

## FACTORS INFLUENCING THE CHOICE AND QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF HOTEL FACILITIES IN POLAND

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### Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the effect of selected factors on the choice of hotel facilities by customers. Particular attention was focused on the perception of the quality of services by consumers. The field research, the results of which are presented in the article, was conducted on a nationwide sample of 1,000 persons aged from 15 to 70 according to the author's questionnaire.

**Keywords:** quality of service, hotel facility, decisive factors, consumer, customer satisfaction

**JEL classification:** D12

## **Introduction**

In the era of universal globalization, when there is dynamic growth in the number of companies operating in the hotel industry, maintaining a competitive edge is a real challenge and it enforces the need continuous improvement of the quality of offered services. Today's consumers pay even higher attention to the quality of the services they provide, which one can try to define through specific characteristics such as: quality of services being a subjective category; it is a subjective impression of the level and the extent which the tender meets expectations and the needs of the consumer; the quality of services is relative, because it's always the result of comparisons, e.g. between the expectations of consumers and the features of the provided offer; the quality is gradated, meaning that it should not be equated with something perfect – quality of services may in fact be satisfactory to different extent or not; quality of services is a dynamic and variable category – is affected by the phenomena occurring on the market, on both – the demand and supply, trends and phenomena appearing in the economy, technique and technology, in society, tc. (Stoma, 2012).

Assessment of the quality of services can be performed from two different points of view. Consumers evaluate the quality of services provided in a subjective manner in relation to the benefits, needs or preferences, while managers perceive the quality of services in an objective way as the compliance features of a service with a specific pattern (Urban, 2007). For employees who observe it within a company means the compliance with norms, adopted standards and prescribed conditions. For the consumer who takes a look at it from the outside, as the recipient of the service, it is based on a subjective assessment. This assessment expressed as satisfaction, quality and customer contentment has a very big impact on whether the company will succeed in the market or not. It is assumed that consumer satisfaction (contentment) arises in a situation where its subjective assessment of the level of services is at least equal to customer expectations (Chłódnicki, 2000).

The most important concept for assessing the quality of services is consumers' expectation, which depend on such factors as: product price, current needs of the consumer, prior experience, the services complexity, the image of a service company and the consumer attitude to the service and the company, the promises made by the service provider and other possibilities to satisfy needs. A better market offers higher expectations and the requirements of buyers. The second major factor is the perception of the service received. Next to the level of expectations, on the different perception of the same service for two persons or the same consumer but at a different time, is also affected by the selective manner of the reality of perception, which can rely on

selective attention, that is, noticing only to what is associated with the current needs; selective choice of information (selection or modification of the available information in order to maintain its current assessment); and selective remembering (only the facts that are related to the needs and confirmation of the current opinions) (Jonas, 2012).

Both consumer expectations, as well as the perception of the received service are not constant factors and depend on many variables. According to Dobski (2002) the most important factors influencing the level of service include: waiting time for services, the aesthetics of interiors and the surroundings of the establishment, the scope of the information provided to the customer by the personnel, individual approach to the customer, equipment and devices in the company. Consumer preferences also depend on some variables that affect the evaluation of the quality of services. What should be mentioned at this point is age, education, level of income, lifestyle, and fashion, etc. An important factor may be also the situation and the conditions at the moment of deciding about using the services. Among the most important conditions are: physical conditions (light, sound, temperature), conditions, that arise from the essence of the situation (the cause of using a service), social conditions (behaviour patterns, accompanying persons), time in the decision-making process (pressure of time, time of a day), conditions related to the act of using the service (financial means, the mood) (Kachniewska, 2002).

Each enterprise operating today in the hotel services market try to achieve success and gain a competitive advantage over other entities has to choose the right strategy. One of the fundamental elements in achieving success on the market is a subjective assessment of the quality of customer service. A hotel guest can issue a final verdict of the service quality in the hotel and the elements that can affect expectations are: fashion, reputation and position of the company on the market, but also the price of services, previous customer experience and the opinions of others (Batyk, 2012). According to Świątkowska and Świstak (2014) there is a relation between the number of satisfied service purchasers of the company and the number of new customers.

To skilfully manage the process of quality creation, it is necessary to appropriate the choice model of service quality. One of the patterns proposed by the research is the model of the expected and perceived quality. This model assumes that the quality of service is the extent to which the delivered service to the purchaser meets with his/her expectations (Kachniewska, 2006). On the one hand the quality perceived by the customer is not only the result of the occurrence of the process of the service, but it is a concept much broader because it also includes the actual process of the service. On the other hand regarding expected quality there are not just the personal needs of the buyer but also the gained experience, fashion, market communication,

opinions of friends or service price. Recognition of customer expectations allows to better meet the buyer's demands and precisely adjust the service. Below are a comparison of the expectations with observations that allow obtaining a certain level:

- satisfaction – when the perceived quality meets with the expectations,
- dissatisfaction – when the perceived quality is significantly lower than expectations,
- positive surprise – when the perceived quality exceeds expectations.

