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The Satisfaction Index in the Hotel Business
Case Study: Vega Hotel by Galati

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Abstract: This study focuses on customers' level of satisfaction in the hotel industry. In this case, the level of satisfaction represents an index that links customers' satisfaction with the firm's effort to offer not only effective accommodation services, but other services as well. Under these circumstances, the hotel companies emphasize customers' satisfaction, realizing that customers' perception on the quality of products and services is a decisive factor in the size of the market segment and the level of profit.

Keywords: customers' satisfaction; Servqual model; customers' satisfaction index.

JEL Classification: D11; D12; L83; P36

1. Introduction

Generally, speaking about the hospitality industry, we consider a certain standard with implications on the quality of the services offered, and the clients of the hotel "hope that the hotel will be clean, comfortable, safe and secure. They expect it to be furnished with hygienic conditions, good and sanitary food and beverage at a reasonable price" (Guler & Yukselen, 2010).

Services provided by hotels nowadays are designed for efficiency which, combined with the design elements, change clients' perception. This new element, a fusion between the two dimensions, offers more than the quality provided by standards and goes up to a significant commitment of the employees, so the offered product, mixing luxury with experience, is exceptional, "a kind of unique art work". (Michelli, 2008.)

Hotel clients are divided into two categories: those doing business and vacationers. While business clients are "very sensitive to the efficacy of the reservation systems and to the comfort offered by the available equipment" (Lupu, 2010), vacationers generally prefer "options simpler and cheaper than a hotel" (Lupu, 2010). Selecting a hotel means information, marketing actions, and, why not, choosing the same accommodation place again due to previous complete satisfaction. "Basically, there is no perfect hotel" (Lupu, 2010), but there are some advantages, sometimes even considerable ones, that the hotel will use in order to appeal to a certain segment of customers. However, there will be no hotels appealing to all categories of clients.

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Consumers would like to choose a hotel from a set of alternatives, which would provide the maximum expected value based on a set of attributes. To help achieve the above objective, the consumer can independently search for information or use a travel agent. (Trivedi, Michael & Kalpesh, 2008)

Implicitly, the hotel does not sell the basic product, accommodation, but much more than this, it will sell a commercial name, with emphasis on an identity, a success factor which will answer the question "How can we offer what people wish for?" (Diller, Shedroff & Rhea, 2006.)

The starting point for any manager of a hotel whose strategy is oriented towards the client, is represented by the client's needs and expectations.

Hotel companies which offer efficiency will automatically attract a great level of satisfaction generated by high quality and will certainly obtain some advantages compared to their rival companies.

Therefore it is very important to know the real quality level of the supplied services in order to compare it with the target value (using a quality measurement system will make possible the coordination and orientation of the developed processes to fulfill customer requirements) (Mândru, 2011).

Customer perception is the hotel manager's highest priority. In this respect, customers' perception on hotel services provided constitutes a present feed-back on customers' requirements and, in long term, on maintaining, lowering or increasing the individual level of the standards of services offered.

2. Theoretical Concept

Customers' needs and requirements represent satisfaction at an adequate level of both their material and spiritual needs. Services for clients hold an essential role in this respect, since they satisfy their needs (requirements) as well as those ensuring comfort or leisure time. Therefore, services provided to clients are meant to satisfy their multiple needs.

Generally, the concept of client satisfaction induces psychological moods such as welfare, happiness and content.

An important trend in recent years has been the development of customer relationship management (CRM) systems directed towards improving customer retention and building customer loyalty (Johnson, Sivadas & Garbarino, 2008).

Customer relationship management (CRM) systems are based on a series of stages, but the most important is the one post-purchase.

