

THE QUALITY OF SERVICES IN TOURISM AND IN THE ROMANIAN ACCOMMODATION SYSTEM

Gina Ionela BUTNARU*

Abstract

Quality nowadays has become a strategic element in the companies dealing with services because it determines “competitiveness” at its highest level.

In the European Quality Charter, quality is defined as “the key to competitiveness” of companies that have the obligation to work for the mutual objective of quality promotion in all the European Union countries.

By the implementation of a quality management system in the field of Romanian tourism, the constant improvement of the qualitative performance of a product or service will be assured in the direction of reaching the objectives of quality.

At present, the main tendency in the field of Romanian tourist services quality consists in the introduction of a set of methods with the purpose of constantly improving the quality of products and services by improving the functioning and increasing the performance of the service providers.

Key words: quality, tourist services, Q Mark, tourist products, accommodation services

JEL classification: M19

1. Introduction

In the functional market economy, because of the progressively aggressive competition, the providers of tourist products and services are more and more forced to consider the needs, requests and expectancies of clients and consumers as - better informed and trained - they prefer more and more often to purchase products and services of maximum quality at the lowest prices. Consequently, the managers and employees from the hospitality industry should aim to provide only services of high quality at minimum prices.

The quality of the services provided by the Romanian tourist units as well as their image represents a vital issue for them. Both the excessive industrialization during communism and the misunderstood capitalism which followed had a powerful impact upon the Romanian tourist base and also upon managers' mentality, who found themselves powerless in the face of the wave of changes occurring over night.

In the last years, a trend has been noticed which shows that the young generation of managers learned their lesson and their efforts, although timid, seem to get a contour. The providing of high quality services is not possible without serious management knowledge,

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especially as quality and quality management are concerned, operating with them coherently and constantly.

Consequently, in his work **Assurance of quality in tourist services**, Dinu Vasile emphasizes the fact that at present the problem of tourist services quality has become an issue of modern management, i.e. one referring to vision, values, objectives and strategies, to good practice and the highest standards and models.

In order to sell quality services, managers and employees should aim, be able to, and know how to achieve quality, evaluate it, and improve it constantly. To do so, according to the ISO 9000 standards, they should implement a quality management system in the tourist businesses they are running, a system requiring planning, control, assurance and improvement of tourist services quality, especially those concerning accommodation.

To increase competition at both national and international level means that the providers of tourist services should take the due steps to re-adjust themselves by diversifying their offer and correlating the price and quality of the product. These steps are decisive when trying to survive on a specific market.

The time has come that the specialists in the tourism industry understand the new tendencies in the process of developing international tourism and the fact that clients' increasing demands force them to use new management instruments. Moreover, it is not enough to understand such phenomena, it is equally important that all parties involved implement these ideas and instruments.

2. Quality and the quality management system in tourism

The aspects concerning tourist services have entailed a basic terminology: the producer of services is called service provider; the consumer of services is the client or beneficiary. Services in general have several elements of "technological" specificity, from this point of view being original, even unique.

2.1. General aspects of the quality of services

Quality of services means *conformity with the client's demands*. The companies try to increase the quality of services, serving both as a purpose of management services and a strategy to develop the enterprise.

Quality of services has *two components* [Jivan, 1998, 90]:

- The quality of the serving process;
- The level of quality for serving, i.e. the real service provided.

As for a company's level of service quality, it depends on the way in which the officials approach the quality issue. Thus [Stanciu, 2003, 335]:

- The concept of quality should be approached systematically;
- The client's demands should be understood and then fulfilled;
- The quality principles should be imposed at all structural and organization levels of the unit;
- The qualitative level of services should be achieved efficiently;
- The diversity of services on the market should be a permanent aim.

A relevant aspect of any competition is to take into account all the aspects concerning quality, not only quality of services.

As for the *connections between perceived quality and real quality*, the estimations may vary from the client to the service provider directly.

The client very seldom is aware that he/she is well served and makes it publicly even more seldom, while the discontent will be certainly wide spread. In addition, the main characteristic of the quality of services is their *relativity* [Jivan, 1988, 92], i.e. the impossibility to measure and evaluate them.

Among the **aspects of the quality of serving** one should mention: personnel's behavior and attitude; duration of serving; availability of information; advertisement; location of serving units and their accessibility; environment, etc.

The total quality of a service is seen as a 3-component function:

- *Body image* – company's image and its global attractiveness;
- *Technical quality* - the essential attributes of services corresponding to the needs to be fulfilled;
- *Functional quality* - the way to provide services.

