

QUALITY OF SERVICES AND GUESTS SATISFACTION IN THE RESTAURANT¹

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ABSTRACT

Taking into account the importance of quality for the relationship quality of service - customer satisfaction - loyalty, all in order to avoid or reduce mistakes and make efforts to continuously improve quality, each company should conduct quality control, i.e. to identify deficiencies. Quality improvement activities should be continuous and uninterrupted because, although a certain result is achieved (desired quality), it should be maintained and improved through numerous innovations. Due to the simultaneity of production and consumption in restaurant services, it is more difficult to notice the mistake before it is too late, i.e. before the guest notices it. On the other hand, the cost of introducing a quality system is an investment in the future of the company.

KEYWORDS: e-service, requirements, expectations, wish

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INTRODUCTION

The quality of services is crucial nowadays because the market environment is very competitive. In this regard, the planning, design and marketing of services is a very complex process, where consumer requirements must be met at every step. The quality of service is extremely important for positioning and survival in the market. In order to achieve the desired quality of service, but also to maintain it, it is necessary to conduct research on the needs of customers (consumers or in the case of restaurants - guests) for a certain quality, as well as the form of service. The quality of the service can be defined as a result of comparing the expectations and what is received - seen at the moment of providing the service. Quality service can be understood as a means for companies to attract customers, but also to retain them, which means more stable sustainability of the competition.

The desire to understand the quality of service exists because there was a desire to understand guests and improve service. The notion of quality for the guest is transient and varies depending on the new knowledge, the new events that together make expectations. The search for the values of an individual guest has no defined end of the process, it is a continuity that shows the guest the service and the desire of the caterer to improve each of his meetings in the catering facility.

SERVICE QUALITY AND GUEST SATISFACTION

The quality of the catering service that consumers expect is a standard based on which the quality of the catering service is assessed. The catering product is essentially a service experienced by the guest. Expectations created based on market information, personal past experiences and the experience of others are the standard on which guests evaluate the provided service.

Quality service in tourism and hospitality is what leaves a feeling of satisfaction and desire to come again. Managing such quality means being long-term focused on the goal and the people who provide that satisfaction. Although guests are the only true assessors of service quality, those who provide quality must have a unique picture of what quality service is and how to deliver it to guests. The most honest answer about the quality of service is the most difficult to collect because exactly that inner feeling of the guest is manifested as satisfaction or dissatisfaction with that guest.

The notion of guest satisfaction goes deep into the psychology of guest behavior and it is often impossible to display and explain all the elements that guests subconsciously assess, and whose subsequent reaction

results in guest satisfaction or dissatisfaction. This is because in order to get honest information, the guest must be understood as an individual, a person with desires and needs that are unique to him. The word pleasure is derived from two Latin words - satis (enough) and facere (to achieve) and means a positive experience gained by comparing what is expected and perceived. Today, there are numerous definitions of satisfaction, which due to their mutual uniqueness indicate the complexity of this concept. In order to describe overall satisfaction, scholars generally focus on overall guest ratings based on service characteristics, personal communication with employees, and other factors in the situation.

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J. W. Marriott's famous statement - "Take care of your employees, and they will take care of your costumers"

- conveys a strong message about the importance of employees, especially those who are in direct contact with guests. If the purpose of the catering facility is to provide a sense of comfort, the staff and their relationship with the guest must not be standardized. Simply, for the service to be of quality in the eyes of the guest, managers must "educate" their employees. Education must be aimed at understanding the concept of service quality and guest satisfaction.

For many years the authors have been trying to give some fundamental dimensions to quality. Thus, Lehtinen and Lehtinen presented a three-dimensional picture of the quality of service:

1. physical quality of service
2. interactive quality of service
3. corporate quality of service (image).

The physical quality of the service means all tangible aspects of the service in the catering facility. The physical elements in a catering facility can be divided into:

1. Physical products - products that are consumed during the production and service process (finished products and beverages).
2. Physical support - a framework that enables and facilitates the production of the service.

