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Gospodarka turystyczna w regionie

**Wybrane problemy funkcjonowania regionów,
gmin i przedsiębiorstw turystycznych**

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GAP MODEL AS ONE POSSIBILITY OF EVALUATING HOTEL SERVICE QUALITY

Summary: Quality is seen as a key element of service differentiation these days and presents the area that needs to be addressed by every enterprise which wants to stay in the market. It affects the success of business and at the same time it acts as a factor creating business competitiveness. We consider a hotel industry to be a sub-sector of tourism. The hotel industry can meet the needs of tourism participants in the network of accommodation establishments by providing its fundamental and additional services. A compliance with the standard rules of providing services set by a country, organization or enterprise is of great importance to the hotel industry. It is also important to find a balance between customers' and company's perception of the quality. The article is based on a more extensive study focused on the quality assessment of a selected type of accommodation.

Keywords: GAP model, service quality, accommodation establishment, questionnaire, customer satisfaction.

1. Introduction

The current period is characteristic by high living and working pace, different customers' demands and rapidly changing demands. Intensity is given to the quality of provided services. "The relationship between customer satisfaction and customer relation been researched for many years. Retaining customer in the lodging has become increasingly more important with increasing competition" [Uher – Pullmanova Švedová 2011, p. 2]. Customers want a quality, but also a correct price. One of the measuring of the quality is GAP model. The gaps model of service quality was first developed by a group of authors, Parasuraman, Zeithaml, Berry, at Texas A&M and North Carolina Universities, in 1985 [Parasuraman, Zeithaml, Berry]. Model was based on exploratory studies of service such as executive interviews and focus groups in four different service businesses the authors proposed a conceptual model of service quality indicating that guests' perception toward a service quality depends on the four gaps existing in enterprise – consumer environments. They further devel-

oped in-depth measurement scales for service quality in a later year [Parasuraman, Zeithaml, Berry 1988].

2. Importance of quality in hotel industry

Services are an essential part of the tourism product. “Growing competition makes hotel management provide higher standards of the hotel services. Customers require highly professional performance of the hotel staffs. Higher quality of facilities is the only condition for being competitive. Nowadays hotels tend to respond smartly and professionally to their guests’ requirements. Quality is made up by the guests’ requirements. Quality does not necessarily mean absolutely the best. It means the best standard that a customer is willing to pay for” [Šenková 2008, p. 680]. Therefore, talking about quality in services, tourism services included, is becoming more and more relevant. By Oriěška [1998, p. 4], „tourism market is a specific, relatively independent part of the commodity market. The uniqueness is that in it sold mainly service.”

The basis for evaluating of the quality is the product, through which people satisfy their needs [Mateides, Ďad’o 2002]. Product must meet the essential criteria to be able to hold customers fidelity and keep customers loyalty. We can talk about the quality of the product in this dimension. The importance of quality increases due to the fact that markets are becoming more competitive and therefore businesses must find new ways to achieve competitive advantages.

The importance of quality in hotel services is undeniable. High-quality products have resulted in creating the image of the desired options and creating loyal customers moreover they meet the needs of new customers. Customer perception of quality is largely subjective. Therefore it is very crucial to obtain information on how different groups of customers perceive the quality of the product or service [Donnelly et al. 1997]. Donnelly [Donnelly et al. 1997, p. 653] defines quality as „the summary of products and services that make their ability to meet the needs and desires of customers.”

Kotler et al. [2003] say: quality begins by defining customer needs and their satisfaction ends. There are various definitions and approaches to the definition of quality:

- According to EN ISO 9000/2000 quality is „the degree to which a set of inherent characteristics fulfills requirements” [Mateides, Ďad’o 2002, p. 264].
- American Society for Quality (ASQ) sees quality in two senses:
 - a) characteristics of a product or service, as reflected in its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs
 - b) product or service without gaps (ASQ 2007).

The purpose of the offer provided by hotel services is to meet customers’ expectations. The customer compares his or her experience with an expected and real quality of provided hotel services. It is the beginning of quality evaluation process. Between these two levels is the tolerance zone.

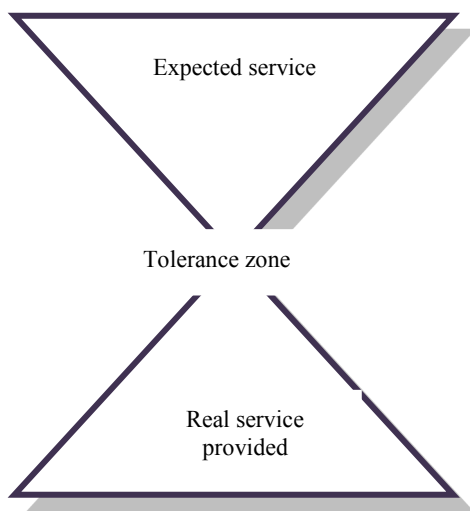


Fig. 1. The levels of customers' expectation

Source: [Ďaďo et al. 2006].