The perception of the quality of a service is influenced by the attributes of its quality, which are presented in the following table:

Table no 1 - The attributes of services quality

The attributes of services quality	Characteristics
Tangibility	The existence of the physical support of service, personnel communication.
Reliability	The capacity of correct fulfillment of the service from the very first contact with the client.
Rapidity	The carrying out of a service within the time limits desired and accepted by the client.
Competence	The serving personnel have the information and capabilities necessary for the carrying out of the service.
Politeness	The politeness, kindness and respect of the contact personnel towards the client.
Credibility	The credibility and honesty of the service-providing company.
Security and safety	The absence of danger, hazard, risk and doubt when providing the service.
Accessibility	The easiness with which the service can be used at the desired moment.
Communication	The client is informed correctly, in a language which is easy and accessible to the client, and the employees have the ability to listen and understand the clients.
Knowledge on client	Understanding clients' needs and behavior.

Adaptation: [Niță , 2007, 111], [Lache , 2002, 79-81]

We present the attributes of the quality of services because the evaluation of this type of quality is a delicate matter as for most services the subjective aspects of evaluation from the part of the clients are predominant.

2.2. The quality with the Romanian tourist services

The field of services presents a series of characteristics which lead to different ways of action and manifestation of some of the evaluation criteria of service quality.

Within tourist services these differences are often met. This type of services represents a very large area, which causes the global approach of the problems concerning service quality to be difficult.

Going beyond the classical approach in the general study on quality and referring especially to the field of the tourist services, one need to take into account the indicators connected to the tourist service quality:

- the quality of life;
- the competitive values of the tourist activities;
- the qualitative dimension of the time for recreation, fun and sports, or recreational activities

The quality of life is directly connected with the way in which the nine basic human needs are satisfied: *subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, amusement, creativity, identity, and freedom.*

For example, with services for tourism transportation, their quality depends mainly on the technical state of the means of transportation as well as on the combustibles used, norms of pollution, or safety. A series of activities such as guides, entertainers, or monitors, promotion or advertisement are more difficult to evaluate or compare from the qualitative point of view.

In the last years, the quality of the services provided by the majority of tourism companies has increased significantly. The tourism market of Romania has obviously developed. The international tourist flow towards Romania registered an increase, the most explosive period of time was in 2007, as it can be seen in Table no 2.

Table 2 - Arrivals of foreign visitors in Romania (thousands arrivals)

Area	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Europe - total	5024	4696	4551	5344	6306	5522
European Union	2311	2401	2502	2951	3847	2868

Source: [Anuarul Statistic al României, 2009]

If in the year 2003 the arrivals of the visitors from the European Union towards Romania were 2,311 thousand, in the year 2008 their number increased by 577 thousand, reaching 2,868 thousand arrivals, meaning an increase of about 20% in only 6 years. The tourists coming from these parts of Europe generally chose to practice seaside or mountain tourism, and lately they have practiced tourism for SPA treatments.

In this global image, the tourist circulation registered a quantitative and qualitative evolution, the main tendency being the increase of the number of arrivals from one year to the other.

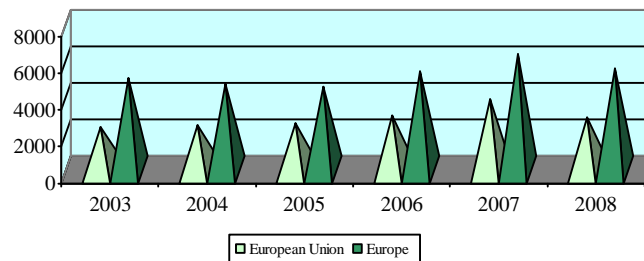


Figure no. 1. The dynamics of the arrivals of foreign visitors in Romania

We can notice an increase of the number of the actors in this market segment, as well as a development of their activities. When we speak of the development of the agencies, we refer to the ones which, in the last years, started to meet the Western standards.

At present time, the system of reservations has a vital role in offering prompt services to the clients of the agencies.

It is not enough anymore to receive a simple voucher; a professional agency should deal with the transfer from the airport, and with everything included in the services concept for its clients.

The travel agent should understand the needs or the ways in which one wants to plan his or her vacation. An agent should not hurry to offer brochures to the clients, or to recommend them a hotel without asking them if they have children, if they intend to rest, or to visit, to spend more time inside the hotel, or outside it, what accommodation facilities they wish. It is obvious that in this aspect, the tourist service quality is according with the quality of the professional training of the human resources.

The analysis of the dynamics of the flows in Romania emphasizes some aspects, the most obvious being their decrease after the year 1989.

From 2004 to 2008, we can notice a constant maintaining of the number of tourist activities towards certain areas of the country.

