

Study on the importance of applying the principles of quality management in tourist services

BOICIUC Carmen¹

¹Stefan cel Mare University of Suceava

carmen.boiciuc85@gmail.com

Abstract: Globally, tourism is the most developed economic sector, its strong influence surpassing established economic sectors such as the automotive industry or the agri-food sector.

The fantastic potential to stimulate the development of other economic branches (constructions, food sector, transport industry), as well as the influence it exerts on the gross domestic product of countries like Spain, Greece, San Marino, make the tourism sector an economic and social phenomenon. In the context of an accelerated expansion of the tourism industry worldwide, which increases the number of those involved in tourism, there is a need to create a system to maintain the quality of tourism services and improve services offered to tourists.

This paper aims to analyze the importance of applying the principles of quality management in tourism services through sociological research methods.

Key words: tourism, tourism services, quality management, quality principles, competitive management

1. Introduction

Tourism is highlighted as the activity of spending free time for relaxation and leisure purposes away from home and work. Also, tourism, as an industry and economic area, involves the development of goods and services necessary for practicing tourism in the best conditions. [1].

Over time, the tourism industry has proven to be the fastest growing industry in the world, becoming a key sector in world economic life. [2]

Defined as tools that enhance the natural and anthropic resources of different geographical areas, tourism services are those actions closely related to the actual activity. [3] Some of those activities aim at covering common, daily needs (rest, food), others have specific characteristics of tourism and its particular forms of manifestation. [4]

From a macroeconomic point of view, tourism is a characteristic activity of the tertiary sector due to the wide and heterogeneous range of the related services. [5]

Thus, tourist services can be highlighted as both basic services (accommodation services, food, transport, medical treatment services, leisure) and complementary services (information providers, cultural attractions providers). [6]

The concept of quality plays an extremely important role in all aspects of people's lives, becoming an increasingly concern over the years. In this sense, the need has arisen to define and apply the quality principles to which humanity instinctively tends by taking measures to meet the standards and requirements assumed.

In the tourism industry, quality is defined by the World Tourism Organization as the result of a process which implies the satisfaction of all tourism product and service needs, requirements and expectations of the consumer at an acceptable price, in conformity with mutually accepted contractual conditions and the implicit underlying factors such as safety and security, hygiene, accessibility, communication, infrastructure and public amenities and services. It also involves aspects of ethics, transparency and respect towards the human, natural and cultural environment. [7]

2. Methods

The objective of this study is the analysis of the impact generated by the application of quality assurance principles in the tourism industry.

Quality represents the degree to which a set of inherent characteristics of an object fulfils requirements. [8]. The fulfilment of the requirements is achieved by applying the concept of Quality Management, a concept defined as a set of principles that compose an organization's quality policy. [9].

Applying quality management methods, procedures and rules is vital to ensuring the prosperity of an organization. Quality management is not limited to the creation of a Quality Manual, the elaboration or acquisition of a certain number of procedures, but to the production of organizational, technical and economic changes, which, as a whole, determine a positive leap in culture of the company. The main purpose of developing a quality management system is to optimize the organization's efforts to meet the requirements, needs and expectations of all parties who have their own interests in organization, operation and performance of the company. [10].

The quality management system is based on a series of principles, rules of organization and management of an entity in order to continuously improve the activity. Standardized quality management principles (QMPs) have been defined as fundamental truths or propositions that serve as the foundation for a system of belief or behavior, or for a chain of reasoning for the ISO 9000 standardization. The quality management system contains seven principles: Customer focus, leadership, engagement of people, process approach, improvement, evidence-based decision making, and relationship management. These QMPs emphasize performance improvement and organizational excellence through the means of quality management. [11].

In the tourism sector, the concept of quality represents the set of characteristics that the product has in order to satisfy the needs and requirements of customers but also to achieve the need for continuous improvement. [12].

Interests in the field of quality services in tourism have occurred about 20-30 years ago, with the development of tourism as an important income generator. The quality of the services is appreciated by the characteristics perceived by the client.

