

Analysis of the effects of service quality on customer satisfaction toward sustainable development of tourism in Kosovo

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Goal and objectives of the dissertation

Goal

The main goal of this thesis is to examine how and to what extent the quality of tourism services through customer satisfaction will affect sustainable tourism development

Objectives

This research work aims to:

1. Examine the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction.
2. Identify the main elements of service quality and customer satisfaction in tourism sustainability development.
3. Analyse the impact of accessibility on tourist satisfaction.
4. Analyse the effect of facilities and services on the satisfaction of tourists.

Methodology

The research methodology combines descriptive quantitative and qualitative approaches. The descriptive analysis includes the frequency of the collected data while the qualitative conclusions were based on open questions posed to the respondents.

Data were collected from customers who stayed in hotels in Kosovo and from hotel owners or managers. The questionnaire was divided into two parts: a part with questions dedicated to business owners and another one for customers. More specifically, the questionnaire included 27 questions (12 questions for business owners and 15 others for customers) to assess the quality of services and customer satisfaction. The first part of the questionnaire obtained qualitative data, enabling the respondent to freely express their attitudes while the second part was focused on the descriptive quantitative analysis of the problem. The questionnaire included Likert-scale questions, dichotomous questions, and rating scale questions. In total 30 four- and five-star hotels located in seven regions in Kosovo were included in the research. The questionnaire to the customers was distributed from the respective hotels or some of them were asked by the e-mail that they left at the reception of the hotel, with the consent of the hotel. A total of 300 guests participated in the study.

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the characteristics of the data collected. Pearson's Chi-squared test was used to establish the relationships between study variables.

Results

Of the total number of surveyed customers, 74.3% were from Kosovo and 25.7% from abroad. Given the timing of this research, we can assume that the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to this significantly reduced number of foreign tourists. According to the hotel owners' statements, the strategies for tourism development are mainly based on investment in maintenance and capacity building. However, the attitude of the hotel owners regarding the tourism developments does not align with their statements, since 18 out of 30 hotel owners then stated that good service is the key factor that they believe helps their business grow. The majority of respondents (26 of 30) said that they use this type of strategy.

Customers declared full agreement that hotels met their expectations. The majority of the customers which were completely satisfied with the staff and that the service provided was prompt and as described by the owners. Furthermore, when asked to rate the food and beverages almost half of them gave a "more than adequate" answer while almost all the others rated as good. Interestingly, there was

a significant difference ($p=0.014$) between the sexes: 70.4% of female clients agreed that the services were good, while only 29.6% of male clients did so.

Theoretical conclusions

From a theoretical perspective, this thesis provides insights into customers' impressions of service quality and their level of satisfaction. The research identifies a set of characteristics that contribute to the development of sustainable tourism based on customer demands. Moreover, the approach and continuous care for the clients were shown to be efficient since the clients in general have declared that they were satisfied with the approach of the hotel staff towards them. Taken together, these findings suggest that having good practices and paying attention to the quality of the service is crucial for maintaining customer satisfaction. However, further studies should be done at other levels of tourism to access the same data to have a full picture that would help in developing sustainable tourism around the country.

Practical application of the dissertation

The findings can be of great support to improve the quality of services and further increase customer satisfaction, thus resulting in more sustainable tourism. Moreover, considering the fact that Kosovo is a small and newly formed country, these findings will be of benefit to policymakers. Indeed, hotel owners are expected to base their policies and strategies on these findings to meet the customers' demands.

Content of the dissertation

Abstract of Chapter 1

This chapter focuses mainly on the quality of the services in tourism. It depicts the most relevant theories and definitions of service quality. Moreover, this chapter highlights the value of customer service quality followed by factors that affect the quality of service in tourism: SERVPERF (Performance-Based Measure) and ECOSERV.

Abstract of Chapter 2

Chapter 2 deals with the customers' satisfaction with hotel services. By citing the most relevant bibliography, this chapter describes in detail the terms and definitions of customer satisfaction. Moreover, here we highlight different dimensions of customer satisfaction and analyse them by comparing them with other studies. Considering that service quality and customer satisfaction are strongly related, this chapter highlights the importance of assessing customer satisfaction. Indeed, by doing so we have a full picture of information to use to improve the quality of service if required. Thus, in this part of the thesis we pay attention to the three most important models: HOLSAT - Measurement of Vacation Satisfaction Analysis, MUSA (Multicriteria Satisfaction Analysis), and KANO Model.

Abstract of Chapter 3

Sustainable tourism is in the spotlight of this chapter. Here we discuss the definition, role, and the most relevant findings from different sources of sustainable tourism. We describe the impact of the quality of services on the development of sustainable tourism alone and as a link with customer satisfaction. The influence of customer satisfaction on the development of sustainable tourism as a second objective also is presented here which clarifies the importance of tourism development.

Abstract of Chapter 4

This chapter highlights some empirical research on the effects of service quality on customer satisfaction and compares the findings with recent previous studies. Additionally, this chapter focuses on the effects and role of service quality on the sustainable development of tourism.

Abstract of Chapter 5

Chapter 5 provides an analysis of the current hotel situation in Kosovo. It analyses the capacities, facilities, staff, services, and other attributes by which tourism in Kosovo could be estimated. A SWOT analysis presents the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that could affect the tourism industry.

Abstract of Chapter 6

This chapter describes the survey results from hotel owners and customers. It presents general customer survey data followed by a comparison of customer backgrounds and customer responses by gender and age group. The main finding shows that hotel owners know they must invest in service quality and facilities to have higher customer satisfaction.

Abstract of Chapter 7

The chapter sheds light on the fact that the majority of hotel owners fully agree that the quality of hotel services is a crucial factor for customer satisfaction and the development of sustainable tourism. Most of the local and foreign customers stated that hotel services met their expectations. We conclude that the quality of hotel services and the level of customer satisfaction are strong pillars for the development of sustainable tourism in Kosovo.

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