The result of post-purchase assessment is a critical fact resulting in positive or negative attitudes which will lead to feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. It is essential for the multitude of internal or external factors which ensure the success of the business to make the customer purchase the brand again.
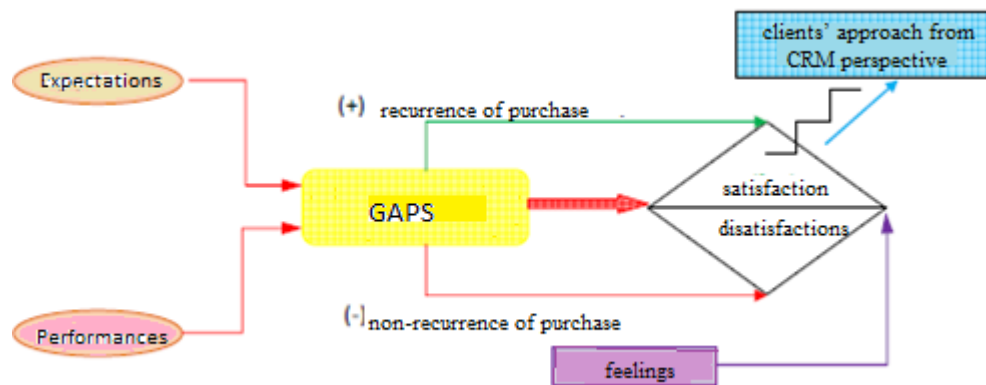
Figure 1. Satisfaction and connection from CRM perspective

There are two aspects that clients will measure irrespective of the notoriety of the brand they buy, that is:

1. an assessment process oriented towards cognitive dissonance in the case of services;

2. an assessment process on the difference between the previous beliefs and revised present convictions in the case of goods.

Leon Festinger's concept which envisages the psychological distemper due to the split between two or more conflicting ideas is found in the consumption behavior. There will be a difference, positive or negative between what we wish and what we find in reality, no matter if we talk about goods, services, activities or ideas.

"Some service marketing studies have indicated a weak effect between customer satisfaction and affective commitment for consumers" (Bansal, 2004; Bettencourt, 1997).

Competitiveness and long term profitability will be at a maximum level as long as it is done what is best for the consumer. In the hotel industry a hierarchy client satisfaction-client loyalty-business success would not surprise anybody as long as there is a correlation between client satisfaction and loyalty.

"Some people have suggested in recent times that customer satisfaction is ‟old hat″ and that we should be concentrating on costumer loyalty and ‟ delighting the customer". (Hill, Brierley & MacDougall, 1999, pp. 3)

An overall index of costumer satisfaction, often called satisfaction index, or costumer satisfaction index, is the overall average of all satisfaction scores. It isn't ideal because some things are more important than others to costumers, the category of social and cognitive psychology. The theory of attitudes and their attributions measurement ‟refers to the measurement of mental response and mental representations″ (Fauconnier & Turner, 2006), but they show the most important attributes in the process of choosing the level of satisfaction. This index shows the extent to which the current level of quality corresponds to the needs of consumers. "The subject of CSI (costumer satisfaction index) measurement captures, not the opinion of the respondent", (Yanova, 2015), but its attitudes are the most important in the survey.

3. The Case Study: The Satisfaction Index at Vega Hotel by Galati

The study was conducted on the basis of a questionnaire consisting of 44 questions in the case of the model Serqual. Among these questions that define the different levels of the main attributes were found some having a double meaning:

1. they emphasize the level of satisfaction according to servqual model;

2. they measure the satisfaction score used in calculating the satisfaction index;

There is a separate question for the importance the tourists place on the attributes that make up the satisfaction index calculation.

The sample of 241 tourists that have accepted to answer the question in the survey is not representative, taking into account that in 2013, 6747 tourists checked in in the hotel.

3.1. Hotel - General Presentation

Hotel Vega is one of the most appreciated hotels in Galati. Set in a picturesque location on the bank of Danube, downtown Galati, Hotel Vega is built in a modern style and it offers high quality accommodation conditions in a quiet and elegant frame. It is a three-star hotel and it has a four-star restaurant. The hotel belongs to Lyra Tour S.A trading company.

3.2. Research Methodology

Assessment of tourist service quality has been implemented according to the Servqual model requirements, that is by five important features such as seriousness, readiness, tangibility, empathy and reliability. The model is implemented on an answer scale, meant to encompass both the clients' expectations and perceptions regarding the services provided.