The authors in the field (Berry, Parasuraman, Zeithamal) are identifying 5 dimensions of quality, suitable for tourism as well: quality of the tangible part (buildings, equipment, appearance of staff and tourism infrastructure), credibility (fulfillment of expectations, achieving the aspects promised in the offer), kindness (prompt and efficient service availability), safety (the reputation that the company is obtaining through customers and the packages offered) and empathy (commitment to customers and customisation of services provided). [13]

According to specialists, the concept of quality is based on ensuring customer satisfaction through correct, complete and accurate information and a favorable first impression. [14].

Also, exceeding expectations, obtaining a reasonable price and availability to the customer in all situations, are desideratum of ensuring customer satisfaction. Equally important are both the priority treatment of customer requirements and the tendency to achieve the level of excellence in ensuring customer satisfaction. [15]

In order to achieve the proposed objective, the questionnaire method was used, a sociological research tool used to collect and interpret the results obtained in order to draw conclusions within a specific topic.

In the case of this paper, the study consisted in applying a questionnaire with 13 questions on a sample of 100 respondents, between 20.05.2022 - 01.06.2022. The interviewed subjects represent adults, with the residence in Romania, who are interested in practicing tourism activities and appreciate the importance of establishing a level of quality in the tourism industry.

The questionnaire was developed and conducted on-line through Google Forms (a survey tool developed by the Google platform) which offers the possibility to centralize the recorded answers and make suggestive graphics according to the information received.

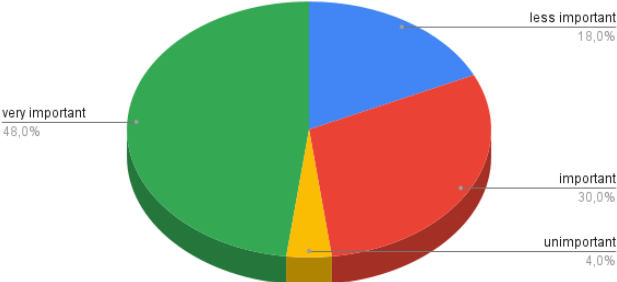
The questionnaire is structured on three types of questions: demographic questions, meant to determine the profile of the respondent, questions with multiple answers and questions with a single answer, meant to assess the opinion of the subjects on the importance of implementing the principles of Quality Management System in the tourism industry.

3. Results

Following the research, 100 people interested in practicing tourism activities were interviewed. The obtained results will determine both the degree of necessity of applying a quality management system in the tourism services and the achievement of a profile of the Romanian tourist who considers as important the implementation of a high level of quality in the tourism industry.

The first question of the survey intends to assess the importance of tourism and the important role that this activity has in the people lives. From the responses received, we can conclude that the majority of the participants (48%) have considered that practicing tourism is a very important activity. Also, a percentage of 30% of the surveyed subjects consider that the activity of practicing tourism plays an important role in their life. On the other hand, 22% of the respondents classify as “unimportant” (18%) and “not at all important” (4%) the activity of practicing tourism.

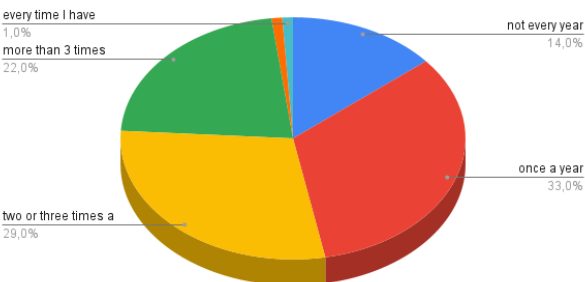
Fig. 1. The importance of tourism



Sources: own contribution

Analyzing the question “How often do you practice tourism?”, we can conclude that most respondents (33%) stated that they travel for tourism purposes once a year, followed closely by the percentage of those who travel two or three times a year (29%). The proportion of those who travel more than three times a year is 22%, and a percentage of 14% of respondents said they do not travel every year for tourism purposes. The percentage of those who stated that they do not practice tourism is insignificant, only 1% of the respondents stating this.

