

Models of Quality Management in the Tourism Field

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Abstract. Integrated Quality Management must not be considered as a method guaranteeing immediate success, but it may lead to certain key-benefits on the grounds of which success may be achieved. The quality exists only if a product or a service fulfills the demands and the expectations of the customers. Consequently, a strategy based on the quality standards established by the total customer knowledge must be obtained.

Keywords: tourism, quality management, models, services, standards.

1 Introduction

Total quality management systems are a common feature of the approach that suppliers of specific tourist services (tour operators, travel agents, hotels, restaurants, etc.) are developing. Nevertheless, as far as tourists are concerned, the satisfaction derived from staying at a certain destination does not only depend on their experience of specific tourist services, but also on more general factors, such as hospitality, safety, sanitation and salubrity, traffic and visitor management (A. Camarda, 2006)¹.

The success of a destination in terms of tourist satisfaction stands as a function with several independent components. This stresses the need for a strategic and integrated planning of the tourist destinations together with the selective use of specific instruments and techniques through which the integrated quality management (including quality control) can be put into practice in the destination.

The working definition of the integrated quality management developed in the tourist destinations in order to supply practical recommendations is (European Commission, 1998)²:

‘... an approach to managing a tourism destination which focuses on an ongoing process of improving visitor satisfaction, while seeking to improve local economy, the environment and the quality of life of the local community.’

The diagram below describes this process.

¹ A. Camarda, N. Rădulescu – The Management of Tourism, Omnia Uni S.A.S.T. Brasov, 2008

² European Commission Integrated Quality Management in Tourism, (1998), Mayrhofen, Austria, July , pp.69-74

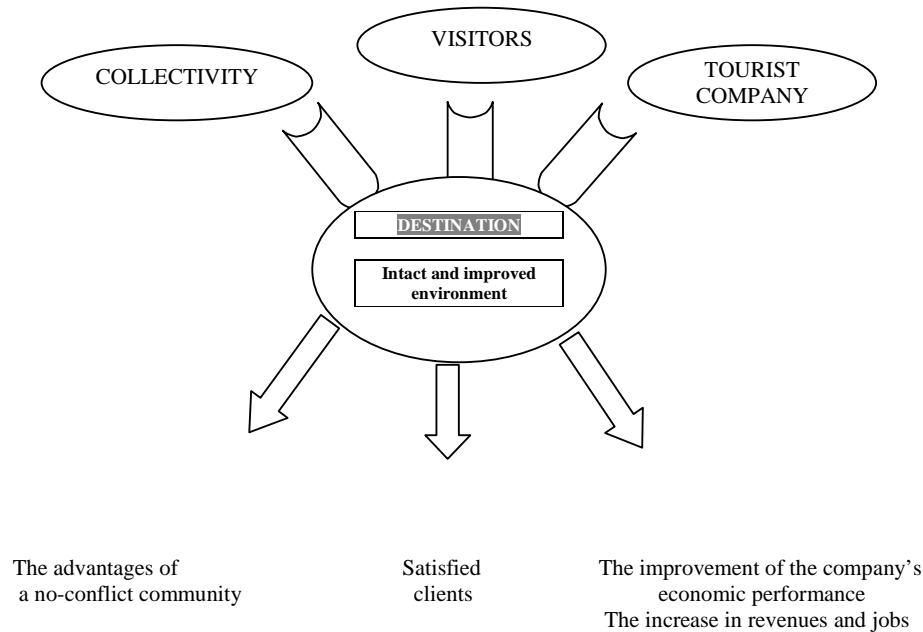


Figure 1 Diagram of the Integrated Quality Management
Source: Integrated Quality Management in Tourism, Austria, July 1998

The concept of the Integrated Quality Management (IQM) first appeared in the theory of business administration in the 1980s. It is a way to accomplish the objectives of an organization through improving clients' experience with a certain product or service supplied. The concept refers to the efficient use of resources as well as to the level of participation and satisfaction of the persons that are part of the organization. The integrated quality management follows this approach, although it is more complex and flexible due to the fact that an organization has several objective types which should be approached from an integrated point of view.

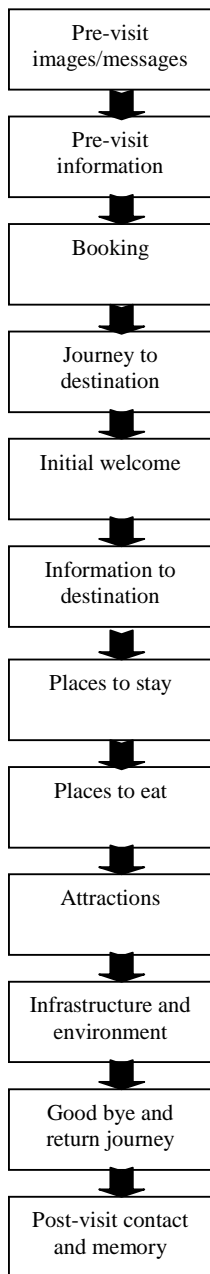
'Sustainable tourism development' is concept accepted at the international level and in most of the tourist destinations. It mainly refers to the maintenance of a balance between visitors' needs, the environment and the host community. Commonly, a tourist destination manager has two main objectives in view.