Physical support includes: environment - the entire interior and decoration of the space (ambience); technical devices - hygiene and sanitation systems (bathrooms and toilets), plumbing, sewerage and electrical systems, signaling devices, telephones, elevators, refrigerators and other devices that serve as support for guests and workers and equipment - various machines, appliances, tools and accessories for work, furniture and other inventory.

Interactive quality is the dimension of the quality of service that the guest realizes before arrival (via the Internet or by phone) and during the stay in the restaurant when communicating with employees. It can be divided into two basic groups:

- Interactive personal communication - includes communication between the guest and the staff and their relationship that develops during the conversation, whether it is personal contact or indirect telephone conversation, e-mail, etc. The intangible quality of service created during the conversation with the guest is also the most sensitive dimension of quality because it involves human contact, which is the most difficult to control. In addition, the image, ie the corporate quality of the service, largely depends on this dimension of quality.

Interactive technology - by investing in ICT for guests, caterers try to improve the quality of the interactive technology available to the guest. New generations will increasingly focus on the experience provided by interactive technology, so in addition to the challenge of managing employee relations, managing the experience that technology offers will be an equally important challenge for caterers.

- The quality of the company is a dimension of quality that arises from the long-term operation of a catering facility and refers to the image or image of the service provider among potential and real

guests, but also others in the market. Therefore, when we talk about positioning or repositioning in the market, we mean exactly the "creation" of the desired image in the eyes of the guest that will reflect the corporate quality of service. Upon arrival at the restaurant, guests bring with them a certain "picture" and expectations that follow that picture. A positive image in the eyes of the guest can help a lot if some minor mistakes are made in the service and vice versa: if the image is negative, even those small business mistakes for the guest will be big and unforgivable. The quality of the service through the guests indirectly affects the factors that are collectively interpreted as a competitive advantage. Among the basic tasks for the quality of services are:

- stimulates the interest of the guests
- enables the sale of the service
- affect the satisfaction of guests with the service provided and
- build and maintain customer loyalty.

Physical quality can be easily measured with various measuring instruments and determine the functionality for the guest, in contrast to the interactive and corporate quality of service.

If the services provided in the catering facility provide the specified tasks, the services will be considered quality. Because the quality is evaluated exclusively by the guests, the eight most common characteristics that the guests use as a criterion for quality evaluation are singled out:

1. security in providing the service - possibility for the catering facility to continuously provide satisfaction to the guests regardless of the time of day, season, etc. The following characteristics are also used for security: fulfillment of promises, provision of quality service from the first time, consistency and continuity in the service.
2. business activity and responsibility - ability of employees to respond promptly to guests' requests and to be ready and available to provide the required service at any time.
3. employee competence - a set of knowledge, attitudes and skills that prove the level of excellence in performing daily work tasks.
4. accessibility - the ability of the catering facility to provide availability of the service, adequate working hours and waiting time for the service.

5. sociability - the ability of catering staff to approach the conversation with the guest in a polite, considerate manner, giving him respect and understanding of all the problems that the guest has from the moment of his address. Guests are particularly sensitive to their problems and find it most difficult to forgive the behavior of workers (unattainable, irresponsible and unreasonable).

6. communication with the guest - includes verbal and non-verbal communication.

7. credibility - an opportunity to maintain trust in the catering facility of honest and professional workers.

8. security - the ability to eliminate hazards and ensure physical and financial security.

The problem with the quality of the provided services and the relations in the service activities is more complex than in the production, and the reason arises from the basic characteristics of the services (dislocation of supply and demand, simultaneous production and consumption, intangibility, heterogeneity, etc.). It is generally agreed that quality consists of two elements: objective and subjective. Subjective quality refers to the guest's satisfaction with the relationship and service in terms of his acceptance, his expectations and the characteristics he attaches to that relationship. Subjective quality is the attitude, opinion and attitude of the guest towards the service, as a result of his long-term observation and is a dominant feature of the quality of service. On the other hand, the objective quality, which refers to the quality of the technical means and the service personnel, can be determined with different measuring instruments, but in itself does not reflect the quality of the whole process.

