

Strategies to Improve the Quality Management of Hotel Services in Romania

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Abstract

Tourism is a basic component in a country's economy, but also in the human social whole. In this paper, we chose a hotel in Romania to implement a management improvement strategy. Hotel Rina Cerbul, is a 2 star hotel, located in Sinaia, Prahova county. Following a detailed analysis of the hotel management and the level of quality of the services offered by this hotel, a strategy was developed to improve the quality of the services provided. Regarding the establishment of the objectives of the hotel on all levels, we chose to use a more complex way of establishing all the activities carried out within the hotel in order to carry out a complex examination that would allow to fully detach its fundamental objectives. Following a general evaluation of the hotel, with the help of the EFQM model, the objectives of the strategy to improve the hotel's quality management system were established.

Key words: quality, management, tourism, strategies, hotel services

J.E.L. classification: L1, L8, Z3, M5

1. Introduction

The success of any business is determined by the way the customer perceives the quality offered. Therefore, the activity of any organization is aimed at knowing the requirements of the modern consumer, which is increasingly demanding. The quality of services is the basic criterion in choosing a hotel. Thus, every business must be supported by a policy aimed at consumers, to meet and anticipate their needs.

Tourism is a basic component in a country's economy, but also in the human social whole. Over time, tourist services have become the central component of tourism, so special attention has been paid to tourism services companies, but especially to hotel units and factors that may influence the competitiveness of these units. In the age of the global competition environment, when there are a multitude of products, services and replacement destinations, understanding the term quality is not only a problem to be solved but is seen above all as an opportunity for competition. This has led to increasing concerns about adopting new concepts and approaches to increase the quality of hotel services, while optimizing the needs of tourists. In this sense, the main way to improve the quality of services in the hotel industry is through quality management.

Studying the needs of consumers is a condition for achieving quality services, for achieving competitiveness through a strategy focused on quality. This is where quality management comes in, which aims for long-term success by meeting customer requirements and gaining benefits for all members. The management system within the hotel industry must be based on the objectives pursued by the hotels, on the services offered by them and on the practices used. Thus, although quality management may vary from unit to unit, its purpose is always the same: effectiveness.

The provision of good quality hotel services requires the unit's ability to control its activity at any time, as well as the ability to solve problems that may arise in the course of its activity. In the hotel field, both obtaining as well as maintaining and improving the quality of services is a difficult aspect to achieve, so the continuous development of quality must involve all groups of resources, from highly trained staff to modern materials and procedures for providing services.

Given that customer requirements are constantly changing, being influenced by society, their own desires or other environmental factors, the strategies used in the field of quality management in the hotel industry must keep pace with these changes. In this sense, not only fidelity to the provision of a quality service is sufficient, but it is necessary the continuous development, the permanent improvement and renewal of the quality of the offered services, as well as the recognition of the quality of the services by the consumer. This is due to the fact that the quality factor implies a comparison between the service provided and the one expected by the consumer.

The quality of services is considered substantial when it comes to defining organizational success. The winning strategy is to provide customers with excellent quality services. In the current environment, the need to improve the quality of services in the hotel industry in Romania has come into the spotlight due to the tough competition in which hotels are trying to attract their competitive advantage through the human factor.

The purpose of this paper is to show the possibilities and specifications for improving the quality of services in the hotel industry, through quality management, which has become an essential part of the management of hotels that want to succeed. This study shows the possibility of implementing programs to improve hotel services in order to meet the requirements and needs of customers.

2. Literature review

The quality of services is considered the lifespan of the hotel and the core of service management. The quality of services is related to customer satisfaction, and customer satisfaction is associated with the intention to review customers. If an effective image is portrayed to customers, it will create a competitive advantage for the hotel. (Ryu et al, 2008). As a result of the service development process, three parts have emerged that form the quality of services: the structure of the service process, the system and the resources of the service.

Customer satisfaction plays an important role in the hotel's performance. In the hotel industry, as the service has direct interactions with customers, customer satisfaction is the means of measuring the quality of services in hotels.

