered in tourism market lately. The factors of this delay were the isolation of the country for more than 50 years and also the government has followed the Marxist theory according to which the services do not influence in the increase of GDP. During the last two decades the tourism sector has been developed rapidly with the increase of the offer and demand and consequently competition in the tourism sector. The need for a competitive product has affected the approach to Service Quality in the hotels' area. The study is based on the rating of hotels supported by Servqual elements and a new method of measurement based on seven dimensions of quality QualMark.This dimensions are the factors that influence directly to the customer's satisfaction. This study based in 20 hotels in Albania, indicates that Albanian Hospitality industry need more attention and strategies to be on competitive sector in region. However, some recommendations and suggestions will be presented by which the applicability and effectiveness of the proposed methodology is expected to increase.

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to study the service quality of the hotel industry in Durres, Albania. Albania's economic development the last 20 years has been part of a long transition. Part of the transition phenomenon, is considered tourist sector were hotels have their specific weight.

The high demand in the first years of democracy, facing an influx of ethnic tourism, Kosovo and Macedonia, brought the need for increased accommodation units, without giving much importance to product quality offered.

The change from this kind of accommodation units to an actual fictional system of hotel classification the evaluation of the quality of a part of them makes the difference.

The Quality in the customer, client, manager, and employee point of view is part of this paper. The sustainable tourism development and optimal conditions of employment is taken into consideration through a more structured questionnaire, into the whole country. The quality of the services is defined by the client and management, in context with the client's demand and expectations.

Hotel Industry in Albania

The tourism sector in Albania experienced a late development by having thus a marginal role in the Albanian economy. The socialist system (1944-1990) of that time based its policy on the ideology of Karl Marx's theory according to which ―*the services have influence in the distribution of prosperity, but they do not have influence in GDP configuration"* As in every planned economy, the central government was the authority that should care of everything. The first development traces of Tourism in Albania seemed to be at the beginning of 20th century.

An interview of 1928 stated that King Leka II speaks about the improvements that he wanted to do in order to attract tourists, on the way of the transformation of Albania into a European state Tirana and Durres cities. The figures of that time showed that Albania in 1929 counted about 13 holiday centers and 27 hotels in

total, whereas three of them located in Durresi beach. In the mid '30s the only tourism agency was ―The Tourism and Albanian automotive Office", and at the two country's major ports regularly anchored cruisers with tourists having daily tours in Tirana and Durres cities.

The touristic infrastructure inherited after the World War II was almost negligible. In 1945, a 15 villas complex with a capacity of 37 rooms and a hotel with 28 rooms in the Durresi seaside were the fewest touristic infrastructure. In the mid-50s, as a consequence of the broken alliances between the socialist camp countries, the Albania-Soviet socialist policy encouraged the development of tourism.

Derek Hall shows that *the bulk of tourists that visited destinations in the socialist countries came from the bloc, mostly from the wealthier northern and central European states such as the GDR, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary* [9]
The most populated area was the coastline of Durres: where were built Hotel Adriatic (1958) with a capacity of 54 rooms (3 suites and 51 double rooms); Hotel Apollonia, Kruja and Durres build in (1961-1962).

The three hotels were built with the same architecture with a capacity of 102 rooms and 300-seats restaurant. Later on a series of hotels named as Hotel ―Turizmi (Tourism) were built in the major cities of Albania, such as Gjirokastra, Fieri, Vlora, Korca, Shkodra, Saranda, Drini etc., A hotel building programs commensurate with an expansionist policy Foreign-Tourist that was inaugurated 1972-1982. New 11 hotels were built, almost doubling the New International Standard Accommodation Capacity.

Years	1970	1975	1980	1987
Balneary center	5	6	6	6
Beds	405	640	700	640
Vacationer	6. 871	8.666	11.769	13.523

Source: ISTAT Albania

Actually the Tourism in Albania has won its status as the helmsman of the Albanian economy and try to follow the compass that will led to the best possible direction provided by "wind of change".
Looking at the importance of tourism actually is important to know where its hotel industry stands in terms of its service quality and which factors influence in it today in Albanian hospitality.

Literature

Definition of Service Quality

In service literature, service quality is usually defined based on consumers' Assessment. Parasuraman (1985) defined service quality as "measure of how well the service level delivered matches customer expectations; delivering quality service means confirming to customer expectations on a consistent basis". Kolter and Armstrong (1996) defined service quality as "the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs".

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[9] Hall (1991), 91–95, cited in TAYLOR. K (2011). From trips to modernity to holidays in nostalgia: tourism history in eastern and southeastern Europe

Since Parasuraman et al. (1988) introduced a 22-item scale, called SERVQUAL, for measuring service quality; the model has been widely adopted across industries. The thrust of SERVQUAL lies with its five dimensions of service quality that are accomplished by indirect (or objective) comparisons between pre-purchase expectations and post-purchase perceptions of company performance. That is, service quality is indicated by, or defined as, the arithmetic differences between customer expectations and perceptions across the 22 measurement items. The 22 difference scores are then reduced to fewer (typically five as required by the original SERVQUAL model) factors or dimensions via factor analysis.