Table no 3 - Tourism organized by the Romanian travel agencies according to tourist activities and areas (thousands of persons)

	Number of tourists	Number of tourists	Number of tourists	Number of tourists	Number of tourists
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
<i>Internal tourist activities</i>	1322	1203	1234	1429	1210
<i>Mountain area –cities</i>	340	312	341	372	293
<i>Spa area</i>	360	330	334	317	288
<i>Seaside area</i>	376	304	318	389	332
<i>Mountain area – villages and tourist trekking routes</i>	86	80	89	121	76
<i>Historical areas</i>	68	62	50	61	44
<i>Religious pilgrimage areas</i>	2	4	4	4	13
<i>River cruises</i>	1	4	18	44	54
<i>Miscellaneous circuits</i>	7	7	5	12	37
<i>Other areas</i>	82	100	75	109	73

Source: [Anuarul Statistic al României, 2009]

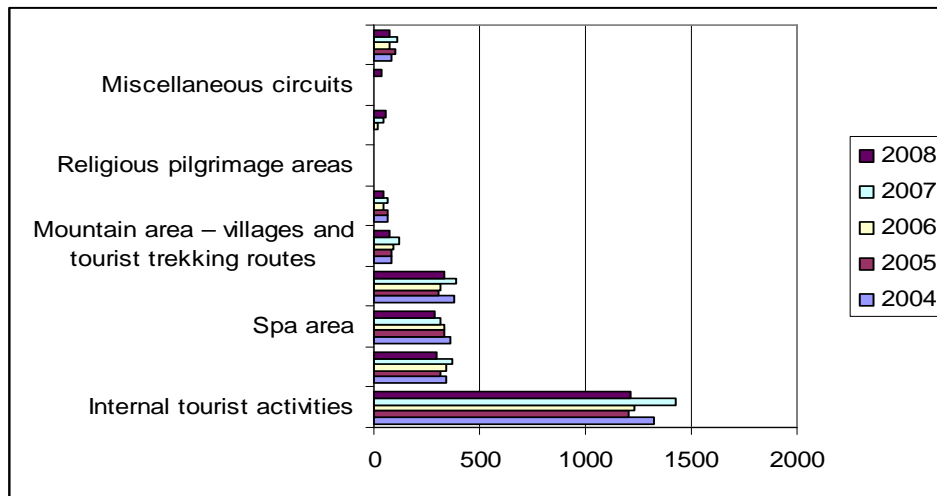


Figure no. 2. The dynamics of tourism organized by travel agencies according to tourist activities and areas

In the year 2008, as compared to the year 2007, we registered an increase in the total number of tourists who had as a purpose different reasons to travel. Related to the total number of tourists, this decrease is of approximately 7 thousand tourists per year.

When there is a low concern for the quality from the part of the service providers from the Romanian tourism, people should notice the concern of the National Authority for the Tourism, of the professional organizations from the Romanian tourism, of the tourism undertakers, and at last, but not the least, of the specialists from the Romanian tourist education, for the “quality in tourism”.

Among the ones mentioned above, The Ministry of Transportations, of Constructions, and of Tourism, through The National Authority for the Tourism, through The General Direction of Authorization, has started an approach for the “Q Mark - system of quality certification of the services from the hotels in Romania“ [**Governmental Decision no 668** of 5 June 2003 concerning the approach of the National Program of the increase of the hotels quality services, and the launching of the “Q” Mark].

The representatives of The National Authority for the Tourism, directors and hotel owners, representatives of the Federation of the Hotels Industry in Romania, of the Association “Tourism, Hotel, Restaurant, Consulting Group”, as well as specialists in the field of the quality of the hotel services have discussed issues as:

- quality of services in tourism;
- competitiveness, good practices, standards, models of excellence;
- importance of standards;
- implementation of quality of the tourist services standards – Q Mark, the safe premise of the development of Romanian tourism;
- introduction of a quality management system of hotel services in Romania.

The purpose of the system is to improve the quality of services provided by hotels in order to increase the level of the clients’ satisfaction, as well as the possibility to use this symbol in order to promote and to recognize the hotels nationally and internationally.

The objective of the quality certification system of hotel services in Romania is to put into practice a new set of regulations concerning the quality of services provided by hotels in Romania for:

- endowment of the hotels with an internal and external evaluation system, which should act as an efficient management instrument in order to guarantee the quality of the services provided;
- building a continuous action base, by adapting the management system to the new needs, expectancies, and demands of the clients [Nistoreanu, www.mmq.ase.ro].

These concerns are due to the fact that at present time the Romanian tourist service must impose itself on a market where the competition is in full ascension, and within which the consumers are more and more informed and demanding. This is the reason why the reaffirmation of Romania's destination should be connected with the development of the quality of tourist services.

Each company from the Romanian tourism should realize an analysis of the quality of the activity developed. This quality analysis represents the starting point in the improvement of the strategic leadership of the company. The purpose of this analysis is to aim to the following issues:

- setting the services quality level;
- formulation of the main decisions for the improvement of the services and of the tourist products offered;
- awareness of the strengths and of the weaknesses of the organization;
- gathering ideas and planning for the specific measures in order to develop the quality of the entire activity.

The improvement of the tourist services quality is closely connected with the improvement of the companies management from the Romanian tourism. This could be realized by applying a quality management of the services which should have among its main concerns the following issues:

- awareness of the tourists' demands;
- maintenance of the buildings and of the decorations, as well as of the auxiliary facilities;
- increase of the tourists' satisfaction;
- team work;
- cooperation with partner organizations;
- promotion of a correct motivation of the employees.