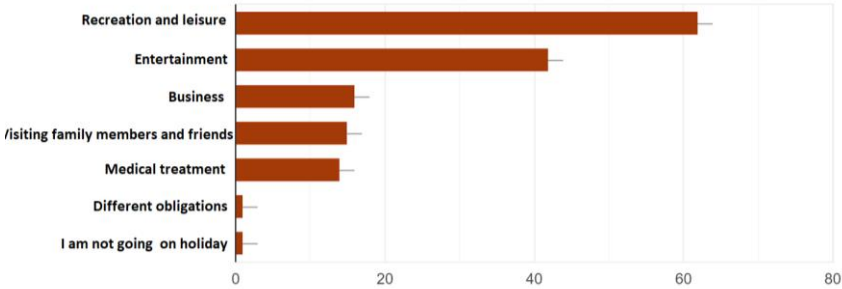
Fig. 2 Frequency of practicing tourism activities



Sources: own contribution

The question "What are the reasons why you choose to go on a holiday?" assesses the reasons that determine people to make trips for tourism purposes. The majority of data collected shows (62%) that the need for rest and recreation of people is the main reason for choosing a holiday, to the detriment of those who prefer tourism travels for leisure and entertainment purposes (42%). A significant importance is offered to business trips (16%), to reasons such as "visiting family members and friends" (15%) or trips for medical purposes (14%). As in the previous question, there is an insignificant percentage of those who said they do not go on holiday, only 1% of respondents.

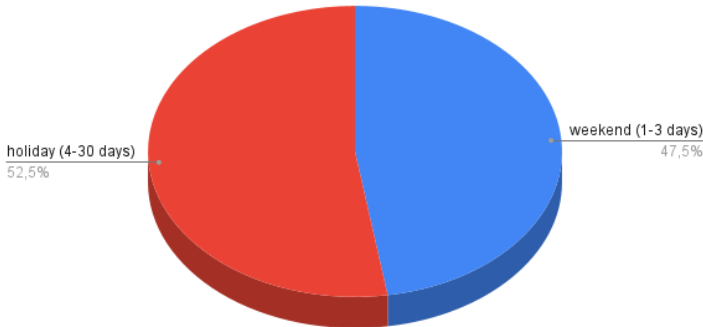
Fig. 3 The reasons for choosing a holiday



Sources: own contribution

The question regarding the duration of the stay indicates the average length of stay preferred by survey participants. We notice that the majority of participants (52.5%) prefer stays of 4 to 30 days to the detriment of those who choose short stays (1-3 days), 47.5%.

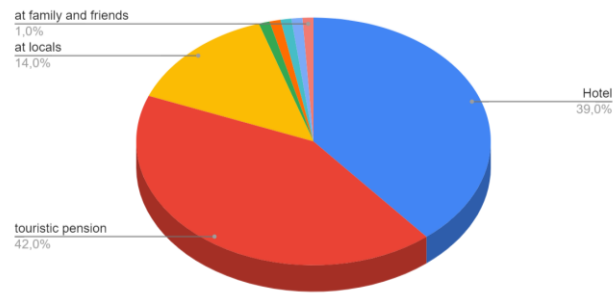
Fig. 4 The duration of the stay



Sources: own contribution

The question "What type of accommodation do you use most often?" shows that the majority of participants (42%) prefer accommodation in touristic pensions to the detriment of those who prefer the hotel as a type of accommodation for their stay (39%). A significant percentage of respondents choose accommodation at locals during their trip, and a percentage of 4% of subjects opt for accommodation at relatives and friends.