This model means asking clients 22 questions regarding their perception, as well as 22 questions on their expectations relative to the level of quality and satisfaction. Respondents are required to assess the statements using a Likert scale with seven items. The statements represent the extent of service quality based on five groups of factors which determine clients' satisfaction.

The factors have the following meaning:

- Seriousness – represents the offer of a fair, professional service, which provides confidence;

Elements that concur to seriousness are trust, fame, and image.

- Tangibility – the physical elements that make up the service provided and the facilities offered to the customers;

Elements that concur to tangibility are material goods.

- Readiness – represents the wish to help customers and to offer the services when necessary;

Elements that concur to readiness are staff's availability and training when providing services.

- Reliability – represents the staff's professionalism and kindness, physical safety and their ability to inculcate trust;

Elements that concur to reliability are: physical safety, financial safety and privacy.

- Empathy – represents the distinction of the services offered according to clients' requests.

Questions from 1 to 4 (4 included) define tangibility, 5-9 define seriousness, 10-13 define readiness, 14-17 define reliability and 18-22 define empathy.
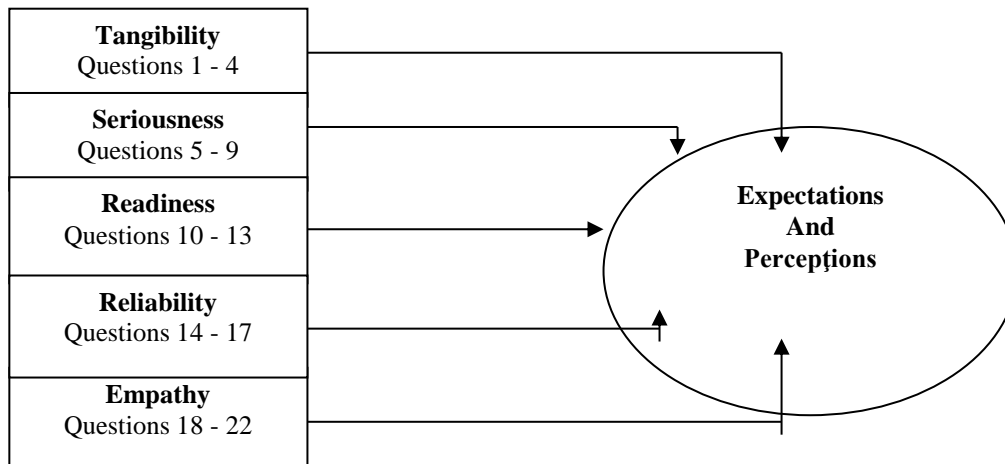

Figure 2. Main attributes considered by Servqual model
Source: Processed by author

Since the importance of expectations is vital, these are influenced by a series of other essential factors, described as follows:

- Personal needs: any client benefiting by a service will firstly turn to their personal needs which are expected to be fulfilled by the service provided. Since these needs are different according to each client and service, it is mandatory to clearly understand them in order to create an appropriate service;

- Previous experience: it is an important factor since most customers used services in the past. Therefore, previous experience influences at a certain extent future expectations regarding the service, including previous experience not only with that service, but also with other types of services. When it comes to accommodation services, expectations are influenced by the experience with similar services, but provided by another hotel;

- Oral communication: in this case, expectations are shaped according to informal talks with friends, family members and workmates, but they can also be shaped by the media or other organizations such as the audit agencies;

- Explicit communication regarding services: made up of staff statements but also advertising through brochures or other advertising materials. This type of communication has a direct and well-defined impact on hotel clients' expectations;

- Implicit communication regarding services: it alludes to certain factors, such as the hotel's appearance. An example in the accommodation services can be the refurbishing which can make the beneficiary or the client expect other aspects of the services offered in the same hotel to be of high-quality.

These previously stated factors hold an essential role in the client's thinking process which is different for each individual. Therefore, calculating the general level of satisfaction means calculating the satisfaction index. The attributes it relates to occupy different levels when establishing the hierarchy and some are more important than others.

Virtually, calculating the satisfaction index firstly means to find out the level of importance for each attribute considered, then each score obtained for each attribute to be multiplied with the level of importance.