As a result, the managers and the employees of the tourist companies (transporters, hotels, restaurants, travel agencies) should offer only services of maximum quality at the lowest prices.

This is how the clients can be preserved, and new clients can be attracted, and the turnover, the profit, and the market segment can increase constantly and continuously.

All these can be realized if desired, if one knows how to realize the quality, its evaluation, and its permanent improvement. The putting into practice of these objectives is represented by the cycle P = PLAN, D = DO, C = CHECK, A = ACT, which implies planning, realization, checking, and action. *This is why in the world of the tourism people there is a saying, that one has the quality which one can control* [Nistoreanu, www.mmq.ase.ro].

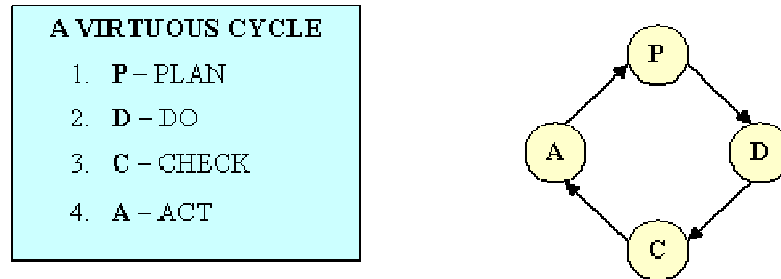


Figure no. 3. The Virtuous Cycle [Q Mark, 2004, 22]

In Romania, due to the increasing competition, the tourist service providers are more and more obliged to take into account the clients' and the consumers' needs, demands, and expectations, because – being better informed and trained – they prefer more and more frequently to purchase tourist products and services of maximum quality and minimum price. This should be the concern of the managers and of the employees of the companies from the tourist industry - hotels, restaurants, travel agencies.

For a tourist company to offer its clients only quality services, it is necessary that before providing them, the tourist services should be completely and correctly aware of the clients' demands, and after their providing, it is important to learn as much as possible about their reactions (satisfaction or dissatisfaction).

It is important to notice that there is no absolute quality, because the quality always depends on the demands of the clients who exist at a certain time, on a certain market.

The quality of a tourist service (the effect) depends essentially on the quality of the processes (causes) from which it appears. But the processes can depend on 7 decisive factors (materials, equipments, personnel, methods, environment, management, and measures), and which all vary, while they should be introduced and maintained under control.

The quality assurance – involving quality control – requires to avoid the possible non-conformities by anticipating the potential causes, and to prevent their manifestation.

The quality management can be realized at its best by the implementation of a quality management system in the tourist companies. The reference which is the most frequently used in this purpose is represented by the international standards from the group ISO 9000.

According to the European practices, in order to generate/to increase the clients' trust in the products, services, processes, and persons, it is necessary to certify them, and in order to generate/increase the trust of the partners in organizations, they usually are accredited.

In this context, it is necessary to present the steps of trust as it follows:

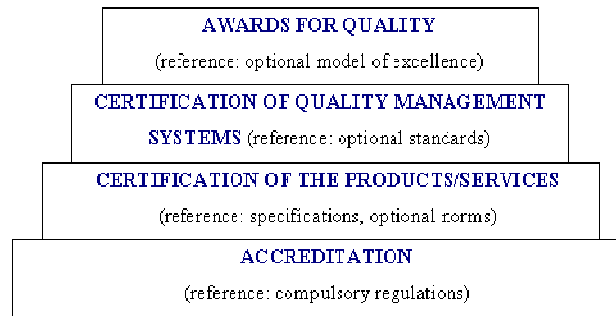


Figure no. 4. Steps of trust [Q Mark, 2004, 22]

In the tourism industry – as well as in other fields – only the first step (corresponding to the authorization, by which the satisfaction of minimal conditions is confirmed) is compulsory, the others are optional, but indispensable if one wishes to maintain the tourist company on the market.

One can notice that only businesses where the objectives of all the business partners are satisfied as much as possible can have the chance to resist for a long time, and even to develop. *This is the spirit of the international standards for the quality management* [Familia EN ISO 9000:2000].

2.3. The tourist products quality

The technical progress in general, the innovation, and especially the development of the means of telecommunications, the increase of the level of culture, education and professional training have determined the increase and the rapid evolution of the preferences and taste concerning the choice of potential clients for a certain tourist destination.

From this point of view, the quality of the tourist products is considered as depending on [Nistoreanu, 2004, 96]:

- the beauty of the tourist patrimony;
- the accessibility, and the technical performances of the tourist infrastructure;
- the professionalism and the competence of the personnel providing the services.

One should notice the influence of the subjective factor in the client's evaluation of the qualitative level of a tourist product.

