

The Role of Quality of Services in Tourism Activity

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Abstract

We can say that compared to products quality, service quality is relative, as a matter of balance, meaning that it requires an approach on several levels, and his assessment is quite difficult to achieve and quantify.

For obtain differential advantage, service providers have to improve quality aiming to overcome the perceived quality of consumer expectations. For this purpose, organizations must identify: what are the main factors determinants of service quality, what are the customer expectations who want to access services from the company provider, how consumers assesses company services compared to their expectations.

Keywords: quality, services, products, consumers

J.E.L. Classification: M1, M2

1. Introduction

Assessment of quality products and services requires a broad approach given the complex and dynamic concept of quality in general. Numerous aspects are pursued in order to achieve this objective and this point requires some clarification. Currently, more than ever, consumers have access to free and open markets that allow them wherever and whenever purchasing goods or services desired, in terms of strong competition between bidders. Performance due to technical progress and other factors of influence, have allowed manufacturers and service providers to offer consumers attention increasingly better targeting the same goal: to satisfied demand and exceed customer expectations.

2. The quality of products and services

Scientists, professionals from business, define quality in relation to various criteria that are consistent with the scope of their activities representing a quality (as) to be, and defining the meaning and use of this concept are nature: *philosophical, technical, economic and social (Pascu E. ş.a.,2012)*.

The concept of "product" used to mean "commodity" is a "good material resulting from a labor process" or "all objects or property obtained in the production process".

In the spirit of traditional marketing, the product is "the sum of tangible attributes and characteristics, physical and chemical together in an identifiable form" (*Pascu E. ş.a., 2012*).

Service concept refers to the result of which is the interface between supplier and customer, services being all valuable activities that some people provides them to benefit of other members of society.

Making a service may involve (*Stanciu, I., 2002*):

- an activity performed on a tangible product;
- an activity performed on an intangible product;

- delivery of an intangible product;
- creation of ambience for the customer.

Services are characterized primarily *by immateriality and intangibility*. Unlike the product, which exists by itself, generally service is impalpable, intangible, can't be seen, tried, tasted, heard, smelled, therefore, services are called "invisible" and trade with services "invisible trade".

Intangible nature of services has important consequences for international trade "invisible" in that services cannot be "surprised" at border crossings, and therefore can avoid "barriers" traditional customs and trade registration services in balance of payments often encounter difficulties (*Ioncica, M., 2006*).

Services are perishable, they can be stored, this leading to another characteristic, namely perishability. This feature of the services can cause a number of shortcomings, especially in ensuring the balance between supply and demand and actual service. Once offered but not used, these services can lead to loss of resources both material and human resources.

Another feature of the services, which fundamentally distinguishes them from products, is the simultaneous production of goods and service consumption. As no stock, it determines that any disparity of time or place to result in losses of supply and / or unmet demand. Service change is not possible, service provided cannot be returned, existing a risk associated with the acquisition phenomenon, related to service purchase decision.

Inseparability of services from individual provider and from the user characterizes most services. The service measure is effective delivery provider and asks about work, the material means of benefit and service object, material or social reality that changed or modified. The main difference between the production of services and manufacturing of material goods is that the client is part of the production (*Ioncica, M., 2006*).

Closely linked to the presence and participation provider, service quality depends greatly on the level of his professional qualifications,

talent, skills, accuracy with which it is running. Hence, the difficulty is "standardization" of services and there are high possibilities of differentiation of the offer.

Variability or heterogeneity is a feature which gives its service compared to products the possibility not to repeat in an identical manner a certain service, not to be copied. Services are performed by people, which even they are not as ideal as the services can be personalized according to each client.

According to H.J. Harrington, services have certain properties that make them different category of product realization processes, namely (*Harrington H. J., 2002*):

- ✓ services reflects the behavior of the one who provide;
- ✓ if an opportunity is missed, there is no a second chance;
- ✓ the client is part of the process of benefit;
- ✓ service cannot be easily withdrawn from the market compared to products;
- ✓ quality assurance activities must be completed before taking the product, which may not be possible for services;
- ✓ more the client is in permanent contact with many people, the less likely to be satisfied.

Unlike products, in case of services where quality and productivity often contradicts because a dilemma service provider is to provide customers with exceptional benefits while serving more customers per employee. Productivity and high quality services can be correlated only after all errors are eliminated.

Service quality assessment methods are common with products such as eg cause-effect analysis, also called Ishikawa diagram and Pareto analysis, but may be also specific ways. This assessment on product quality is based on a system of product quality indicators, which measure the characteristics of each part, the groups of features, and the product that their synthesis. An important place in this system it is occupied by

synthetic quality indicator representing quantitative expression of his features, set against the conditions to create, use or consumption.