Product quality affects the satisfaction of guests resulting in a frequency of regular guests while minimizing the number of complaints in the hotel industry. The end result of improving product quality is to increase the competitiveness of the market in the hotel industry, increasing market share and increase in net profit. Successful promotion of the market is necessary to use not only the positive market factors but mainly their own positive impact on the market which is conditional on the quality of the product. Product quality however should not be regarded as static – the level and scope needs to be refined and adapted in response to changing market demands in the hotel industry [Novacká 1993].

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At present, there are three concepts of quality management in general, resulting evolutionary perspective on the development of quality assurance:

1. Quality standards.
2. Systems based on ISO standards.
3. Total quality management TQM [Janičková et al. 2006].

3. Expected versus real provided quality service in hotel

On the basis of the above Figure 1 the quality in the service can be understood as the difference between the service provided and what the customer expect. Relationship can be drawn:

$$Quality = Actual Provided Service - Expected Service$$

The relationship between the provided service and the service which the customer expects Mudie and Pirrie (2006) explain the equation:

$$Satisfaction = Perception - Expectation$$

A hotel as a temporary accommodation facility offers a variety of services and goods. In guests' terms these translate into a set of individual services. A hotel product has several levels:

- The base is what guests expect as standard (core product) and consider it for granted. Another area is what differ one hotel from another hotel and the resulting expectations of guests.
- Another area is the top services (expected product). This creates a zone extending a zone of competition between the services provided by the individual hotels. This is an element, which at first view of the same hotel services become different.

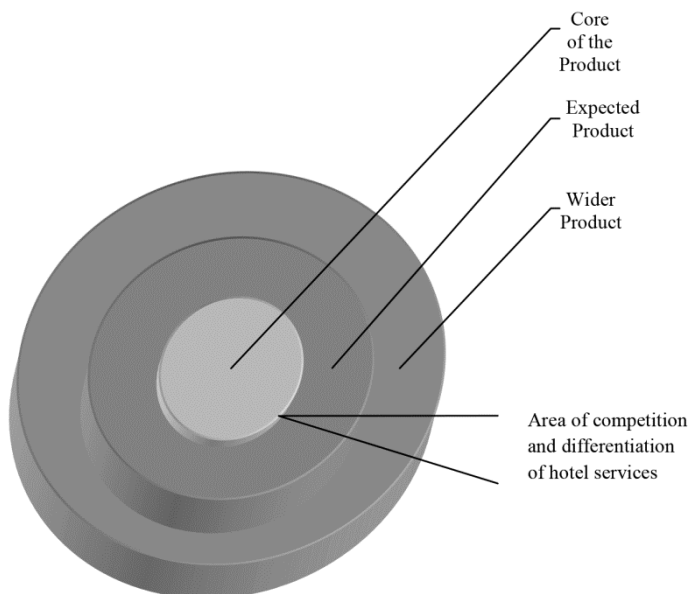


Fig. 2. Hotel Product

Source: Processing on the basis of: [Gúčík 2007].

- The last area is a something small, the hotel also provides guest (wider product), see Figure 2. This is a service that pushes the seal of the hotel to raising guest and ensures a certain position in the hierarchy [Gúčík 2007].

Expectations are formulated on the basis of past experience, commercials and heard the views, recommendations. Guests compare their expectations with realized / provided service after consumption of services. Then we can say:

- expected service < real provided service = decline and loss of interest in guest.
- expected service > real provided service = guest return, positive references.
- expected service = real provided service = unchanging status.

4. Model GAP

GAP model is the main subject of several studies e.g. Šambronská – Matušíková – Šenková. Measuring service quality of hotel establishments on base of GAP model with emphasis of dimension of service reliability. Both studies were treated at the same time participation with the thesis and in further studies focusing on the shift of services in terms of time (comparison 2009-2012 years).

GAP model clarifies the requirements a guest on deliver of the expected quality. It also identifies five possible conflicts, more precisely, gaps - GAP which arise as a result of the expectation and reality. Rifts show cause why provided services are failed in a view of guests [Ďaďo, Matejdes 2002].

- GAP 1 „Perception Management Gap” means the difference between expectation of the guest and understanding of the guest's expectations on the part of management. Hotel management still does not perceive the hotel guests' wishes correctly, during providing service that offers them. Moreover, offered services are judged differently.
- GAP 2 „Specific Gap” between management perception and service specification. Management has a clearly defined realistic idea of the quality in the hotel. However it lacks a required effort to achieve this quality, and it defines goals vaguely or sets unrealistic goals.
- GAP 3 „Procedural Gap” causes the specification and quality of services provided by real output. It is more targeted to the hotel staff of the hotel company and failing to meet causes of the quality from their side (lack of education, indifference interest in quality, lack of employee loyalty, excessive workload...).
- GAP 4 „Differential Gap” refers to the difference between the actual provided and communication-oriented to guests. It evaluates the consistency or the difference between the promised and the real provided service. Primarily focuses on the promotion and marketing communications relay to guests.
- GAP 5 „Summary Gap“ is mismatch between the expectations of the guest and his experience with the service. This gap is created when it is identifying one of the upper gaps [Šambronská 2008].