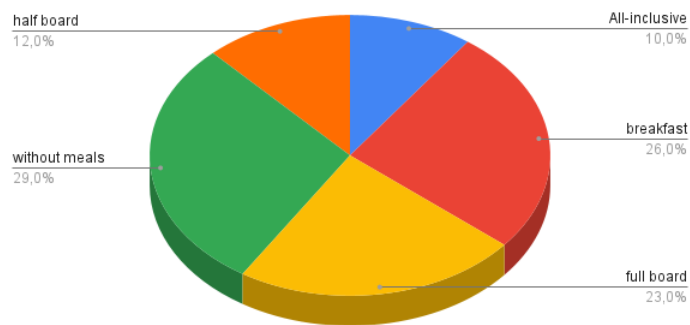
Fig. 5 The type of accommodation preferred



Sources: own contribution

The question “What meal services do you prefer during your stay?” reveals that a proportion of 29% of the respondents do not opt for meal services during their stay, unlike those who prefer breakfast meals (in proportion of 26%).

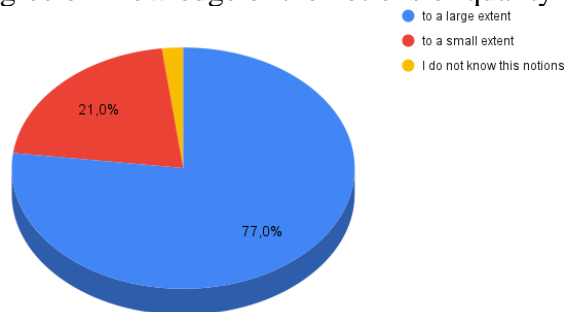
Fig. 6 meal services preferred



Sources: own contribution

Analyzing the results of the question on the degree of knowledge of the notions of quality management, we note that majority of participants (77%) said they are familiar with the principles of quality management, compared to 21% of respondents who do not know these notions.

Fig. 7 the degree of knowledge of the notions of quality management

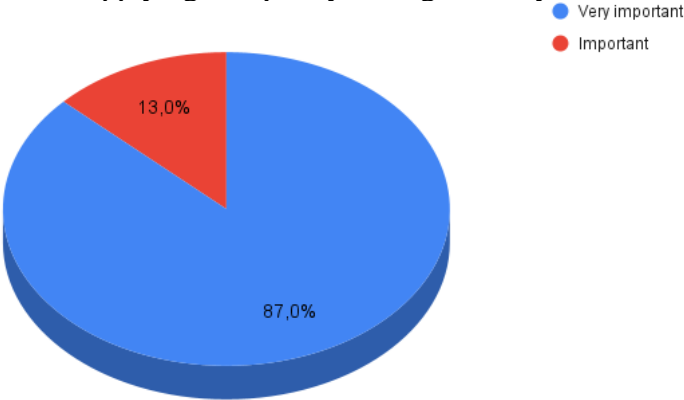


Sources: own contribution

The question "To what extent do you appreciate the importance of applying the quality management system in the tourism industry?" indicates that the participants have assessed the

implementation of the quality management system in the tourism industry as very important (87%), or as being important (13%).

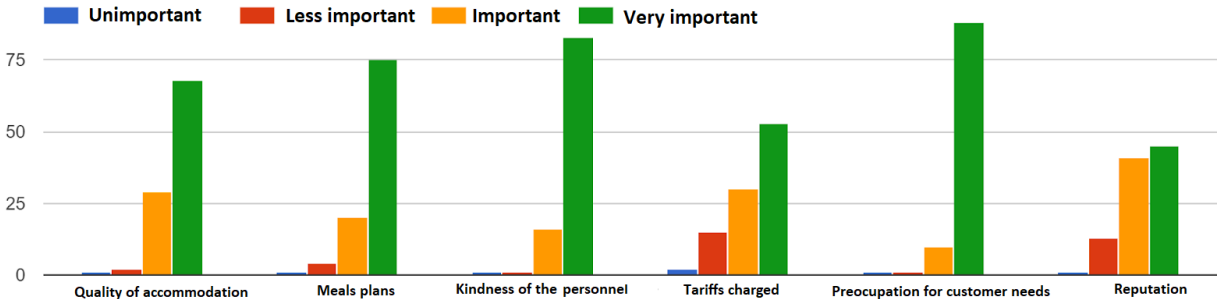
Fig. 8 the importance of applying the quality management system in the tourism industry



Sources: own contribution

The question "To what extent do you appreciate the importance of the following aspects?" reveals that all respondents appreciate the importance of quality in the tourism industry.

