

Current approaches to hotel service quality management: their development and state in Ukraine

Insufficient attention to the issues of hotel service quality management in Ukraine, on the one hand, and the objective need to enter the European market through the implementation of appropriate requirements for the service quality level, on the other hand, make the research on current approaches to hotel service quality management relevant. The article outlines important aspects of hotel service quality management, namely available amenities, the interaction between staff and the consumer, service delivery technology, and degree of customer satisfaction.

The classification of approaches to hotel service quality management has been proposed, and their peculiarities have been indicated. The operational approach is characterized by an orientation towards the proper performance of technological processes of the provision of service and does not involve consumer participation. It is defined that the regulatory framework for hotel service quality management in Ukraine is mainly focused on this approach, however, further, the development will imply a reorientation to the consumer needs.

In the consumer approach, the consumer perception of the service is basic. It is indicated that the available methodological approaches involving consumer participation are quite diverse. As an example, a brief description of the Service Quality and the Service Performance Models methods is given.

The distinctive feature of the comprehensive approach is the quality requirements built into the enterprise management system. In the framework of this approach, several practical tools are given, namely the strategic management tool Balanced Scorecard (BSC), which provides the possibility of its implementation in quality management processes; Customer Relationship Management (CRM), which creates the possibility of ongoing monitoring of various aspects of interaction with consumers and their perception of the service; awards in the field of quality, the requirements of which serve as a kind of set of generally recognized benchmarks in achieving high-quality services; and documented quality systems, in particular ISO quality management systems, the most significant aspect of which is the implementation of a continuous quality improvement approach. Each approach has been defined to have certain characteristics and reflect different aspects of hotel activity.

Keywords: hotels; tourist accommodations; hotel service; quality management.

The relevance of considering the issue of service quality in the hospitality industry of Ukraine and, in particular, hotels and other tourist accommodations is due to a number of reasons, among which it is worth emphasizing the followings. For instance, there is a certain discrepancy between the growth of the number of hotels and other tourist accommodations and the pace of implementation of quality systems in them. On the one hand, there is a fairly significant increase in the number of tourist accommodations, despite some downward trend recently owing to the pandemic and quarantine measures. For example, the number of hotels and similar accommodations increased from 4,081 units in 2014 to 5,451 units in 2019 and slightly decreased to 5,125 units in 2020 [1]. On the other hand, there are reasons to argue that the issues of service quality are not given due attention. Evidently, the level of service quality of domestic tourist accommodations is significantly inferior to western ones, it is also important to point out the insufficient efforts of tourist accommodations to develop and implement internal customer service standards and carry out categorization as a voluntary type of hotel services certification. To name but a few, as of June 23, 2021, only 276 hotels were categorized among the 3,165 registered tourist accommodations in Ukraine [2].

It is also worth indicating the processes of further transformation of the existing domestic hotel certification system, which is due to Ukraine joining the European community of national associations of hotels and restaurants (HOTREC) and, accordingly, the European hotel certification system Hotels Stars Union (HSU) in the spring of 2021 [2]. The entire implementation of the mentioned system and, as a result, full entry into the European market will require special attention to the quality management systems of domestic tourist accommodations.

Note that as the popularity of Ukraine as a tourist attraction increases in the near future, the enumerated problems will become increasingly acute without a relevant solution. The above-mentioned issues actualize scientific research in terms of the review of current approaches to hotel service quality management as a necessary element of studying the accumulated experience in the researched realm.

Analysis of previous studies. It is worth noting that at the present time, the science and practice of management have developed quite a significant number of approaches to product and service quality management, which facilitated the formation of a certain system of knowledge about quality in general and hotel services quality in particular. Modern theoretical principles of product and service quality management were laid by such outstanding experts as W.A. Shewhart, K.Ishikawa, W.E. Deming, J.M. Juran, N.Kano, A.V. Feigenbaum, etc.