In the first stage of the study through the Servqual model we can find out the satisfaction levels for the 5 attributes. The difference between perceptions and expectations indicates the satisfaction level. (see the results in table 1).

The results in Table 1 can be classified into two categories, as follows:

- "high" if the level of the expected/received service is above the average;

- "low", if the level of importance is below this average.

Respectively, these also allow not only a classification of the service, but also a hierarchy of the satisfaction level between expected and received service.

Table 1. Classifying and grading services

Atributte		Level of expected service NSa	Level of received service NSp	Difference (NSp – NSa)	Interpreting the degree of importance IP>IPmed. IP<Ipmed	Interpreting Servqual
S e	S1	3,67	4,33	-	The level of expected service seriousness corresponds with the average. The received service is above average.	Expectations correspond with the level of received service.
	S2	3,18	5,81	-		
	S3	3,46	5,53	-		
	S4	2,88	5,11	-		
	S5	2,86	6,13	-		
	$\overline{Se}$	3,21	5,38	2,17		
T	T1	2,96	5,04	-	The level of service tangibility is above average, and expectations are above average.	Staff training and endowment is at the level expected by the client.
	T2	4,55	5,45	-		
	T3	2,67	4,63	-		
	T4	4,90	5,1	-		
	$\overline{T}$	3,77	5,05	1,28		
P	P1	2,55	3,44	-	The level of service readiness is a little above the average.	Readiness level must be raised, but it can also be maintained.
	P2	4,95	5,05	-		
	P3	2,88	2,04	-		
	P4	3,93	6,07	-		
	$\overline{P}$	3,57	4,15	0,58		
Si	S1	2,81	1,82	-	Reliability is considerably below average and below the level of expected service.	In this case, it is necessary to maintain the reliability standard.
	S2	2,28	1,72	-		
	S3	2,96	3,03	-		
	S4	2,19	2,80	-		
	$\overline{Si}$	2,56	2,34	- 0,22		
E	E1	6,92	6,07	-	The level of attention granted to clients for both services is above average,	The level of attention granted to clients needs to be raised in
	E2	4,86	5,13	-		
	E3	3,91	3,82	-		

E4	5,38	4,62	-	and the level of the difference is, paradoxically, negative – considerably below average.	order to make the difference positive.
E5	2,55	2,50	-		
$\overline{E}$	4,72	4,42	- 0,30		
Average	$\overline{Nsa}$	$\overline{Nsp}$	$\overline{Md}$	Generally, the average of the difference is positive, even when it has been determined that the level of empathy offered to clients is only a standard, not real. A negative difference can also be observed, just as in the case of reliability level with the two indicators, S1, S2, reliability suggested by staff behavior and implementing environmentally-friendly policies. Therefore, correlating reliability with empathy, we can draw the conclusion that staff behavior towards clients is not in accordance with the hotel policy.	
	3,56	4,26	+ 0,70		

Source: Processed by author

For the second part of the study, which will rate the level of the satisfaction index, we have considered the following attributes:

1. location – according to N. Lupu "the degree of occupancy of the future hotel, as well as the type of clients, will mostly depend on its location" (Lupu, 2010, pp. 397) or according to Conrad Hilton[1] "location, location, location";

2. room layout – price of the hotel room also depends on the floor, view, area, or furniture;

3. level of price – accommodation price is renting the hotel room for one day;

4. service quality – we will consider the difference between received and expected service from the Servqual analysis;

5. check-in/out – aims at a flexible schedule, offering help with the luggage, monitoring the waiting time for the customers;

6. front - office helpfulness – although the front office is sometimes seen as being the forefront of the hotel activity, it controls more than the activities taking place there. Irrespective of its size, the front desk must be organized in order to manage key tasks and responsibility fields;

7. parking – there is a great disadvantage for the hotels having no parking or insufficient parking space for the number of clients;

8. staff appearance/ behavior – "the relationship with the client gives substance to the "emotional quality" (Lupu, 2010, pp. 147) which can not be neglected. In fact, the first impression does matter.

The importance scores are used to calculate the weighing factors. In table 2 the first column of data shows the average importance score from the hotel survey. The Likert scale was standardized on the 7th step, while the 4th step means neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

At first we will calculate the levels of importance tourists place on each of the above-mentioned attributes, thus obtaining the data in Table 2.