The performance of the hotel is directly related to the improvement of the quality of services. There is a significant relationship between improving the quality of services and changing hotel performance. High-level development tools are used to the satisfaction of more users in terms of service and quality. The key element is to retain and attract customers. Customer satisfaction plays a mediating role in the perceived value of the hotel and in the behavioral intention. Thus, both the public and private sectors have approached a customer-oriented quality management. (Un et al, 2009)

In order to improve hotel services, diversity and complexity must be used during the processes of attracting customers and meeting their requirements. Thus, the quality of hotel services must include all those procedures that determine the satisfaction of customers. These procedures must have the following aspects (Berry et al, 1991): (1) service culture: the hotel must have a management control over the achievement of the service culture; (2) kindness - within the tourist units a culture of service must be developed, based on a common responsibility of the employees, on a systemic approach to the provision of services, an approach that has as a starting point the satisfaction of the clients' needs; (3) standardization - the provision of services must be based on clearly defined principles and procedures that allow the control of the obtained results and the improvement of the activities where it is the case; (4) expertise - the staff must have professional, interpersonal skills, an attitude in support of the client; (5) complaints - the evaluation of customer satisfaction must be a continuous process that results in the permanent revision of quality standards at the level of the contemporary service consumer, much more informed, more receptive to new, more demanding (Gustafsson et al, 2006).

Quality in services depends on several factors, such as the material basis, the preparation of human resources, the exigency factors of the service consumer. Special attention must be paid to the human component, Romania occupying not such a leading place in the international rankings in terms of the quality of training of human resources in tourism. This situation requires a sustained effort of stakeholders - educational system, business environment, managers, and entrepreneurs to develop a strategy for training and development of tourism employees, based on motivation, satisfaction, behavior of individuals towards performance and economic activity in general.

Professional motivation is the will to make an important effort to achieve the objectives set by the organization, a will conditioned by the ability of management to meet a personal need (Grahamand et al, 1995).

Motivation is conditioned by three key elements: effort, business objectives and needs.

The idea of effort corresponds to a certain degree of work intensity. If a person feels motivated then he/she will work harder and for longer, getting even more involved in the task he has to perform. This effort must be channeled correctly towards achieving the company's objectives by carrying out quality activities. Motivation must be seen as a process of meeting needs. Need designates an internal state of the individual, characterized by the desire to achieve a goal. An unmet need creates an imbalance, a tension that causes the individual to act in order to restore balance. This imbalance determines a behavior of searching for individual, particular objectives, which by achieving them satisfy the need, reducing the tension.

To reduce this tension, the employee makes an effort proportional to the intensity of this tension. If this effort allows the need to be met, it simultaneously reduces the tension. From a professional point of view, this effort to reduce stress must be in line with the company's objectives.

If individual needs are incompatible with the company's goals, the efforts of individuals risk going against the interests of the organization.

A motivated employee is energetic and enthusiastic. He works well and is constantly looking for new responsibilities, helping to support the morale of the team he belongs to.

The material component influences the quality of tourist services through the demand for comfort, functionality, aesthetics, as well as ergonomic qualities of the equipment provided by certain units. One of the most important factors influencing these requirements is the level of technicality, which determines the level of comfort and quality of services. The higher the technicality, the better the service, as it offers heating and sound insulation, various room facilities, such as reliable installations, which lead to both lower maintenance costs and fewer complaints.

Another important element of quality is the sizing and organization of different spaces which must include aspects regarding the flexibility of the offer, in order to be able to offer complementary services, such as the organization of congresses and conferences, as well as other events.

In the case of Romania, which has a diverse tourism potential, with authentic components, the transition to the use and improvement of service quality standards would be an element of differentiation and would increase the competition of the Romanian tourism product. This has also been demonstrated by international research studies that consider Romania an interesting tourist destination.