In terms of the development of modern ideas about service quality, it is worth pointing out the works of scientists from the USA, A.Parasuraman, V.Zeithaml, and L.Berry that proposed conceptualized model of service quality estimation as a difference between customer expectations and actual perceptions of the service, developed the well-known the Service Quality Model and to some extent laid the foundation for further research in the field of service quality management [3]. Later, scientists J.J. Cronin, Jr.Steven, and A.Taylor proposed a slightly different approach to understanding the service quality that is based on the analysis of the obtained level of service and the corresponding evaluation model [4]. It is important to note that the above-mentioned developments are still widely used in practice. Scientists have been carrying out their appropriate implementation in various areas of service industries [5, 6].

Domestic scientists also have quite significant accomplishments in the study of service quality. In particular, V.V. Dykan, and O.I. Grechana present the results of a thorough study of the essence of the concept of «service quality», available methodological approaches to assessing service quality, among which production and consumer approaches are distinguished, and provide recommendations for assessing the quality of trade services market complex [7]. Balabanyts A. and Gaponyuk O. in their research determined the essence of service quality as a key aspect of customer orientation in tourist accommodations and proposed the approach to its assessment based on certain factors [8]. Scientists I.M. Melnyk and T.V. Khymych analyzed a fairly significant number of modern methods of assessing the level of guest service quality in hotels and considered the reasons for the complication of assessing the hotel service quality and existing models of service quality [9].

In light of the importance of the transformation of the hospitality industry of Ukraine according to the European market requirements, it is still relevant to consider and critically analyze the current approaches to quality management in hotels and other tourist accommodations.

The purpose of the study is to clarify the main characteristics of current approaches to quality management in the field of the hospitality industry, in particular hotels and other tourist accommodations, in the aspect of ensuring the efficiency of their activities.

Results. The starting point of the research is to find out the essence of the concept of «hotel service». Note that the Law of Ukraine provides the following definition of hotel service: «these are actions (operations) of an enterprise to accommodate a consumer by providing a room (place) for temporary accommodation in a hotel, as well as other activities related to accommodation and temporary accommodation» [10].

In our opinion, a fairly thorough determination of the definition was carried out in the monograph edited by Prof. V.M. Zaitseva. There are some significant conclusions from the cited scientific work in terms of this research. So, we fully agree with the authors' opinion that «due to the complexity of the client's needs and the "intangibility" of the service itself, this concept [hotel service] is formed and perceived subjectively», and therefore the main characteristic of the hotel business is «direct focus on the client's needs, in the nature of production, priority is given to the service process, and the service quality has a double assessment. On the one hand, this is a certain generally accepted standard, and, on the other hand, it is the assessment with which the service is perceived by the guest (consumer). That is, hotel service according to the criterion of its evaluation is not so much "standard" or "expectation", but the degree of consumer satisfaction» [11, p. 15]. So, it follows from the above that quality management in the hotel industry must take into account the consumer perception of the service. This is the main distinctive feature of the researched area that significantly differs it from other types of economic activity, both production, and service. However, it is important to note that the room stock of hotels and other tourist accommodations is the material basis of the hotel service. Thus, we can state that hotel service quality management should be based on a set of requirements for the following components:

- available amenities;
- service process (interaction between staff and the consumer, service delivery technology);
- degree of customer satisfaction.

The outline of the main components illustrates important directions in hotel service quality management.

It should be noted that the aspect of the degree of client satisfaction is currently insufficiently taken into account in the existing standards for the provision of hotel services in Ukraine. In particular, analysts of the hotel services market, among other systemic problems, point to the absence of established procedures for taking customer complaints into account meanwhile categorizing hotels. Such norms are only intended to be implemented, particularly, the «mystery shopper» technology, which will allow responding to guest reviews [12].

Considering modern approaches to quality management, in our opinion, the aspect of their development over time should be taken into account. A significant evolution of approaches to quality management involves the

implementation of previous practices that become mandatory but insufficient. For instance, one of the fundamental principles of modern quality management systems is the implementation of continuous quality improvement procedures. This requires methods and techniques of quality management that are different from the previous ones and the construction of its system regarding modern conditions. In this regard, it is advisable to consider approaches to hotel service quality management based on quality levels or the so-called Japanese quality hierarchy model, which is widely covered in professional literature [13, p. 13]. In a way, they reflect the evolution of approaches to quality management.