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[1] Conrad Nicholson Hilton (December 25, 1887 – January 3, 1979) was an American hotelier and the founder of the Hilton Hotels chain.

Table 2. Calculating the weighing factors

Attribute	Importance scores	Weighting factors
Location	6,4	15,49
Room layout	6,2	15,01
Level of price	6,1	14,76
Service quality	0,70	1,69
Check-in/out	5,5	13,31
Front - office helpfulness	5,8	14,04
Parking	4	9,68
Staff appearance/ behavior	6,6	15,98
TOTAL	41,3	100%

During the second stage, we take into account the satisfaction levels tourists place on the attributes considered. In this respect, see Table 3.

Table 3. Calculating the satisfaction index

Attribute	Satisfaction scores	Weighting Factors	Weighted Scores
Location l	6,2	15,49	9,603
Room layout	4,9	15,01	7,354
Level of price	5,8	14,76	8,560
Service quality	0,70	1,69	1,183
Check-in/out	4,4	13,31	5,856
Front - office helpfulness	5,2	14,04	7,300
Parking	4,6	9,68	4,452
Staff appearance/ behavior	5,4	15,98	8,629
TOTAL	37,3	100%	53,177

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In this case we obtain a satisfaction level index of 53,177%.

The obtained level of satisfaction is above average for the hotel business as it is wished that clients' opinions and attitudes match expectations, which leads towards competitiveness and long term profitability. We can conclude that the obtained level of satisfaction is in correlation with the considered attributes, while the Scatter chart, which offers information on Correlation, Homogeneity and presented and analyzed data symmetry, shows a direct correlation.
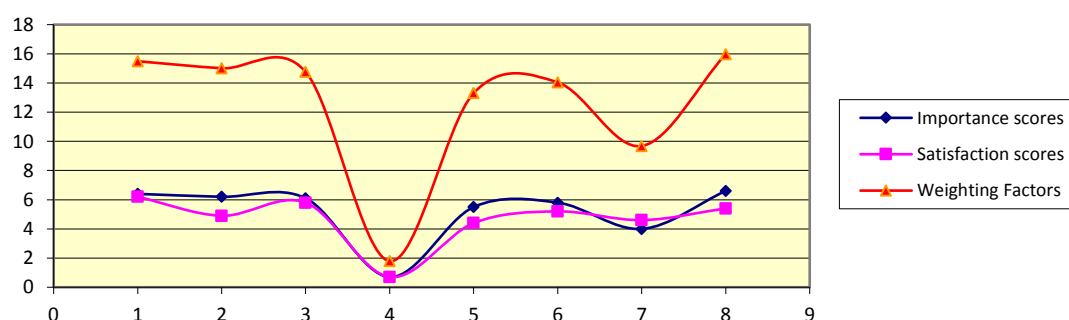

Chart 1. Level of satisfaction is in correlation with the considered attributes.

For a positive satisfaction level identified by the 5 dimensions of the Sevqual model, we can notice that the differences between clients' perceptions and expectations do not all have negative values. This result indicates that for the hotel some attributes such as reliability and empathy are not in conformity

with clients' requirements. Clients view the reliability level as being too low while being prone to risks, and not all services are offered for individuals, for each client, but for collectivity. The study needs to be repeated at regular periods of time in order to see the desired level of quality.

4. Conclusions

The results of the study can be found only in three dimensions of the Sevqual study, that is tangibility, seriousness and readiness. For empathy and reliability the management must adopt other strategies to meet the clients' needs.

The basis is the assessment of the service from a previous experience, even if many aspects have been changed. Perceptions are already formed and a change for the better is going to be difficult to achieve.

The study efficacy is focused on the level of satisfaction index, which, by the measured level, shows that it is generally correlated with clients' expectations.

The main issue is that theoretically, the practice of following some standards does not offer the desired level since there is no implication from the members of the organization. On the other hand, the level of quality for the services provided, as well as the level of satisfaction represent a sum of each satisfied or dissatisfied client.

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