Thus, the level of the client's satisfaction as a result of the tourist consumption depends on the degree of correspondence between the effective components of the tourist offer during the tour or the trip, and the image which the tourist has formed in this concern.

If one takes into account the complementarities of the services constituting the tourist product, then an index of „*the final quality*” does not result necessarily from the addition of the quality of the components. A superior quality of one component cannot always compensate the inferior quality of another component.

In this situation, *the clients wish to be informed correctly and completely in what concerns the quality of the tourist product which they want to buy, so as they could choose the product which would satisfy the best the level of their expectations.*

The same, we should not forget that the tourists are more and more demanding in what concerns the quality of the tourist offers. As a result, “*the image, but also the reputation of a superior quality of a certain tourist product constitutes a major advantage on the market, because the tourists have the perception of the existence of a high risk connected with the purchase of the package tours.*” [Nistoreanu, 2004, 96]

In the situation of a compromised tourist product, the reconstruction of its image requires special marketing efforts for several years, because the unpleasant experiences leave strong impressions, which are difficult to change.

It is recommended that in the situations of a client’s dissatisfaction, the service provider company finds the best solution to solve the major problem determining the client’s dissatisfaction, as a result of the consumption of that tourist product.

The qualitative level of the tourist products can be analyzed from the point of view of the following characteristics:

- *natural* (for example the beauty of the landscapes met during the voyage, the purity of the air and of the water, the altitude where the tourist objectives are located, the climate, the season, the frequency and the amplitude of the avalanches, the floods, the earthquakes, etc.);
- *technical* (the accessibility of the tourist objectives, the speed, the degree of safety and the comfort of the tourist transportation means, the degree of wear of the tourist reception structures, the conditions of signaling and illumination, the noise and the vibrations which accompany the tourist services, the capacity of the accommodation equipment of reception and production, transportation, food, entertainment, architecture of the cities and of the buildings);
- *organizational – the structure and the realization of the circuit and of the tourist program*: the beginning and the ending of the tourist services, the program of visits, and of the entertainment activities, the synchronization of services, the correspondence between the duration of the stay and that of the auxiliary services, the number, the structure, the kindness, and the solicitude of the personnel serving the clients, the periods of opening and closure of the resorts, the degree of overcrowding of the tourist destinations, the duration of the service providing).

The quality of the tourist products can be appreciated by the consumer taking as a reference their price, or the classification category for the means of transportation, accommodation, or food.

Consequently, the concept of “quality of the tourist products” consists of all the issues concerning the quality of tourist services representing an extremely vast field where the points of view of the ones who offer meet the points of view of the ones who consume.

2.4. The theoretical context of the concept of quality in the accommodation services (hotels)

The aspect of the services quality provided in the hotels in Romania and their image is a surviving issue for them. In other words, it is an aspect of modern management, an issue of vision, values, objectives and strategies, of codes of good practices, standards, and models of excellence.

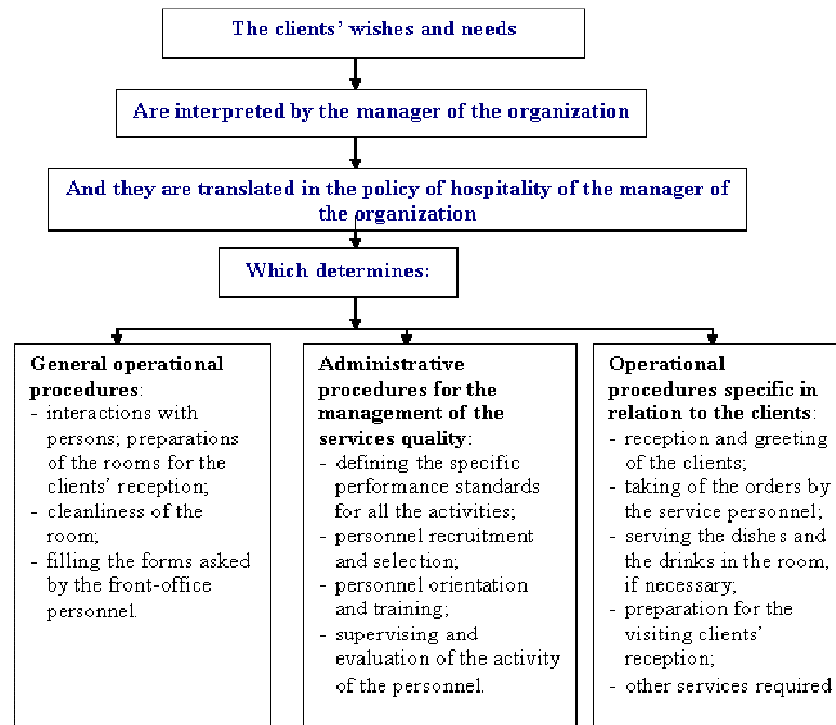


Figure no. 5. Determination of the performance standards for the accommodation services
[Neagu , 2002, 33]