3. Research methodology

Research methodology is the foundation of scientific research and is embodied in a set of principles and research methods that contribute to obtaining valid results from the research undertaken (Marczyk et al, 2005, p.4). It has a direct impact on the processes of validation and generalization of a study and plays a very important role in the development of knowledge related to the business environment.

Most countries, which did not perceive the importance of tourism development and the transition to a new approach to the quality of customer service, have made a complex system of standards in the hotel industry at the national level, which requires the service to be characterized by criteria such as: reaction, creditworthiness, curiosity, flexibility, etc.

So, we chose a hotel in Romania to implement a management improvement strategy. Hotel Rina Cerbul, is a 2 star hotel, located in Sinaia, Prahova county, which offers tourists double, triple rooms and apartments. Following a detailed analysis of the hotel management and the level of quality of

the services offered by this hotel, a strategy was developed to improve the quality of the services provided.

The strategy (Nicolescu et al, 2008) represents the defining element of the company's activity, because it specifies the directions in which the company is oriented to achieve the proposed objectives and the general way in which it carries out its activity. The formulation of the company's strategy is the indispensable final act of the laborious process that has a high responsibility and offers the possibility of measuring the managerial capacity of strategic decision makers. The formulation of the strategy reflects the clarity of the company's top management conception regarding the major coordinates of its activity and the performances to be achieved.

The elaboration and implementation of a strategy (Porter, 1980) to improve the management of a company involves a process structured in three stages within which several phases of this process take place. These refer to: (1) the substantiation of the strategy; (2) elaboration of the strategy; (3) implementation of the strategy.

The first operational component of the strategy is the strategic objectives. They express the major goals of the organization and materialize new economic, social, technical, managerial dimensions of hotel performance. The strategic objectives represent the starting point in outlining a plan for improving the quality of hotel services and must target all its procedural and structural components.

Regarding the establishment of the objectives of the Rina Cerbul hotel on all levels, we chose to use a more complex way of establishing all the activities carried out within the hotel in order to carry out a complex examination that would allow to fully detach its fundamental objectives.

The EFQM model is a tool for conducting a complete, systematic and ongoing examination of an organization's activities and results, by comparing it with a performance model called a self-assessment model. The EFQM model is based on the principle of customer satisfaction, staff satisfaction and integration into the life of the community, these being obtained through the function of leadership, policy and strategy, personnel management, resources and their processing. All this ultimately leads to excellent operational results.

4. Results

Following a general evaluation of the Rina Cerbul hotel with the help of the EFQM model, the objectives of the strategy to improve the hotel's quality management system were established.

Table no. 1. Strategic objectives to improve quality management

	EFQM RESULTS
LEADERSHIP	Mission development, vision, values and ethics - play the role of models of the culture of excellence;
	Ensures that the hotel management system is continuously created, implemented and improved;
	Promoting specific strategic activities to improve customer / beneficiary relations;
POLITICS AND STRATEGIES	Creating policies and strategies based on information obtained by measuring performance, research, learning and related external activities;
	Continuous improvement of the approach technique of the market and customers;
PERSONAL	Developing the company's strategy through the active involvement of employees;
	Organizing trainings;
RESOURCES	Improving conditions and facilities;
	Modernization of the offered conditions;
PROCESSES	Use appropriate methods to implement change;
	Forming a strategic plan based on innovation;
RESULTS IN RELATION TO CUSTOMERS	Improving the conditions offered;
	Implementing new facilities;
	Implementing customer transport to different destinations;
	Application of questionnaires to measure customer satisfaction with the quality of services provided;