MEASURING THE QUALITY OF SERVICE

Measuring the quality of catering services is much more complicated than measuring the quality of material products. Although the service product contains material components (eg food or beverage), a large part refers to the intangible components of the service delivery process, communication and relationships between service staff and guests, and so on. Continuous measurement of customer satisfaction is of great importance for catering facilities, because based on the results, you can see possible shortcomings that affect the level of (dissatisfaction) of the guest, and also provide

guidance to combat competition. When measuring consumer satisfaction with a catering service, their satisfaction is usually examined according to individual needs. The satisfaction of the guests as a result of the positive perception of the service provided in the restaurant is of particular importance primarily because it is the most relevant measure of the quality that the catering facility can have. A guest who is dissatisfied has a negative impact on future business results, disloyalty to attitude and behavior.

The perception of quality and satisfaction with the service are interrelated, but separate constructions serve to assess the service received. Unlike satisfaction, which can be the result of every aspect of the organization, whether it is related to quality, the perception of service quality is solely related to quality characteristics. Quality precedes satisfaction but there are studies that show that there is an inverse relationship, and in a way that satisfaction affects the evaluation of quality just as the evaluation of the quality of service affects the satisfaction of the guest. A guest who is satisfied with the previous and current service will be less critical in assessing the quality of service and vice versa: the guest who is not satisfied with one of the elements of the service will be more critical in the final valorization of the quality of service.

In order to determine the level of satisfaction of the guests, it is necessary to collect data that can be obtained from different sources. Research in terms of data collection and analysis can be divided into two basic types:

- Cabinet research (indirect methods) where the internal data from catering facilities that are in its own information system are used, possibly supplemented information from external sources (statistical register, data from the Chamber of Commerce, tourist organizations, etc.)
- Field research (direct methods) which are mainly performed on purpose.

The main difference between these two types of research is in the quality, cost and time required to perform them. Field research is better in terms of quantity, quality and relevance of the information collected, they require more in terms of cabinet research in terms of costs, training of staff who will conduct that research and the time required to perform them.

RESEARCH CAN RELY ON PRIMARY AND SECONDARY DATA SOURCES.

Primary data sources are information collected specifically for the needs of the given research (measurement of consumer satisfaction) and include questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, observation and the like.

Secondary data sources are those information that are collected for another purpose, but have the advantage of saving time and money, as well as speed of access to information. The main disadvantage of these sources is that they are often not fully suitable for the current need. Therefore, they are most often used with data obtained from primary sources to obtain clearer and more detailed images of the condition under study. As mentioned above, secondary data can be internal or external depending on whether it is available within the restaurant (database) or available outside the restaurant (published, commercial, online).

Quantitative and qualitative methods can be distinguished within the field research, and within the quantitative methods there are descriptive research and causal research. Within field research there are three basic tools for data collection: observation, questioning or probing, and experiment. The observation explores the visible behavior of the guest in real time and environment. The emphasis is on the external manifestation of the person, the relations in the space, the habits, the verbal records. Surveying or questioning is considered by many to be one of the most common data collection tools. They are usually conducted in such a way that the focus group is asked open-ended questions (a question is asked and the consumer responds).

When formulating the questions, it is necessary to take care of that precisely and clearly to ask those questions through which relevant information of importance for the specific research will be obtained.

The experiment is a method of data collection oriented to the study of consumer behavior for specific situations and conditions. The experiments can be performed both in the field and in artificial, "laboratory" conditions, specially prepared for that purpose. The most advanced form of experimentation is the simulation of virtual reality.