Fig. 9 Assessing the quality of tourism services

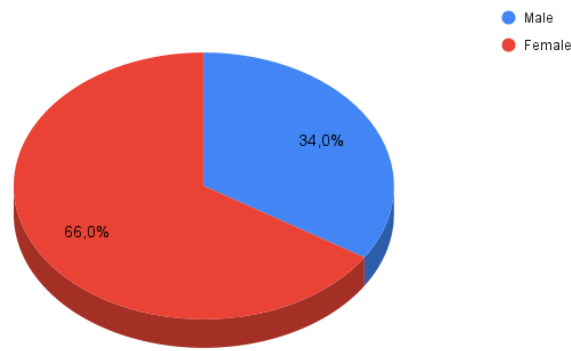


Sources: own contribution

The last part of the questionnaire includes 4 demographic questions, which aim to collect the identification information of the participants (gender, age, the residence and level of education) in order to determine the profile of respondents.

The results obtained show that the majority of respondents are women (66%) while male respondents are only 34%.

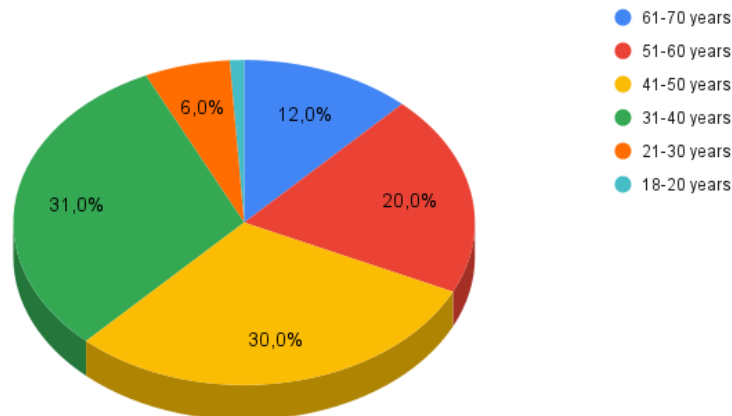
Fig. 10 The gender of the participants



Sources: own contribution

Analyzing the results recorded in the question regarding the age of the participants, we notice that age category 31-40 years (31%) predominates, followed at a short distance by the 41-50 years age category (30%). A significant percentage is registered in the 51-60 years age category (20%), and the percentage of those who declared their age in the range of 61-70 years is 12%.

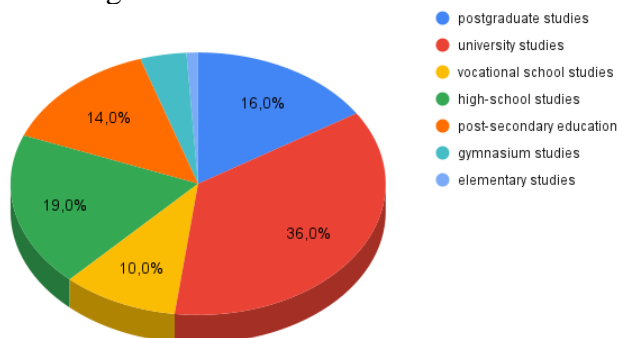
Fig. 11 The age of the participants



Sources: own contribution

The question regarding the level of education of the subjects revealed with a percentage of 36% that the majority of respondents have higher education, far behind the percentage of those with high school education (19%), of those with postgraduate studies (16%) and by the percentage of those with post-secondary education (14%).