The quality of services in the hotels

- **spatial quality** – referring to the accessibility (the ways and the means of transportation, the time required for the transportation from the client's place to the place where the hotel is located), clarity of the traffic signs (minimum efforts of orientation), parking facilities (the certitude of finding a parking lot) and the possibilities offered by the hotel neighborhood (additional real attractions).
- **the quality of the choice** – refers to the diversity of the propositions concerning the variety of the rooms (location, view, decoration) and the variety of the services (food, entertainment, recreation).
- **the actual quality** – refers to elements which can be easier to evaluate.
 - a) **The material parameter** – there are 5 norms taken into account:
 - *norms of materials* – the emphasis is on the choice of the types of equipment provided (accompanied by quality guarantees),
 - *norms of use* – the equipment used must be replaced more often in order to be according with the requirements of the fashion,
 - *norms of maintenance* – of the equipment by the client and by the hotel owner,
 - *norms of cleanliness* – both for the accommodation, and for the restaurants, or the area around the hotel,
 - *norms of security* – especially in the case of fire prevention.

b) Availability of the personnel – the number of the employees per room is considered one of the criteria for the classification of a hotel.

- **relational quality** – direct (between the hired personnel and the client), and indirect (client-client, when one of them might be disturbed by the other's behavior) [Niță , Butnaru , 2007, 116].

For the implementation of the quality of hotel services, it is required to have an open, constructive, and cooperative attitude of the managers. It is required to get from the empirical approach of the practicing in the field, based on sense and experience, to what is called the scientific approach, that of the manager who adds principles and laws, methods and techniques, instruments, and standards to these concepts.

So it is required to get from the logo "I have enough experience, and I know what quality means in a hotel" to the logo "I am ready anytime to learn anything which means more clients, and more faithful ones for my hotel".

In order to register within the approach described above, the only one generating true and sustainable competitiveness, the tourist companies have made a few steps.

The first step consists of the general information of the entire personnel concerning quality issues, i.e. what and how quality is achieved, especially the quality management, and why it is needed. The manager must start to shape a comprehensive vision, specific and to the point, a profitable situation, which should permit him to elaborate his policy, on the basis of the values stated in his declaration, and to stabilize, in an achievable and profitable way, the reference points and the objectives of the activity on short term, medium term, and long term.

The second step is the personnel selection from the ones who want to study this information further, transforming it in knowledge, habits, and activity models, and who, cooperating with the specialists from outside the company, will have as a mission and attribution the design, the implementation, the certification, and the permanent improvement of some quality management systems according to different references: codes and models of good operational and managerial practices. In order to specialize themselves, the selected ones must be registered in programs of formation and training, from the ones included in the consulting activities, in different short-term courses in institutions specialized in the field of quality, to different programs of superior specialization.

The third step consists in designing and in the actual implementing of the quality management system in the company. This means the realization of the working tools – the setting of the references (norms, standards, models), the elaboration of the documentation (manuals, procedures, working instructions, forms to fill, questionnaires, files, register books), informing the entire personnel and training the personnel involved in the work with these instruments. This step is ended with the final examination made by an internal audit, of the system functioning, the setting and the execution of the corrective measures, and of the preventive ones which are compulsory.

The final step, the fourth, consists of the certification of the system conformity with a reference adopted by the company as a good practice model. This action takes place through an external audit realized by an independent certification organism, and is finalized through the emission of a conformity certificate, accompanied by a certification mark. This certification mark, one of the most important and of the most efficient image factor, is the main marketing instrument of the company, the main attraction, selection, and faithfulness of the clients for the accommodation unit.

As it can be noticed, the quality is the main determinant factor of the success of an accommodation unit on the market. It is well known that “the quality merchandise does not need advertisement, and it sells by itself”, and the quality hotel service is nothing else but a quality merchandise.

The quality is the main determinant factor of competitiveness, of performance, thus of the profit, and it means good practices (at a superior level, the one of excellence, even the best practices) according with the models of standardization, with standards (and at a superior level, with models of excellence), as they are presented in the following figure.

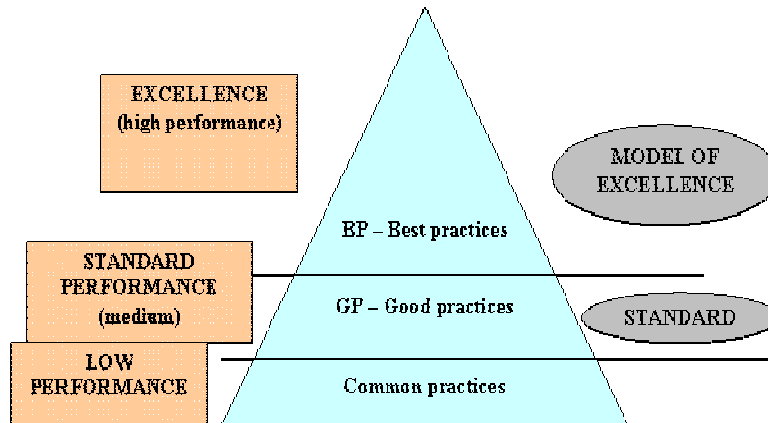


Figure no. 6. Performance and good practices
Source: [Q Mark, 2004, 11]