Based on the results of the analysis of professional studies and our own research, as well as taking into account the content of the concept of «hotel service», the following classification is proposed:

- 1) operational approach;
- 2) consumer approach;
- 3) comprehensive approach.

Operational approach. It corresponds to the first level of quality (conformance to the standard) and partly to the second level (conformity to use), i.e. the quality is evaluated as conforming or not to the requirements of the standard (or other documents for the operation of the product – technical conditions, contract, etc.), and the product must meet not only mandatory requirements of the standards but also operational requirements in order to take advantage of market demand. This approach pays special attention to the proper performance of technological processes of the provision of service and compliance with norms and standards in the hotel industry and does not involve consumer participation. The approach focuses on the material and technical base of the hotel service. Assessment is carried out by the service provider himself or certification (control) bodies. Simultaneously, the second level of quality is partially realized insofar as the standardization of the service takes place, i.e. the interaction of the service provider and the consumer.

Overall, the structure of the quality system processes is supposed to ensure the proper management of all work processes that determine service quality and guarantee their appropriate level [14, p. 288]. Within the framework of the quality system, methods have to be developed that establish requirements for the implementation of all processes related to the provision of services, including the three basic processes (marketing, design, and provision), which function in the structure of the service quality system [14, p. 288].

Regulatory documents provided in the field of hotel service quality management are identical to any other types of service and include the following: technical conditions for the service (establish the content of the service provided), technical conditions for the provision of services (establish the means and methods of its provision), and technical conditions for quality management (establish the methods of evaluating the characteristics of the service and its provision, as well as their management) [14, p. 300] and state standards.

Nowadays the following standards apply in Ukraine in the field of hotel service quality management [15]:

1. The State Standard of Ukraine DSTU 4527:2006 «Tourist services. Tourist accommodations. Terms and definitions»;
2. The State Standard of Ukraine DSTU 4269:2003 «Tourist services. Classification of hotels»;
3. The State Standard of Ukraine DSTU 4268:2003 «Tourist services. Tourist accommodations. General requirements».

Certification (actually – assignment of the appropriate category) of hotel services in Ukraine is voluntary.

Mandatory certification of hotel services and restaurant services is carried out in accordance with the mandatory regulatory documents in force in Ukraine regarding the safety of life and health of people, protection of their property, and environmental protection [14, p. 402]. The above-mentioned aspects are regulated by the State Building Regulations of Ukraine [16].

The Ukrainian hotel categorization system is five-star in accordance with the European system. It is important to note that the classification of hotels by category is determined by a set of requirements for:

- material and technical equipment;
- list of services provided;
- personnel qualification.

Obviously, the main attention of the existing standard is given to the technological component and its material basis.

Joining the European hotel certification system Hotels Stars Union (HSU) will require the implementation of a slightly different system of standardization of hotels and other tourist accommodations, namely 21 HOTREC principles for the setting-up and / or review of national / regional hotel classification systems in Europe [17]. They significantly expand the number of hotel compliance criteria and shift the emphasis with a reorientation primarily on the consumer and their perception of the service. In fact, the further development of the hotel services standardization system in the direction of established European practice will mean its transition from an operational approach to the following – consumer and comprehensive ones.

It is worth noting separately the standards in network structures, for instance, franchising. Quite often, a franchisor provides a built-in quality management system in the support package. Franchising in the restaurant business is quite developed in Ukraine, so we will give it as an example. As a rule, the partner support package

provided by most franchisors includes the following: CRM, staff training, dispatch / location approval, suppliers, methods / licenses, process maps, launch team, personal manager, and technical openings [18].

The Reikartz Hotel Group hotel chain has developed technologies and procedures in accordance with Reikartz's own internal quality standards in the following areas: reception and accommodation, housekeeping, room management, restaurant and bar management, hotel security, engineering, procurement, and supply, etc [19].