MEASURING THE QUALITY OF E-SERVICES

Because most service activities, in addition to their standard services, also offer so-called electronic services, there is a need for such services to be gradually developed in line with the requirements of their users. Research

has shown that quality websites (according to user perception) can significantly affect customer satisfaction, behavior and, ultimately, profits. Today, almost every potential and even regular guest visits a catering facility electronically. If the customer is not satisfied with the e-service, no form of marketing communication will lead the guest to visit the website again. Today, the electronic habits of the guests are an inexhaustible source of information for those who follow their activities.

The authors Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Malhotra (2005) proposed two scales to assess the quality of a website. The first is basic (E-S-QUAL) and measures 22 items divided into four dimensions:

1. Efficiency: ease, speed of access and use of the website
2. Fulfillment: the extent to which the website promises delivery and sale of services
3. System availability: proper functioning of the website
4. Privacy: The degree of security of the website (security of user data).

In addition to presenting their four dimensions for basic services, they also proposed an e-rec-SCQAL model that measures the quality of non-routine services (for solving customer problems) in three dimensions:

1. Answer: effectively solve user problems.
2. Compensation: the extent to which the website compensates for user problems.
3. Contact: providing opportunities for assistance through telephone or online support.

The rapid development of e-business has imposed the necessary changes on these scales. Thus, in the following years, the authors developed new scales that are more suitable for tourism activities and that better reflect the needs of users. With this type of research, unlike online tools, the following can be achieved:

- better establishment of future intentions of users
- better determination of which dimensions of e-quality have the greatest impact on satisfaction and vice versa, which dimensions of quality do not affect the overall satisfaction of service users
- more efficient development and improvement of websites.

ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH ON SERVICE QUALITY

A research can be conducted in two ways, in order to obtain two types of data: quantitative and qualitative data. The difference between these two types of data is that quantitative ones refer to facts such as: answering the questions what, where, how much, how often and so on. These are usually objective (not personal) and controlled. While in qualitative answers the answers are more subjective and describe the thinking - the attitudes of the respondent. In order to achieve the goal of this research, certain questionnaires were made which are intended for guests in the catering facilities in the eastern part of the Republic of North Macedonia. The purpose of this research is to get insightful opinions and attitudes as end consumers of the catering product. Furthermore, the obtained results can be used to create short-term and long-term plans for future development of restaurant operations and at the same time will allow comparative analysis with the same or similar facilities in the destination and beyond, providing theoretical and practical applicability in restaurant operations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The subject of research in this paper is the quality of service and the satisfaction of the guests. This paper analyzes the results of the research conducted in the catering facilities in the eastern part of the Republic of North Macedonia. The survey questionnaires were designed and answered by the guests in the catering facilities in order to see the quality of service in the restaurant operation.

The survey was conducted in April, May and June 2021 electronically. The survey questionnaire aims to perceive their opinion and views, as final consumers of the catering product. Given the current situation we are in and the crisis caused by the Covid 19 virus, only domestic guests participate in the survey.

The guests on the question whether the motivation of the employees in the restaurant contributes to the guests returning to the restaurant most of the 87 respondents stated that they absolutely agree that the motivation of the employees in the restaurant contributes to the guests returning to

therestaurant, 35 respondents partially agree, undecided 4 and 3 respondents partially disagree.

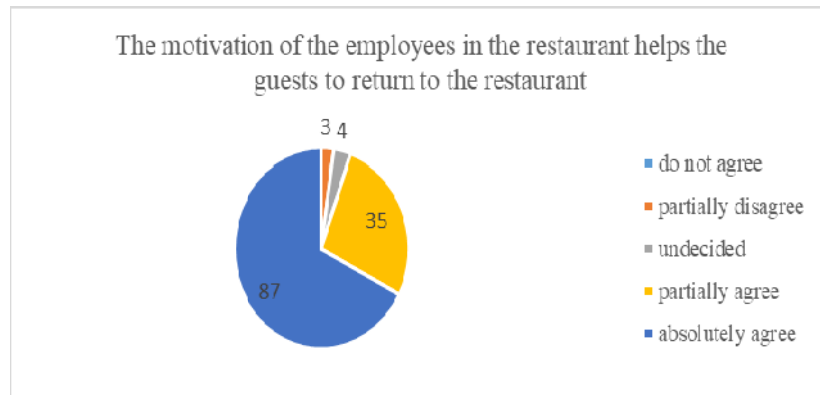


Chart 1. The motivation of the employees in the restaurant helps the guests to return to the restaurant (guest)