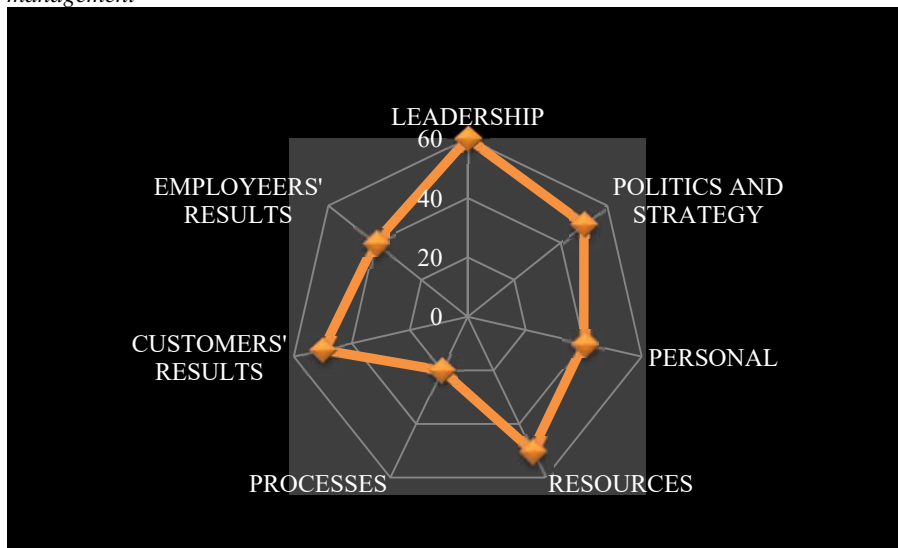
RESULTS IN RELATION TO EMPLOYEES	Permanent request for feedback from employees;
	Paying more attention to the requests made by them.

Source: made by the author based on the EFQM model

Following the application of the EFQM method in order to establish the current situation of the Rina Cerbul hotel and to identify the structures in which it is necessary to act the improvement strategy, we obtained the following radar.

The correlations between the elements of the EFQM Model, which are cause-effect relationships, are really the ones that make the whole quality management system work through better results, sustainable success and adaptability. Thus, the hotel manages to maintain its position on the market.

Figure no.1. Radar indicating the structures in which to act through the strategy of improving quality management



Source: done by the author

Table no.2. How to achieve the objectives proposed through the Balance Scorecard method

	OBJECTIVES	MEASUREMENTS	TARGET	INITIATIVE
Financial	Improving the efficiency of the services offered by investing in customer relations;	Cost, unity, efficiency	20% Improvement	Detailed monitoring
Clients	Implementation of new facilities; Application of questionnaires	Quality / price ratio; Expectations / satisfaction ratio;	Improving quality by 30% Increasing customer satisfaction by 20%	Monthly monitoring; Monthly monitoring;
Internal process	Increasing employee satisfaction; Establishing long-term goals	Work / reward ratio; Objective / time ratio	Increases efficiency by 20%; With 10% more objectives / year;	Monthly monitoring; Annual monitoring;
Learning and development	Vocational training	Organizing courses	20% more training	Monthly monitoring

Source: made by the author based on the Balanced Scorecard method

To improve and achieve the general objectives listed above, the Balance Scorecard method was used as an improvement method. The Balanced Scorecard (BSC) is a management system and a strategic planning tool, widespread in business and industry, in public state institutions, as well as in non-profit organizations. BSC improves external and internal communication. In addition, it monitors the performance of an organization based on its strategic objectives. The table below shows the Balance Scorecard method.

Establishing the necessary resources to achieve the proposed objectives is a very important step in the process of developing the strategy for improving quality management in the hotel. There is a high probability that major difficulties will arise in this process, especially in terms of customer satisfaction and connection to the culture of the organization.

Table no.3. The time necessary to achieve the proposed objectives

Objective/action	Time to complete it
•Improving the quality of services provided	1 year
• Implementing new facilities	1 year
• Increasing customer satisfaction	6 months
• Employee satisfaction	6 months
• Professional training	2 months

Source: made by the author based on the Balanced Scorecard method

The implementation of the strategy (Ansoff, 1980) is the last stage of the process of improving the company's management and is a complex stage that requires a rigorous organization. In this sense, several steps must be taken: (1) preparing the implementation of the strategy; (2) complete or partial remodeling of the management system of the organization; (4) operating the planned strategic changes; (5) supervising the implementation and evaluating the results of the strategy; (6) the design and operationalization of certain improvements; (7) motivation of stakeholders.