Consumer approach. It covers the second level of quality (conformity to use) and the third level (conformance to actual market requirements). The direct party in the quality management system is the consumer since their perception of the service is basic in the consumer approach. In this approach, several options for consumer participation can be distinguished. The available methodological approaches including consumer participation are quite widely characterized in the professional literature [3–9, 20]. The most famous of them are listed and characterized below.

The Service Quality Model (SERVQUAL, RATER model). It was suggested by the American marketing researchers V. Zeithaml, A. Parasuraman, and L. Berry in the 1980s [3]. The basic assumption of this method is to regard quality as the discrepancy between customer expectations and actual perceptions of the service. Good service quality is one that meets or exceeds consumers' expectations of the service. Initially, the method captured 10 dimensions but over time it started taking into account five main characteristics named gaps, such as reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy, and responsiveness (RATER). Each gap contains 4 or 5 questions that overall make up the SERVQUAL questionnaire (table 1). The SERVQUAL questionnaire is split into two main sections [21].

Since quality satisfaction in this model determines the difference between perception and expectation each respondent has to be asked twice: about their expectations of the ideal service firm in a specific service category and then about the service quality delivery (the perceived level of service) of specific firms in that industry. Therefore, the core of the questionnaire contains 44 questions in base. It is important to notice that the model can be tailored to the specific service industry in terms of which gap is crucial for it. For example, for hotels, tangibles would be more important than other characteristics, contrary to other service industries.

Table 1

SERVQUAL Questionnaire [21]

Characteristics	№	Questions
Tangible the physicality of the service	1	The service firm has up-to-date equipment
	2	Physical facilities are visually appealing
	3	Employees are well-dressed and appear neat
	4	The appearance of the physical facilities is in keeping with the type of services provide
Reliability the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately	5	The firm meets its promised time-frames for response
	6	The employees are sympathetic and reassuring when the customer has problems
	7	The employees are dependable
	8	The employees provide their services at the times promised
	9	The employees keep their records accurately
Responsiveness willingness to help customers and to do so in good time	10	The employees are expected to tell customers exactly when the service will be performed
	11	It is realistic for customers to expect prompt service from employees
	12	The employees are expected to always help the customers
	13	It is a problem if the employees are too busy to respond to customers' requests promptly
Assurance knowledge and courtesy of the staff and their ability to convey trust and confidence	14	The employees can be trustworthy
	15	The customers are able to feel safe in their transactions with the employees
	16	The employees are to be polite
	17	The employees are to get adequate support from the service firm's management to do their job well
Empathy provision of personalized service and a caring attitude	18	The employees are expected to give customers individual attention
	19	It is expected that the employees know what the needs of their customers are
	20	It is expected that the employees have their customers' best interests at heart
	21	The employees are expected to have operating hours convenient to all their customer

The Service Performance Model (SERVPERF). Later, J.J.J. Cronin and S.A. Taylor (1992) in their empirical work propounded a performance-based measure of service quality called «SERVPERF» (Service Performance) illustrating that service quality is a form of consumer attitude [4]. The framework of the model is based on the SERVQUAL model, namely using the set of characteristics and questions. This technique does not take into account the assessment of the customer expectations and actual perceptions of the service, but the analysis of the given service. Thereby this model omits the assessment of customer expectations because the expectations belong to the ambiguous and variable category. Thus, it results in halving the number of questions. Simultaneously, it allows covering all crucial areas of a specific service industry.

Apart from the models mentioned above, there are other useful tools for the assessment of service quality that involve customer participation. The following methods are given as examples [9, 20].

The Critical Incident Technique (CRIT) is based on an empirical study of cases of interaction between a guest and a representative of a hotel. It is a qualitative method of data collection without a formalized approach to obtaining conclusions. Surveys of satisfaction (questionnaires). It can vary from a simple one-sheet questionnaire to quite complicated many-sheet ones. On the one hand, this is an expensive technique, on the other – buyers may not, due to ignorance of service standards identify its existing shortcomings in it.

Mystery guest / Mystery shopper – a technique of secretly visiting companies / organizations in question, to check the quality of services provided and to prepare and submit feedback reports to management.

The Kano method is based on conducting a survey, but the set of service quality characteristics is not defined, it is formed in the process of the survey itself.