Regarding the question whether the ordered meals and drinks are served by the employees at the scheduled time, most of the 64 respondents stated that they partially agree that the ordered meals and drinks are served by the employees at the scheduled time, 39 respondents absolutely agree, undecided 15, partially disagree 7 and 4 respondents do not agree that the ordered meals and drinks are served by the employees at the scheduled time.

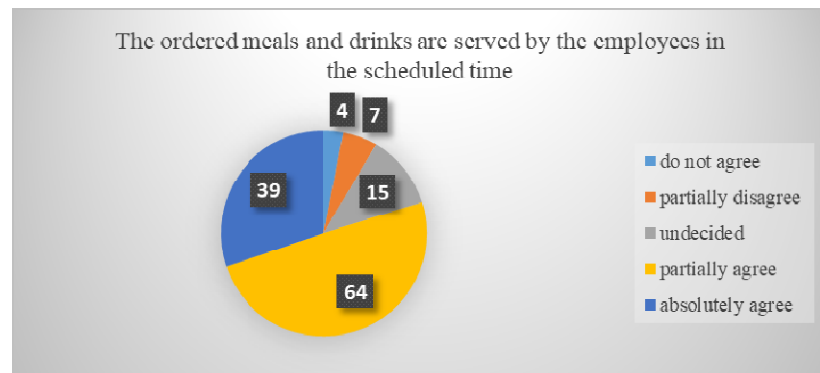


Chart 2. The ordered meals and drinks are served by the employees in the scheduled time (guest)

When asked if the employees make an accurate calculation of the ordered meals and drinks, most of the respondents 56 stated that they absolutely agree that the employees make an accurate calculation, 50 respondents partially agree, 10 undecided, 7 partially disagree and 6 and 6 respondents do not agree that the employees make an accurate calculation.

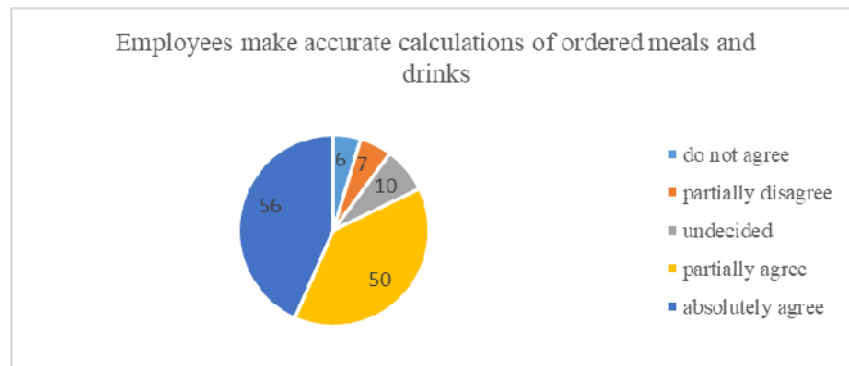


Chart 3. Employees make accurate calculations of ordered meals and drinks (guest)

When asked if the expectations created based on market information, their own previous experiences and the experience of others are the standard on which guests evaluate the service provided, most of the respondents 70 said that they partially agree that the expectations created based on market information, own previous experiences and the experience of others are the standard on the basis of which they evaluate the given service, 36 respondents absolutely agree, 17 undecided respondents, 4 partially disagree and 2 respondents disagree.