Karkalíková [2012] says GAP model has a goal to identify discrepancies between the producers and consumers of tourism services in the market and the subse-

quent analysis of the service on the basis of four divisions (GAP1 – Gap4). GAP 5 presents then disproportion between expected and realized service.

Arguments on a standardized questionnaire SERVQUAL which uses GAP model are divided among the five dimensions of service quality [Mateides, Ďad'o 2002]:

- a) Influence of the environment to client,
- b) Reliability of service,
- c) Sensitivity approach to customer,
- d) Qualifications of staff,
- e) Empathy into the individual wishes of the customer.

At the Department of Tourism and Hotel Management we deal with the issue of quality and its application to practice. We have conducted some minor research the last of which focused on finding the quality of hotels in Prešov by using the GAP model. We report a part of the research in this study.

In the original study in cooperation with students of the Department of Tourism and Hotel Management in 2009, 76 respondents awarded points (100 points) relatively evenly (Table 1). One of their intermediate goals was to evaluate different dimensions. In the repeated study the respondents (79 people) awarded points with larger but not strikingly significant differences (Table 2). The data of the survey in 2012 were collected in October 2012.

Table 1. Overview of the service quality dimensions of importance in terms of customer – 2009

| Dimension of service quality | Number of points | Average points per dimension |
|--|------------------|------------------------------|
| Service reliability | 1590 | 20,92 |
| Sensitivity approach to customer | 1550 | 20,39 |
| Influence of the environment to client | 1506 | 19,82 |
| Qualifications of staff | 1500 | 19,74 |
| Empathy into the individual wishes of the customer | 1454 | 19,13 |

Source: [Drábiková, Šambronská 2010, s. 65].

Table 2. Overview of the service quality dimensions of importance in terms of customer – 2012

| Dimension of service quality | Number of points | Average points per dimension |
|--|------------------|------------------------------|
| Service reliability | 1725 | 25,73 |
| Sensitivity approach to customer | 1611 | 21,15 |
| Influence of the environment to client | 1500 | 17,50 |
| Qualifications of staff | 1592 | 20,62 |
| Empathy into the individual wishes of the customer | 1472 | 15,00 |

Source: own processing.

Respondents regarded as the most important dimension „reliable of service” in 2009 as well as 2012. That dimension „reliability of service” is presented in partial studies “Measuring service quality of hotel establishments on base of GAP model with emphasis of dimension of service reliability” by Šambronská – Matušiková – Šenková.

5. Conclusion

It is currently necessary to provide services in the quality expected by the guest or presented and promised to him or her. A realistically provided service has an objective and subjective component. Therefore it is inevitable that the hotel management receives feedback on and gains control of an offered product/service. Reliability of service comprises a range of different aspects such as hotel equipment, service selection, service, communication, willingness and professional advice. Guests are very sensitive to details, for example damaged devices, or convenient position of the TV set, duration of hotel service, formal and informal communication with guests.

Basically guests expect what they want to get from provided services. If their expectations are not met they are disappointed. The consequences for the hotel are obvious. Guests do not come back and they do not give positive references.

Customer care is able to generate revenue in the hotel industry. Therefore, meeting the guest expectations should be included in the overall approach of the management of hotel services.

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MODEL GAP JAKO JEDNA Z MOŽLIWOŠCI SZACOWANIA JAKOŠCI USŁUG HOTELOWYCH

Streszczenie: Obecnie jakość jest postrzegana jako kluczowy element różnicowania usług, wskazując obszar, którym powinno zająć się każde przedsiębiorstwo pragnące pozostać na rynku. Jakość wpływa na sukces prowadzenia interesów i jednocześnie doprowadza do konkurencyjności przedsiębiorstw. Hotelarstwo jest postrzegane jako element turystyki. Może ono zaspokoić potrzeby turystów w obiektach zakwaterowania, oferując usługi tak podstawowe, jak i dodatkowe. Stosowanie się do standardowych zasad przez zapewnianie usług ustalonych przez dany kraj, organizację lub przedsiębiorstwo jest niezwykle ważne dla hotelarstwa. Istotne jest również znalezienie równowagi między postrzeganiem jakości przez klientów i przedsiębiorstwo. Artykuł opiera się na szeroko zakrojonych badaniach, które skupiają się na ocenie jakości wybranego rodzaju zakwaterowania.

Słowa kluczowe: model GAP, jakość usług, miejsce zakwaterowania, sondaż, zadowolenie klienta.