But a number of researchers have criticized the SERVQUAL approach. Peter et al. (1993) and Brown et al. (1993), relates to the indirect difference score approach. According to them, the difference score approach causes poor reliability and problems of variance restriction associated with the component scores. Brown et al. (1993) observed that difference scores.

Recently, attention is paid to the increasing interest in research on service quality and customer satisfaction. Researchers such as Bojanic and Rosen (1994) have tested the indicators of SERVQUAL in the hospitality industry while Saleh and Ryan (1991) applied the same model in the housing industry. Together with them Barsky (1992) and Labagh (1992) have attempted to create a framework of research on customer satisfaction by focusing on the endurance of consumer loyalty in restaurants and hotels, as theory based on empirical cases and on the literature

The purpose of this is to propose an integrated approach to study and understand an evaluation process of the quality of management of hotel structures, as from the perspective of customers and employees, management and environmental constancy.

Hotels with successful quality assurance systems report improvement in employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction, profit margins and operational cost savings, relative to their counterparts with less successful quality assurance (Yasin and Zimmerer 1995)

Definition of QUALMARK

The QUALMARK is New Zealand tourism's official mark of quality which integrated quality assurance system, developed more than a decade ago. The Quality Mark Manual (2008), authored by Susan Warren, is the guiding resource for the program. It is being updated to align with the **Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC).**

The assessment and licensing of accommodations to carry the mark has a major focus on supporting responsible tourism. It encourages owners to adopt and implement relevant global sustainable tourism criteria (GSTC). These are a set of 37 voluntary standards representing the minimum that any tourism business should aspire to reach in order to protect and sustain the world's natural and cultural resources, whilst ensuring tourism meets its potential as a tool for poverty alleviation. The 37 criteria have four main themes:

- effective sustainability planning;
- maximizing social and economic benefits for the local community;
- enhancing cultural heritage;
- reducing negative impacts to the environment.

Accommodations carrying the Mark are smaller (with typical categories being under 20 and under 50 beds), and focus on authenticity and a personal approach. They are integrated into their host communities, offering local activities, the chance for visitors to meet with local people and explore the environment, and enjoy

local food and wine, craft, and culture. The Quality Mark must measure what is most important to high-value visitors, but at the same time this system plays a major part in improving business excellence.

QualMark or Quality Mark is based on assessment of hotels under the perspective of Total Quality Management, but based on 37 criteria grouped in seven dimensions which are presented in the following table. Each dimension occupies a specific weight which indicates the total points this dimension has. So the dimension under the name of "Customer service and satisfaction" occupies 21% of the total valuation of the hotel, "Cleanliness, safety and security" occupies 12% of the total evaluation. Each dimension has a defined number of total points which determines the methods of valuation, such as "must have" "more better" and "delighter".

To understand how the assessment above works, we can set specific criteria that must be met. To demonstrate these criteria, in the following table are presented the standards that hotels should meet to be evaluated according to "Must have", "More is better" and "Delighter" ratings, for each of the criteria of the Customer Service dimension. For each criteria there is a certain number of points to move from one level to another.

Table 2: Standards for determining evaluation with point-Quality Mark

	"Must have"	**"More is better"**	**"Delighter"**
Initial contact & booking, client greeting and briefing	Some form of confirmation offered (email, fax, etc) including directions for finding hotel. Guest check-in service at all times, including clarification of price and any in-house rules and access restrictions.	Efficient "check-in" and Professional, accurate and timely service assured, including business terms for deposits and 'no-shows'.	Booking system highly efficient and professional with good follow-up and A competent Internet site used for reservations Guests has excellent first impression.
Guest care and support services	Guests are cheerfully served .	Guests are made to feel special and their needs are anticipated Guests are helped with their luggage. Clear and consistent price policy Clear and consistent smoking policy. Pet's policy. Variety of services offered to make guest's stay memorable and hassle free.	Variety of services offered to make guest's stay memorable and hassle. Clear smoking places and rooms delineated Great delighters offered eg refreshments on arrival, Souvenirs provided electronic payment facilities.
Customer satisfaction and complaints	System in place for recording and resolving complaints. Customers asked for verbal feedback Local people and foreigners are treated with equal respect and service	Evidence of high levels of visitor More than one language spoken satisfaction (book for guests) .More than one language spoken	Complaints resolved promptly with genuine attempt to restore customer good will. Foreigners are made to feel welcome and cultural differences understood and accommodated

Likewise, the 25 criteria are evaluated, and at the end, the hotel is rated with a total number of points that defines the category in which the hotel is part.

Categorization is the final evaluation of the hotel in one of the three categories - bronze, silver or Gold.

Research paper

Methodology and research design

This study involves a research on the critical success factors associated with a managing a successful TQM implementation in hospitality industry specific in hotels with a case study in Durres Albania 3,4 stars hotels. The aim is to better understanding the relative role of various on effective Quality services in implementation industry, using a new approach of Service Quality (QUALMARK with 25 variables in 7 dimensions).