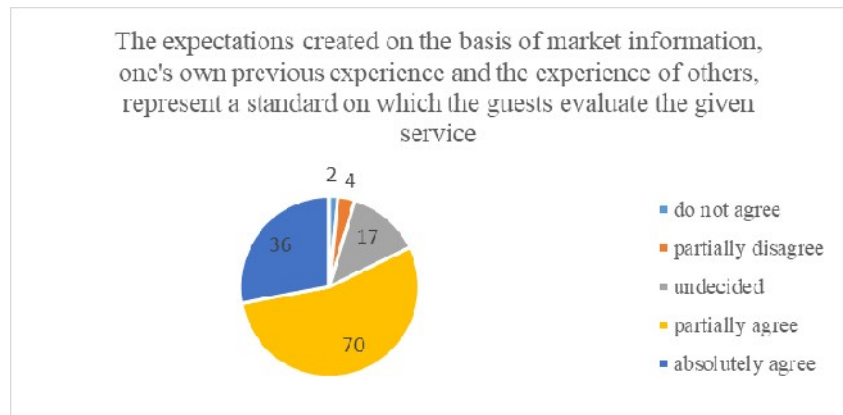


Chart 4. The expectations created on the basis of market information, one's own previous experience and the experience of others, represent a standard on which the guests evaluate the given service (guest)

Regarding the question whether the quality service in tourism and catering is the one that leaves a feeling of satisfaction and desire to come again, most of the respondents 96 said that they absolutely agree that the quality service in tourism and catering is the one that leaves a feeling of satisfaction and desire to come again to the catering facility, then 26 respondents partially agree, 4 undecided, 2 respondents partially disagree and 1 respondent does not agree that the quality service in tourism and catering is the one that leaves a feeling of satisfaction and desire to come again in the catering facility.

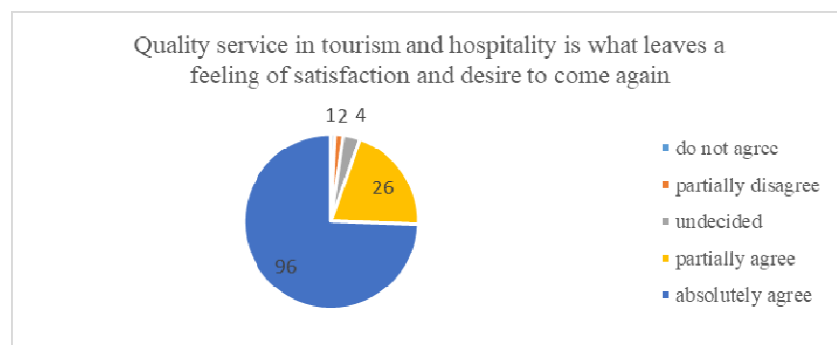


Chart 5. Quality service in tourism and hospitality is what leaves a feeling of satisfaction and desire to come again (guest)

FUTURE STEPS FOR RESEARCH

This research has weaknesses that can be overcome in some future more comprehensive research. Regarding the research where the opinion of the guests in the catering facilities is assessed, the most important limitations are the following:

- A relatively small set of indicators has been researched, which shows the quality of service and the satisfaction of the guests. This can be overcome by introducing new indicators to better assess the quality of service and guest satisfaction used to collect primary data by monitoring restaurant operations in the eastern part of the Republic of North Macedonia.
- The survey was conducted electronically due to the coronavirus pandemic COVID-19, in the future the research on the quality of service and satisfaction of guests in the restaurant in the eastern part of the Republic of North Macedonia can be checked by physical presence in catering facilities where more reliable information. This can be overcome by increasing the sample by covering a larger number of guests in the catering facilities in the region;
- A simple research technique has been applied, which can be supplemented with other model research;

In the future, to make a comparative analysis of the quality of service and guest satisfaction in restaurant operations from other regions in the country in order to obtain a full understanding of the quality of service and guest satisfaction.

The findings obtained from this research are not to be neglected because they reflect the current situation, the service quality and the satisfaction of the guests in the restaurant operation in the eastern part of the Republic of North Macedonia.

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