Comprehensive approach. It covers the third level of quality (compliance with actual market requirements) and the fourth level (compliance with latent needs). Its peculiarity is that quality requirements are built into the enterprise management system and make it important and related to other components of hotel management. Several such approaches can be specified.

In the framework of strategic management, in the 1980s, scientists R.Kaplan and D.Norton proposed the Balanced Scorecard (BSC), which is a strategic management tool for formulating and implementing strategic plans. The basic model of this tool comprises four main aspects: finance (financial activity), training and career growth (infrastructure / personnel), internal business processes, and customers (market, consumers). This approach makes it possible to transform the company's strategy into an extensive system of indicators and monitor the change in their values in the interconnection amongst individual aspects [11, p. 84]. The framework of the considered approach makes it possible to implement it in terms of quality management processes as well. For instance, in the work of the domestic researcher O.O. Kurnosova-Yurkova for the purpose of assessing the service quality according to the BSC methodology, appropriate indicators are proposed, on the basis of which the integral indicator of service quality is calculated [22].

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) allows combining disparate business tools into a single well-established system. It is an approach that integrates all aspects of business concerning relations with consumers: marketing, product implementation, customer service, and product operation support with the integration of staff, processes, and technologies using the advantages provided by computer technologies [14, p. 374–376]. In our opinion, CRM creates the possibility of ongoing monitoring of various aspects of interaction with consumers, and their perception of the service in particular, which is fundamental in hotel service quality management. However, this system is primarily a monitoring system that provides an information base for making further decisions regarding service quality management.

Awards in the field of quality. The approach offered within the framework of organizations regarding rewards in the field of quality is not a direct internal tool for hotel service quality management but it serves as a kind of set of generally recognized guidelines for achieving high-quality services [20, p. 56–58]. It is important to emphasize that in this case a quality-based management approach is used. There are the most important existing quality awards.

The European foundation for quality management (EFQM). It introduces the «EFQM Excellence Model» based on a set of eight fundamental concepts as a framework for an organization's self-assessment for improvement across all of the organization's activities. EFQM expresses a facilitator and advisor role, not delivering certification to organizations, but it awards prizes to the best companies. The enabling factors (leadership, people management, policy and strategy, resources and process) are calculated based on an introduced, systematic, measurable, and ongoing improvement system, while the results (people satisfaction, customer satisfaction, impact on society, and operational results) are evaluated based on trends, achieved objectives and comparison with other companies in the sector.

The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. It is the highest level of national recognition for quality that a US company can receive. It is administered by the federal government (National Institute of Standards and Technology, Commerce Department). The award promotes an understanding of quality excellence, greater awareness of quality as a critical competitive element, and the sharing of quality information and strategies. The Baldrige Criteria are applied equally to all business sectors, including service organizations. There are

Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence, namely leadership, strategy, customer; measurement, analysis, and knowledge management; workforce; operations; results.

The Leading Hotels of the World is considered to be one of the most significant quality awards [23]. The LHW is a prestigious luxury hospitality organization representing the world's finest hotels and resorts. Its assessments cover over 800 individual service «touches» across all hotel departments. The assessment comprises such aspects as an anonymous on-site three-day / two-night assessment measuring all aspects of the guests' journey; measurement of over 800 benchmarks, emotional intelligence, and brand-specific standards; a final report that provides both quantitative and qualitative feedback as well as digital photos and recordings; exit feedback session between the consultant and the hotel management team.

Documented quality management systems that comprise ISO-certified quality management systems as well as they can be called a practical embodiment of the TQM concept. It is focused on satisfying and anticipating the wishes of consumers based on ongoing improvement of the quality of products, processes, and the use of resources. The definition of TQM in the international standard ISO 8402 is given: «A form of management of a body focused on quality, based on the participation of all its members, and aimed at long-term success through customer satisfaction and providing benefits for all members of the body and for society» [24]. It is common knowledge that ISO 9001 is a quality management system, the certification of which guarantees that the organization can produce goods at a stable level of quality and constantly improve it. In Ukraine, the analog of this standard is DSTU ISO 9001:2015. The ISO 9001 standard is one of the models for managing the organization's activities in order to ensure its effectiveness. The TQM concept and ISO standards complement each other. ISO standards are intended to regulate the relationship between the producer and the consumer, whereas the TQM concept is intended only for the internal needs of the producer. The most significant aspect of documented quality management systems is the implementation of an ongoing quality improvement approach that includes three key aspects: improvement planning, improvement implementation, and self-assessment.