The methodology implied in this study is based in the evaluation of twenty hotels with 3 or 4 stars, in the Durres area. Hotels are chosen voluntarily and each hotel is seen under the perspectives of each dimension. To derive the result, for example of Customer Service, booking online is executed and achieved by anonymous guest paying more attention to aspects of communication.

In the 4th dimension for example, assessment focuses on direct contact with the employees in each hotel evaluating their sustainability through questions such as:

- Are u happy workings in this hotel? From how many years do you work here?
- Do gaps in service quality exist at Hotel? How are they dealt with?
- Is there anything you would like to mention as a negative aspect of this Hotel?
- Do customers appreciate the efforts made by the hotel to ensure superior service quality?
- Anything else that you would like to share with us?

For the dimension of Responsible and Sustainable Tourism, attention is paid to environmental elements, taking into consideration the investments made into the hotels for business and environmental sustainability. Albania has a bad experience with regard to tourism and for this reason, the hotel managers were surveyed for the level of their business management, mainly from the financial and planning perspective. Last but not least important dimension is that of marketing, devoted to how he is accomplished and to the vision for the future.

Data analyses

For gathering the data in the assessment a pilot study is conducted and the number of respondents needed is calculates. For these purpose 20 hotels staffs were asked. Considering 95 percent confidence level and five percent error the total needed number were computed as 41. This study involves a research on the critical success factors with managing a successful service quality implementation in hospitality industry.

After 20 hotels taken into consideration have been evaluated, where six of them have been assessed into the category of silver and 14 into the bronze category, based on points scored in the dimension, seven variables were calculated according to the respective names. The first variable is customer's satisfaction, evaluated in three criteria mentioned above 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3. .In this way is determined the other variables:

V1 Customer service & satisfaction
V2.Facilities, amenities & Ambience
V3. Cleanliness, safety & security
V4. Staff Development / Workforce
V5. Responsible Sustainable Tourism
V6.Marketing
V7. Business

Research paper

Below is given the correlation that exists between these seven variables in the 20 hotels taken into consideration in Durres.

Correlations

		V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	V7
V1	Pearson Correlation	1	.693**	.616**	.506*	.646**	.744**	.239
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001	.004	.023	.002	.000	.310
	N	20	20	20	20	20	20	20
V2	Pearson Correlation	.693**	1	.489*	.657**	.660**	.597**	.242
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001		.029	.002	.002	.005	.304
	N	20	20	20	20	20	20	20
V3	Pearson Correlation	.616**	.489*	1	.515*	.389	.458*	.493*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.029		.020	.090	.042	.027
	N	20	20	20	20	20	20	20
V4	Pearson Correlation	.506*	.657**	.515*	1	.698**	.368	.242
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.023	.002	.020		.001	.110	.304
	N	20	20	20	20	20	20	20
V5	Pearson Correlation	.646**	.660**	.389	.698**	1	.405	.222
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.002	.090	.001		.077	.347
	N	20	20	20	20	20	20	20
V6	Pearson Correlation	.744**	.597**	.458*	.368	.405	1	.294
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.005	.042	.110	.077		.208
	N	20	20	20	20	20	20	20
V7	Pearson Correlation	.239	.242	.493*	.242	.222	.294	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.310	.304	.027	.304	.347	.208	
	N	20	20	20	20	20	20	20

Initially, there are calculated seven variables according to their respective names. For example, the first variable 'satisfaction' is calculated as the average of 1.1., 1.2 and 1.3 values. The first variable is taken later as an independent variable. Each variable is used in two contexts. In the vertical and horizontal section. In one of them it's taken as an independent variable.

Correlations have been developed taking reliability once 95% (in the table evidenced by the green color) and in the second case probably 99% (in the table evidenced by the red color). Apparently, the dependent variable is related to the other six variables and in any case, not affected by variable 7.

We notice in the table, that there are problems in the correlation between the independent variables 2 (Facilities, amenities & environment), 3 (Cleanliness, safety & security) and 4 (Staff Development/Workforce).

With the help of Anova model, the linear function that's implied in this study, is introduced like this: **D1= 0.456 D5 + 0.5O3 D6**

This shows that Customer Satisfaction depends on variable 5 - 'Responsible and Sustainable Tourism' and variable 6 - 'Marketing'.

The result is that we should invest in these two aspects to enhance Customer Satisfaction.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.834[a]	.696	.660	.33053

ANOVA [b]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4.248	2	2.124	19.443	.000[a]
	Residual	1.857	17	.109		
	Total	6.106	19			

Coefficients [a]

Model		Un standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.050	.279		.181	.859
	V5	.456	.162	.412	2.818	.012
	V6	.503	.127	.577	3.947	.001

Conclusion

This study could be a handbook to help managers to lead and modify the current work practices so that they can measure and then increase customer satisfaction.

Based on the research of 20 hotels, it combines the analysis of management of customer satisfaction in seaside of Durres. Many of the discoveries are the same as those from different authors. Customers could be motivated if these instruments are used extensively by the hotel's management.

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