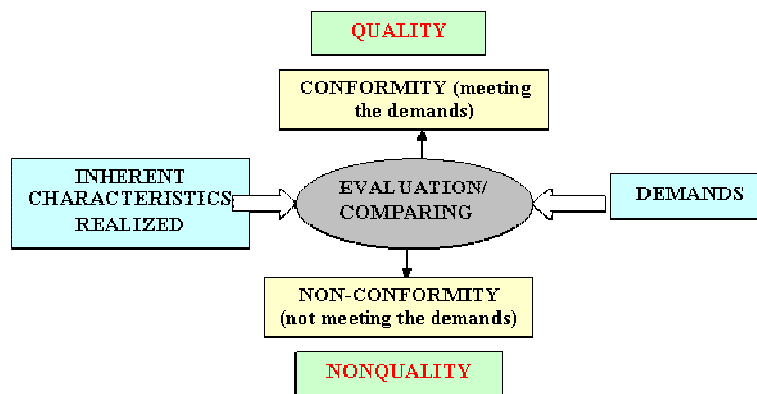


Figure no. 7. Conformity and non-conformity
Source: [Q Mark, 2004, 11]

The quality in the accommodation services requires both the quality of the reception equipments, and the quality of the bed sheets, of the furniture, of the plumbing, of the tech-

nology, and not in the least, of the personnel. As the technology becomes a more and more important part of the daily life, the clients, especially the ones with business preoccupations, will wish that this technology is not absent from the hotel rooms. Thus, the technology development can change the physical concept, and the space allocation of the hotel in the future [Francis, J., Nardoza, Partnes, *National Hospitality Industry*, Directory K.P.M.G, Pleat, Marvick, L.L.P.].

In the same time with the development of the personal strategies for obtaining the global competitiveness quality, the organizations become aware of the special importance of the quality of their providers, as well as of the quality of products and of services provided by them. The global competitiveness quality must thus include an extremely important component, *the quality of the provider and of the products, and of the services purchased from him* [Suciu, Oprean, 2007, 229-230]. Consequently, the hotels restructured rapidly their behavior and strategy towards this issue, re-dimensioning the initial relationship which was rather the one between two organizations which considered themselves as independent, and ready to pursue their own goals, to a more comprising and complex relationship.

Though the working cost is mainly the place where the value of the service is created or added, it happens many times that this is underestimated, and treated superficially. A new touch is brought by the Japanese concepts referring to **KAIZEN**, which focus the whole attention of the company management towards **GEMBA**, the place in which the activities that bring effective and direct value to the service are developed, the entire process of obtaining the client's satisfaction being based on the efficiency of the maintenance and of the continuous improvement at the working place. We will guide ourselves after the Japanese concept. According to this, it is necessary that 2 cycles are covered for the implementation of a *standardized working manner at the working place* [Suciu, Oprean, 2007, 229-231]. The first one requires the setting of the standards necessary for the working place. Their realization and assurance at the working place, verification of the fact that they are understood and explained, and, finally, acting for the elimination of the non-functioning are determined according to what was initially proposed (SIVA: Standardization, Implementation, Verification, Action). The 2nd cycle follows next, and it has in view the continuous standards improvement by applying Deming's cycle: PIVA (plan, implement, verify, act).

It is no doubt that the most important partner, the one to whom the entire attention of the organization is focused, is its client/clients, whose present and future needs and expectations should be understood, and, certainly, satisfied. The approach of the concept of *global competitiveness quality with the partners* [Suciu, Oprean, 2007, 229-232], asks the organization to identify not only the direct clients, but all the interested parties, to identify their demands, needs, and expectations, to solve them adequately, and to maintain at least a balanced proportion. Another important aspect is the setting of communication interfaces with these parts.

2.5. Q Mark - model of good practices for implementation and certification of the quality of the hotel services in Romania

In the conditions in which there is a low concern for the providers quality from Romanian tourism, the preoccupations of The National Authority for the Tourism, of the professional organizations from the Romanian tourism, of the businessmen from the tourism, and, of course, of the specialists from the Romanian tourism education should be mentioned for the "quality in tourism". Among the ones mentioned above, The Ministry of

Transportation, Constructions, and Tourism, through The National Authority for the Tourism, The General Direction of Authorization, started the approach for the “**Q Mark** - system of quality certification of hotel services in Romania“ [**Governmental Decision no 668** of 5 June 2003 concerning the approach of the National Program of the increase of the hotels quality services, and the launching of the "Q" Mark].