In assessing service quality, service companies use five complementary methods, namely: critical incident method, complaints management, customer mysterious; list of comments, satisfaction survey.

Another aspect to be said about the quality compared to the services is related to factors that influence directly or indirectly the quality of services, as follows:

- ✓ accuracy, i.e. the ability to provide an accurate and attentive service contracted;
- ✓ responsiveness, i.e. willingness provider to assist consumers and to provide prompt service;
- ✓ safety, that provider's ability to inspire confidence in the quality of service customers
- ✓ individualization (personalization) and concerns and efforts to deal with each customer due in part;
- ✓ tangible elements, namely the existence of material facilities, equipment, staff and the materials appropriate advertising service.

3. Romanian tourism service quality compared to Bulgarian tourism service quality

Balneoclimacteric sector is an important component of Romanian tourism offer. Mineral and thermal waters, mud with therapeutic qualities, mofettes, temperate climate and, not least, the Romanian Black Sea coast, with a combination of factors of course, is the argument for health tourism and spa in Romania. Travel companies from climatic spas totaling about 30 000 accommodation places, thus accounting for about 20% of Romania's accommodation capacity. It should be noted that spa treatments in our country have a long tradition, as Romania is among the first countries in the world that created a scientific society of balneology

and climatology. Currently, Romania has many spas located in different areas of Romania, among the most important are: Felix (West), Herculane, Călimanesti-Căciulata, Covasna Sovata Vatra Dornei, Mangalia, Saturn, Eforie North, who succeeded, by their offer, to attract over the years a large number of both Romanian and foreign tourists.

Romanian seaside of Black Sea is a place to spend the holiday for many tourists, but also a destination because they wish to treat various diseases in clinics spas in resorts that Eforie North, South Eforie, Neptune, Saturn and Mangalia. Touristic season in this area is extended by spa treatment programs since the first tourists arrive at the Romanian Black Sea since April and leave at the end of September. In clinics in those resorts are particularly valued the therapeutic qualities of mud of Techirghiol Lake, located about 15 km south from Constanta. Outside mud of Techirghiol, spa bases on Romanian Black Sea coast also used to cure other natural factors in the area such as sea water, water and sewage mesothermal peat extracted near Mangalia. In the seaside spa clinics, which appear in catalogs of major tour operators abroad, can be treated, outside the summer season, degenerative diseases, inflammatory, dermatological, respiratory and gynecological.

With all the advantages offered by the Romanian Black Sea coast, there are some negative aspects related to tourism in this area, which make foreign tourists and Romanian people prefer other similar tourist destinations such as Bulgaria.

Some of these negative aspects that characterize tourism Romanian Black Sea coastal area are:

- ✓ Romanian seaside has too low recreational offer versus natural and human potential at its disposal;
- ✓ small number of facilities that are obsolete in terms of equipment and facilities
- ✓ coastline is characterized by high environmental pollution and increased through a process of degradation of the beach and cliffs;

- ✓ seasonal high season almost 2-3 months into the sea;
- ✓ no direct airline International Airport to Constanta, Mihail Kogălniceanu;
- ✓ difficult access to the coast, especially on the road: after leaving the Sun Highway, the road to Constanta is basically one way to go, very busy during the summer season;
- ✓ low quality of tourist services with prices that implicitly leads to decrease of Romanian and foreign tourists, for example, World of TUI company representatives gave up the Romanian seaside due to the fact that foreign tourists satisfaction is below average accepted and wanted to avoid the risk of their complaints;
- ✓ unfavorable image of Romania abroad as a potential tourist destination and promote its failure made that foreign tourists to be fewer and fewer at Romanian Black Sea shore
- ✓ existence of appropriate unmaintained beaches, which didn't offers guests comfort. For example, Mamaia last year faced with an invasion of algae, which, with all the effort by authorities to remove them all drove away tourists on the coast at that time;
- ✓ price of the Romanian seaside tourism packages is significantly higher than that offered by other tourist destinations located in neighboring countries. For example a stay of six nights in high season in a cheapest seaside resort can end up costing about 250 euros, while in Bulgaria to 266 euros per week you can rent a cottage in Albena for four people ;
- ✓ lack of service packages to offer all-inclusive of Romanian tourism, successfully marketed by Bulgaria, Turkey and Greece. Foreign tourists want in addition to comfort, the tour package they purchase to be complete, so additional costs are much lower. A main cause of not selling all-inclusive packages to the littoral area is given by the fact that in many cases the hotel is owned by a person, and the restaurant is owned by another investor;
- ✓ low level of staff training, that is appropriate to unskilled work

they perform and insufficient numbers, mainly due to labor migration;

- ✓ lack of cooperation among actors involved in tourism management, that the public authorities and local government, with direct effects on the allocation of funds necessary for the development and modernization of the coastal area
- ✓ although the Black Sea tourism takes only three months, House and resort fees are paid for a full fiscal year;
- ✓ public services are paid twice because local governments provide services doubtful, and payers are required to manage infrastructure on their own way. (www.zf.ro);
- ✓ excessive taxation requires tourism operators to pay 14 Central and 3 Local taxes (taxes represent 35% of the prices charged by hotels and restaurants). In Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria the taxes are 4-5 times lower than in Romania because the authorities understand that besides tourism sector can develop other related fields (www.zf.ro).