- a. To increase local income and the number of jobs by means of tourism.
- b. To ensure that the environment and the quality of the local people's life are not affected, but improved by means of tourism.

Integrated quality management can fulfill these objectives by improving visitor satisfaction and monitoring tourism impact on the local environment and on the economy.

The two key elements of the IQM approach are:

1. focus on visitors, improvement of the quality of the supply by meeting tourists' needs and influencing their activities so as to make sure that they will be back and make recommendations to other people.
2. involvement of the local people and tourist enterprises in the management of the destination, as participants and users of the management process.



Structures and elements of quality management

A quality management model issued by the European Foundation for Quality management (EFQM) is used in Europe in the public and private sectors.

This model can help understand how to organize a destination and identifies nine elements. Five of these elements are related to structure and functions:

leadership, strategy, management of personnel; use of resources; and the process of service supply. The other four elements are related to result:

Components of the visitor experience

It is useful to know that visitors’ experience of a destination resembles a sequence of influences distributed in space and time, starting with the initial planning, continuing with the actual visit and finishing with the departure and subsequent reflections. This is usually called the ‘*Tourism Value Chain*’. What matters within the framework of the Integrated Quality Management is the quality of each of the stages in this chain.

Stages to be covered in order to meet visitors’ expectations

Quality management partially refers to meeting visitors’ expectations through fair standards, as well as their efficient observance and communication. The SERVQUAL model identifies a series of gaps within this process. These are shown in the diagram below which also indicates the corrective actions requested in the tourist destinations.

Figure 2 Stages of the customer satisfaction; personnel satisfaction; community integration; and tourist experience operational results.
 Source: *Integrated Quality Management in Tourism, Austria, July 1998*

Levels of visitor demand to be met

Some quality theories, such as the one developed by Kano, refer to ‘must be’ quality standards and to ‘attractive’ quality standards. When establishing quality standards for facilities and services in the destinations, it should be useful to consider three levels of the visitors’ needs that should be implemented and communicated by means of efficient information. These levels are:

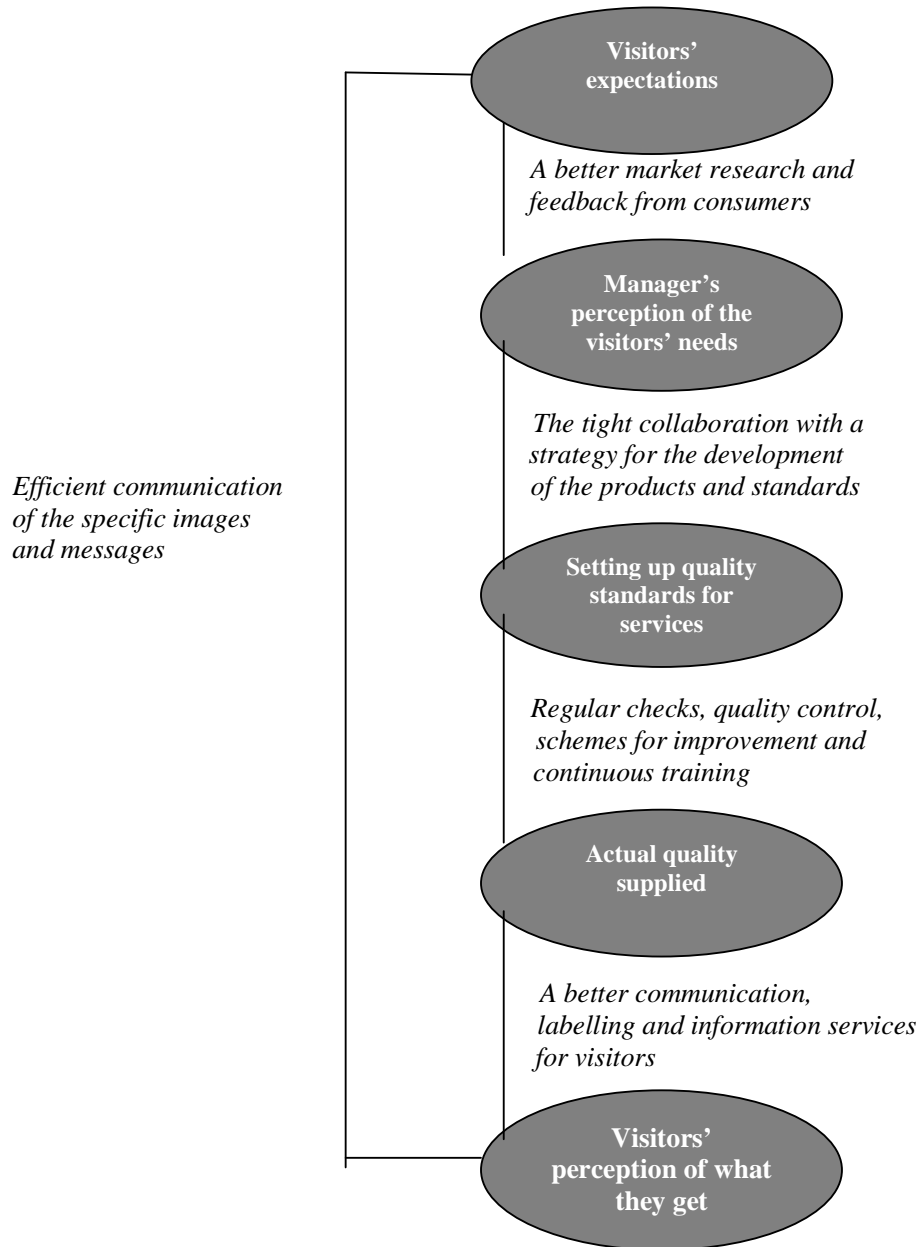


Figure 3 Tourism Value Chain

Source: *Integrated Quality Management in Tourism*, Austria, July 1998

Level 1: Compulsory demands

These refer to factors such as sanitation and safety. Although their lack may lead to the failure of the destination, their observance does not add value at the competitive level.

Level 2: Measurable demands

These measurable factors refer to the number of attractions in the destinations, the sizes of the rooms, etc. These can influence visitors' decision to choose a certain destination, hence the need for correct information.

Level 3: Attractive demands.

These are more subjective factors in that they make reference to the facilities' style and the way visitors are treated by hosts. They can also refer to certain presents that can highly influence visitors' final experience.

What does Integrated Quality Management actually mean in a tourist destination? It means that a destination should be³ (Lorato-Giotart J.P, 1997):

- ❖ well organized, with clearly defined objectives;
- ❖ paying attention to all aspects of visitors' experience and to the impact of tourism on the local community and the environment
- ❖ engaged in a continuous process of supervision and improvement.

The targeting of the integrated quality management goals assumes a certain number of structures and actions that have to be consolidated or implemented. These are summed up below:

I. Cooperation for strategy development

➤ *Process determination*

The initial reasons for quality achievement in rural areas are different from area to area. No matter what these reasons are, they should be followed by a meeting of the main participants in order to guarantee an integrated and complex approach.

➤ *Leadership and partnership structures*

Integrated quality management processes assume the involvement of certain structures:

- ❖ **Local tourism businesses**
 - ❖ **The local community**, including local people, interest groups and other types of rural companies.
- *A clear, well conveyed strategy*

The development of a strategy based on analysis and consultation and completely recognized in its destination is needed and it should comprise objectives for quality improvement.

2. Providing quality at all the stages of visitor experience

This is achieved through the *Tourism Value Chain* concept and it refers to the attention to details and the facilitation of all the stages for the tourist. In the rural areas mention should be made of seven elements:

- a) *Marketing and communication* – this refers to who the potential tourists are, the creation of a quality image that shall convey clear messages, thus facilitating booking and maintaining contact with the potential tourists.
- b) *Welcome, orientation and information* – being the main aspect of a destination, this element refers to creating a first impression in order to make sure that tourists understand the area, behave responsibly and have all the necessary information since the very beginning.
- c) *Accommodation* – most of the accommodation places in the rural area are family bed and breakfast structures, managed by persons with not enough training in the field. For this reason, special attention should be paid to the types of accommodation in the area, the level of services and facilities offered, as well as the degree to which the establishments reflect the destination's rural qualities.
- d) *Local products and gastronomy* – local food and crafts may represent a special feature of the rural areas. This is why their quality improvement would not only indulge tourists with a special experience, but it could also stand as a benefit to the local economy and the agricultural landscape⁴.

³ Lorato-Giotart J.P. (1997) Nuove pratiche e nuovi e modelli turistici, in „Annali Italiani del Turismo Internazionale., Vol. II, n. 2,

⁴ *** Action for more sustainable european tourism, Report of the Tourism Sustainability Group, februarie 2007

- e) *Attractions and events* – rural areas have few attractions or events that reflect local heritage and ambient. Quality management implies the connection of these experiences and their creative promotion.
- f) *Recreation* – a rising demand for recreational places where tourists can walk or ride their bicycles (for instance) has been noticed. Consequently, rural areas should supply good access and facilities in order to be able to meet these demands.
- g) *Environment and infrastructure* – tourists expect rural areas to be a recreational space, easy to reach, with adequate shops and other services, as well as with clean and attractive environment.