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- the quality of services provided in tourism;
- competitiveness, good practices, standards, models of excellence; the importance of standards;
- the implementation of the quality standards of tourist services – Q Mark, the safe premise of the development of Romanian tourism;
- the introduction of a quality management system of hotel services in Romania.

The purpose of this system is to improve the quality of services provided by hotels in order to increase the clients’ level of satisfaction, as well as the possibility to use this symbol for the promotion and acceptance of the hotels on a national and international level.

The objective of the quality certification system of hotel services in Romania is to put into practice a new set of regulations concerning the quality of services provided by hotels in Romania for:

- endowment of the hotels with an internal and external evaluation system, which should act as an efficient management instrument, in order to guarantee the quality of the services provided,
- building a base of continuous action, by adapting the management system to the clients’ new needs, expectances, and demands. [Nistoreanu , www.mmq.ase.ro]

These concerns are due to the fact that nowadays the Romanian tourist product must impose itself on a market on which the competition is in full ascension, and where the consumers are more and more informed and demanding. This is why the reaffirmation of Romania’s destiny must be correlated with the increase of the tourist services quality.

Every organization from the Romanian tourism must realize an analysis of the quality of the activity they developed. This quality analysis represents the starting point in the improvement of the organization strategic leadership. **The purpose of the analysis has the following aspects:**

- the establishment of the level of quality of services;
- the formulation of the basic decisions for the improvement of the tourist services and products offered;
- the awareness of the organization strengths and weaknesses;
- gathering ideas and planning specific measures in order to increase the quality of the entire activity.

The improvement of the quality of the tourist services is correlated with an improvement of the management of the organizations involved in Romanian tourism. This is possible by applying a quality services management which should have among its concerns the following aspects:

- awareness of the tourists' expectations;
- maintenance of the buildings and of the decorations, as well as of the utilities;
- increase of the tourists’ satisfaction;

- team work;
- cooperation with the partner organizations;
- promotion of a correct motivation for the employees.

As a result, the managers and the employees of the tourist companies (transporters, hotels, restaurants, travel agencies) should offer only services of maximum quality at the lowest prices. This is how one can keep the clients, can get new ones, and the turnover, the profit, and the market segment obtained can constantly and continuously develop.

3. Conclusions

The specialty literature offers several definitions for the quality concept, among which it is also included the one from 1986, offered by the International Organization of Standardization, according to which this is “all the characteristics of a product or service which offer the aptitude to fulfill the needs expressed or implied.”

The quality in services consists in fact of *the conformity with the client's demands*, and it has *two components*:

- the quality of the process of serving;
- the level of the quality of serving, i.e. the service actually provided.

The quality of serving consists of the personnel's behavior and attitude, the duration of the serving, the possibilities of information, the advertisement, the location and the access to the serving unit, the neighborhood, and the environment etc.

The immaterial character of the services makes it hard, and sometimes even impossible to measure the quality level.

The managers choose their own evaluation criteria of the quality of services, and the most used instrument is the one of the quizzes-polls, by which the clients' expectations and demands are evaluated.

In order to realize the quality of products and of services at the level of an organization, one needs a way to administrate all the processes, and thus there is the concept of *quality management*.

At present time, the emphasis is strong on the final stage of the development of *quality management*, in particular “*total quality management*” (*TQM*).

According to Joseph M. Juran's theory, the quality management is “the totality of the ways through which one can obtain quality, establishing in the same time three basic processes in its realization, respectively: quality planning, quality control, and quality improvement.

The quality of the services in tourism depends on the training of the employees who are providing them, on how the managers act, but also on the culture of the company.

The client is assured of the level of services offered looking at the marks applied on the locations: stars, daisies, and dolphins.

The quality of the services in hotels requires:

- *spatial quality*, which refers to the accessibility, the clarity of the traffic signs and marks
- *the quality of the choice*, which is given by the diversity of the propositions and by the variety of the services
- *the actual quality*, which has in view elements which are easy to evaluate
- *the relational quality*, which is as it follows:

- *the direct relational quality* (personnel - employee), which includes the quality of reception, that influences the client's future attitude;
- *the indirect relational quality* (client – client), which is the satisfaction obtained by a client in relation to other clients.

The non-quality of the tourist services is given by the bad results of the polls, which might be:

- the existence of some communication barriers among the departments of the hotel;
- bad application of the hotel marketing and management techniques;
- inadequate personnel training, and the employees' lack of training;
- lack of self-control from the part of the employees;
- no polls, or other evaluation forms for the clients;
- lack of cleanliness inside and outside the hotel;
- inadequate activity of collecting and storing the household waste;
- inadequate or old equipment in the sanitary facilities or in other places;
- lack of knowledge concerning the norms of guidance for the hotel activity, etc.

The quality improvement as a principle of quality management requires the decrease of the non-quality to the "zero defects goal".

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