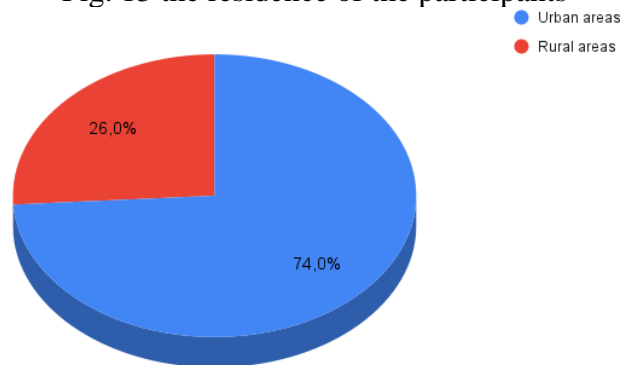
Fig. 12 the level of education



Sources: own contribution

The last question of the survey shows us that out of the total of 100 respondents, a percentage of 74% people answered that they come from urban areas, and a percentage of 26% have chosen rural areas as their residence.

Fig. 13 the residence of the participants



Sources: own contribution

4. Discussion

Analyzing the answers collected, we can formulate a series of observations.

Thus, the need for rest and recreation of people, one the main needs of mankind, influences the perception of tourists on the relevance of quality services in the tourism industry. Also, the level of education (university studies) of the majority of respondents reflects the high degree of knowledge of the notions of quality management as well as the concern for continuous improvement.

Due to their experience in practicing tourism and the important role that this activity has in their lives, the Romanian tourists interviewed appreciate the need to implement the quality management system in the tourism industry as a significant aspect in the context of the global tourism industry.

Identified after interpreting the results of the survey, the profile of the Romanian tourist, who considers as relevant the implementation of a high level of quality in the tourism industry is: a female person, aged 31-40 years, with higher education and residence in urban areas. She travels once a year for rest and recreation purposes, with an average length of stay specific to holidays (4-30 days), opts for accommodation services offered by pensions and does not opt for meals within stay.

5. Conclusions

The conclusions that emerge from this sociological research reinforce the statement that quality is an absolute and imperative condition necessary in all social and economic aspects of humanity.

In the context of a strong development of the tourism industry and the competition generated by it, it is necessary to focus on quality tourism services, represented fundamentally by ensuring customer satisfaction and exceeding their expectations. However, this cannot be achieved without the approach of standardized quality principles, without a systemic approach of actions, without involvement at all levels, but especially without the embracing of the desire for continuous improvement.

6. Bibliographic References

- [1]. NEDELEA, Al., *Tourism market*, Ed. Didactică și Pedagogică R.A., București (2003).
- [2]. Boiciuc Carmen, *Touristic promotion of Piatra-Neamț, Neamț County (2020)*
- [3]. Jivan Alexandru și Ioan Fruja, *Economics of Services*, Ed. Mirton, Timișoara (2006)
- [4]. TURCU D, WEISZ J, *Economics of Tourism*, Ed. Eurostampa, Timișoara, (2008).
- [5]. BRAN F, MARIN D, SIMON T, *Economics of Tourism and the environment*, Ed. Economică, București, (1998).
- [6]. Zaharia M. (coordonator), *Economics of Services*, Universitatea Româno-Americană, București, Ed. Universitară, București (2005)
- [7]. World Tourism Organisation, *The Practical Guidelines for Integrated Quality Management in Tourism Destinations*, [accessed June2022], <https://www.unwto.org/>
- [8]. National Standardisation Body of Romania – ASRO, SR EN ISO 9000:2015 *Quality Management Systems. Fundamentals and vocabulary*. (2015)
- [9]. Dogaru Mihaela Maria, *Quality Management*, Ed.Universitară, București (2016),
- [10]. CHIȚU E, *Quality auditor, initiation course* (2021).
- [11]. Vidican Octavian, *ISO 9001:2015 on everyone's understanding*, Ed. Primus, Oradea (2021)
- [12]. Bălășoiu V., Dobândă E., Snak O., *Quality Management of products and services in tourism*, Ed. Orizonturi Universitare, Timișoara (2003)
- [13]. Tomescu Elena Evelina, *Total Quality Management in touristic activity*, pag 78
- [14]. Anghelescu C, *Quality Management of touristic services*
- [15]. Sandru Angela, *Quality Management* (2015)