Table no.4. Implementing the strategy

Measure	Resources necessary	Person in charge	Application period	Observations
Improving the efficiency of the services provided	-resources needed to purchase new furniture; - resources needed to invest in customer relations; -trained staff.	-managers	year	-use of new operating technologies; - purchase of modern furniture.
Implementing new facilities	- purchase of ergonomic equipment	-managers	6 months	-raising the level of technicality
Increasing customer satisfaction	-trained staff; -implementing new facilities; - application of opinion questionnaires	-managers -staff	6 months	-establishing a necessary order of processes;
Employee satisfaction	-resources needed to increase the salary income of employees	-managers	6 months	- increase bonuses; - salary increases; - motivation through bonuses for staff involved in improvement ideas
Professional training	- resources necessary for training	-managers -staff	6 months	- organizing learning courses; - periodic evaluation of the knowledge acquired by employees

Source: done by the author

In order to implement the strategy for improving the quality management, Rina Cerbul Hotel has developed a program for preparing and implementing the strategy.

The effective application of the changes necessary to improve the quality management is achieved by finalizing and operationalizing the strategy. The operationalization of the strategic changes implies the realization of some fundamental changes both in terms of the procedural and structural components of the hotel. Improving the quality management within the Rina Cerbul hotel by operationalizing the proposed strategic changes, aims at the following aspects:

Table no.5. Operationalization of the strategy for improving quality management

Aspects	Operationalization
TECHNICAL	the use of new operating technologies;
	purchase of new furniture;
	improving the facilities offered, by improving the communication network and the internet;
	implementation of customer awakening systems;
	improving the visibility of the hotel in the online environment;
	measuring customer satisfaction;
	providing customers with foreign exchange and fax / xerox services;
ECONOMICAL	ensuring the material resources necessary to improve the quality of services;
	promoting a new principle of customer relationship management;
HUMAN	increasing the salary income of employees;
	organising trainings;
MANAGEMENT	mission development, vision, values and ethics play their role as models of the culture of excellence;
	promoting specific strategic activities to improve customer relations;

Source: done by the author

As we can see, the implementation of strategic changes is a complex process, easy to achieve theoretically, but much more difficult to implement. The success of the managerial strategy of quality improvement consists in knowing and mastering all the variables that may appear along the way.

5. Recommendations

Strategies and policies (Stănescu et al, 2009) developed by managerial mechanisms play an essential role in the design and substantiation of the activities that any hotel carries out. In the essential realization of the forecast, strategies and policies mark the development, of their content depending, most often decisively, the efficiency of the interface compared to other accommodation units, the extent to which they maintain and amplify the occupied market segment and the profitability obtained. Therefore, it is recommended first of all to implement a quality management system in each accommodation unit and then, its development and improvement through various strategies.

Regarding the Rina Cerbul hotel, but also other hotels interested in increasing their value on the market and the number of customers, they must define very well their goals and objectives, both in the long term and in the short term. Strategic managerial thinking is what discerns and defines the goals and objectives of the society in the long run and the means to be used to achieve them.

6. Conclusions

Quality must be the main goal of a hotel unit. The delivery of quality services can only be possible when a customer is satisfied and his expectations have been met. Therefore, the client must be the mainstay after which any hotel guides the quality of its services. As quality is paramount for any

accommodation unit, the implementation of advantageous strategies for improving quality management is a very important goal for any hotel, despite the difficulty involved.

In conclusion, in order to implement and apply a strategy for improving the quality management of a service-providing unit, the policy must include a set of long-term objectives related to all activities carried out, based on available resources. All major actions to be taken and the main managers and executors, as well as efficiency indicators, must also be established. Every organization, regardless of its size or object of activity, must have its own strategy that it can continuously improve in order to improve the quality of the services offered and to occupy a decisive position in the market.

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