As a tourist destination, Bulgaria has won in recent years, a sufficiently large part of tourists who traditionally visited Romania and Romanian Black Sea coast turned their minds to Bulgaria.

In terms of tourism, closely resembles Romania to Bulgaria, Black Sea resorts are dotted with numerous investments benefited from German investments, such as Sunny Beach. Thus, Bulgaria has grown faster in tourism than Romania.

Bulgarian seaside resort has thirty spas (included in this issue so-called resort hotels 3-4), of which only ten are declared of national importance. Before 2000, many of Bulgaria beaches have been awarded "blue flag". This distinction is an internationally recognized label to certain beaches that meet certain conditions related to cleaning and the highest quality service on that beach. Currently, Bulgaria has ten beaches that have this title.

In Europe, Spain has over 450 Blue-Flag beaches, 140 Turkey, Bulgaria 10 and Romania, until 2005 had no distinction beach. (P. Stanciu, Romanian tourist services issues, Journal of Commerce, No. 12, 2006). In 2010, after efforts, Mamaia, Eforie North, Neptune, Saturn and the tourist port of Eforie North obtained from the Foundation for Environmental Education distinguished "Blue Flag".

The strengths of Bulgarian tourism offer which attracts a large number of foreign tourists are, also:

- ✓ Bulgarian seaside has a length of 378 km. and varied: open beaches and lagoons followed by deep bays, small dunes and cliffs, forest-covered mountains and peninsulas covered with vineyards and orchards, fishing villages, villas, bungalows, modern resorts and sandy beaches;
- ✓ most Bulgarian resorts are located quite far from the stress of large cities, but at the same time very close to many tourist sites. Relaxing on the beachfront can add multiple possibilities for excursions in medieval towns and monasteries, and participation in folk dancing evenings, etc.;
- ✓ milder climate, low salinity water make Bulgaria one of the most desired holiday destinations. Albena, Golden Sands, Sunny Beach up to the quality of the resorts on the Mediterranean coast;
- ✓ privatization of hotels and buying by investors Bulgarian seaside facilities;
- ✓ privatization of the Bulgarian tourism began in 1993, not after 2000, as in Romania. Moreover, leading investors - such as for example the German TUI or Neckerman offered not only advice but also money for investment in new hotels, based on their projects. Later, "loan" was paid through the provision of travel services to tourists (www.wall-street.ro)
- ✓ creating a positive image among foreign tour operators who persuaded them to invest significant sums in upgrading to international standards: an example is TUI which annually

brings many foreign tourists: Germans are seen increasingly frequently the Bulgarian lands and increasingly rare on the Romanian;

- ✓ quality of tourist services is much higher and correlated with tariffs;
- ✓ bulgarian seaside is one of the most welcoming and cheap destinations for families with children. Beach clubs are organized for children with specialized staff, and in some resorts, such as Albena, there are kindergardens, where tourists can leave their children when they participate in various trips or recreational activities. These services can't be provided on the Romanian seaside, where families with young children can participate in various activities because there are no special places for children care (Nenciu D, 2009);
- ✓ most hotels are new buildings or completely renovated, with adequate facilities at the international level;
- ✓ skilled labor;
- ✓ maintained beaches offering all the comfort to tourists;
- ✓ bathing water quality is better on the Bulgarian seaside. According to a report by the European Commission in Romania there in 2007, there is one place where water quality meet European Union requirements, compared to Bulgaria, which had 70 such places. Out of the 49 bathing waters monitored by the European Agency in 2008, only one of Romania meet EU requirements, while in Bulgaria, of the 89 evaluated waters on the Black Sea, 70 comply with Community (European Environment Agency);
- ✓ marketing service packages all-inclusive, highly approved by foreign tourists, due to the benefits offered.

Conclusions

Both by its geographical location and nature of accommodation, catering and entertainment which the Black Sea coast offers, Bulgaria performs a sustained tourism activity. Areas Balchik, Albena and Golden Sands have a diversified tourism potential and recreation, being completed by the best report quality-price for travel benefits, that`s why so many foreign tourists choose as their holiday destination for Bulgarian seaside.

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