Simultaneously, the practical implementation of documented quality management systems in the service sector, and in particular in the hotel industry, differs in a number of features. Scholars M.Hussain and Ju.Khan, based on the results of a fairly thorough study of the theoretical aspects and practical implementation of ISO standards in the hospitality industry, indicate certain important aspects of TQM [25]. The researchers state that TQM tools and practices are significantly different in comparison to the service sector in terms of processes, product quality, operations, and customer association and affiliation. Therefore, the crucial success factors in the hospitality industry selected are as follows: 1. Quality Policy; 2. Top Management Commitment; 3. Continuous Improvement; 4. Quality Improvement; 5. Training and Education; 6. Employee Empowerment.

Conclusions. The results of the conducted research on a variety of current approaches to hotel service quality management give reasons to assert that each defined approach has certain peculiarities and reflects various aspects of the activity of hotels and other tourist accommodations. The operational approach focuses on the material and technical base of the hotel's activities, the consumer approach – on the consumer perception of the hotel service provided, and the comprehensive approach – on the construction of quality management systems that provide for its ongoing improvement based on the identification and maximum satisfaction of the client's needs. The existing hotel categorization system in Ukraine corresponds to the operational approach, which currently does not fully satisfy the customers' needs and increase the efficiency of operations, and requires a further change in the direction of established European practice, which involves the implementation of other defined approaches.

The development of approaches to assessing the hotel services quality in Ukraine can be defined as the further direction of research.

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Сучасні підходи до управління якістю готельних послуг: їх розвиток та стан в Україні

Недостатня увага до питань управління якістю готельних послуг в Україні, з одного боку, та об'єктивна необхідність повноцінного входження на європейський ринок шляхом імплементації відповідних вимог щодо рівня якості послуг, з другого боку, роблять актуальними дослідження щодо наявних підходів до управління якістю послуг у засобах розміщення. У статті окреслено важливі аспекти управління якістю готельних послуг, а саме: наявні зручності, взаємодія персоналу та споживача, технології надання послуги, а також ступінь задоволення клієнта.

Запропоновано класифікацію підходів до управління якістю готельних послуг, зазначено їх відмітні риси. Для операційного підходу характерним є орієнтація на належне виконання технологічних процесів надання послуг і не передбачає участі споживача. Визначено, що зараз регуляторна база управління якістю готельних послуг в Україні найчастіше орієнтується на операційний підхід, проте подальший розвиток передбачає переорієнтацію на потреби споживача. В споживчому підході базовим є сприйняття послуги споживачем. Зазначено, що наявні методологічні підходи за участі споживача є доволі різноманітні. Як приклад наведено коротку характеристику методів the Service Quality Model та the Service Performance Model.

Характерною особливістю комплексного підходу вказано вбудовані в систему управління підприємством вимоги якості. У межах такого підходу наведено декілька практичних інструментів, а саме: інструмент стратегічного менеджменту Balanced Scorecard (BSC), який надає можливість його імплементації до процесів управління якістю; Customer Relationship Management (CRM), який створює можливість постійного моніторингу різноманітних аспектів взаємодії зі споживачами та їх сприйняття послуги; премії в галузі якості, вимоги яких слугують своєрідним набором загальноновизначених орієнтирів у досягненні високої якості послуг; та документовані системи якості, зокрема системи управління якістю ISO, найбільш значущим аспектом яких є реалізація підходу безперервного поліпшення якості. Визначено, що кожен підхід володіє певними характерними особливостями та відображає різні аспекти діяльності готелів.

Ключові слова: готелі; засоби розміщення; готельна послуга; управління якістю.

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