Currently, there are no clearly defined guidelines, which in a clear manner define the level of service, but low quality is immediately noticeable. An assessment of quality is affected by many objective and subjective factors. What for one customer will be the determinant of quality, not always for another will it have the same meaning (Dominik, Drogoń, 2009).

## 1. Material and methods

The objective of the research, which became the basis for this article, was to assess the quality of hotel services in Poland. For this purpose the results of research carried out in December 2012 amongst 1,000-personal in a nationwide population aged from 15 to 70 (see Table 1).

Table 1. Characteristics of the study population

	Number of respondents	%
Gender ( $n = 1,000$ )		
Men	495	49.5
Women	505	50.5
Age ( $n = 1,000$ )		
15–19	81	8.1
20–29	209	20.9
30–39	201	20.1
40–49	166	16.6
50–59	204	20.4
60–70	139	13.9
Education ( $n = 1,000$ )		
Primary, incomplete primary	199	19.9
Basic vocational	254	25.4
Secondary, incomplete secondary, vocational	368	36.8
Higher	179	17.9

Source: own research.

The study of the collected empirical material included an analysis of the frequency and the calculated average scores for the respondent answers on a 5-point scale. To determine the

statistically significant differences between variables the Pearson  $\chi^2$  test with a significance level of  $\alpha = 0,05$  was used. In the course of the analysis statistical package IBM SPSS Statistics version 23.0 was used.

The research was conducted within the statutory research of the Department of Organization and Consumption Economics of the Warsaw University of Life Science. The research was conducted according to the author's questionnaire. The study was carried out by using the CAPI method. In the study random sampling was used.

## 2. Assessment of the degree of confidence and satisfaction with hotel service facilities in Poland in the opinion of respondents

Over 40% of respondents agree or completely agree with the statement that they were satisfied with hotel services in Poland. Most frequently responses were from persons with higher level education (51%). The least frequent agreement with the statement respondents declaring basic vocational education (11%). It was noted that in this regard education significantly influenced the answers of respondents. Analysing the responses regarding to the age of respondents, it was observed that people aged from 20 to 39 (47%) usually replied matching the upper level of the scale (4 and 5 evaluation) (Table 2).

Table 2. Opinions of respondents about the degree of satisfaction with the services of hotels in Poland\*

Specification	Total	Education**				Age (in years)					
Share % of ratings		primary, incomplete primary	basic vocational	secondary, incomplete secondary, vocational	higher	15–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60–70
Agree/completely agree	42	35	37	46	51	42	47	47	45	38	35
Neither agree nor disagree	50	56	52	48	43	51	45	46	46	53	60
Completely disagree/disagree	8	9	11	6	6	7	8	7	9	9	5
Median	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00

\* Evaluation of a 5-point scale, where the rate "1" indicates that the respondent completely disagrees with the statement that "respondents are satisfied with hotel services in Poland", and the rate "5" indicates that the respondent completely agrees with the statement.

\*\*  $p < 0.05$  ( $\chi^2$ ).

Source: own research.

A half of respondents could not clearly respond to the statement “I have confidence in hotel companies operating in Poland”. Most frequently respondents agreed or completely agreed with this statement at the age of 30 to 39 years (47%), while less frequently being the oldest respondents (33%). In this age group the most frequent response was “neither agree nor disagree” (59%). The youngest respondents unequivocally confirmed their confidence in hotel companies operating on the Polish market (53%). In this case it has not been recorded depending on statistical significance (Table 3).

Table 3. Respondents' opinions about their confidence in hotel companies operating in Poland\*

Specification	Total	Education**				Age (in years)					
Share % of ratings:		primary, incomplete primary	basic vocational	secondary, incomplete secondary, vocational	Higher	15–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60–70
Agree/completely agree	42	39	39	43	46	41	44	47	44	39	33
Neither agree nor disagree	50	51	53	48	47	53	47	45	48	50	59
Completely disagree/disagree	8	10	8	9	7	6	9	8	8	11	8
Median	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00

\* Evaluation of a 5-point scale, where the rate “1” indicates that the respondent completely disagrees with the statement that they “trust hotel companies operating in Poland”, and the rate “5” indicates that the respondents completely agree with the statement.

\*\*  $p < 0.05$  (Chi<sup>2</sup>).

Source: own research.

Analysing the responses, taking into account their level of education, it was observed that respondents with higher education (46%) most often pointed to the assessment of the upper level of the scale (the evaluation of 4 and 5), while less frequently did it appear with people with primary education, incomplete primary education (39%) and vocational education (39%).

### 3. Factors influencing the choice of hotel

To the most important characteristics of hotel services as a product may be included: immateriality, impermanence, the inseparability of the process of production and consumption,

the inseparability of those providers and recipients, heterogeneity, the inability to purchase services on the property, individual character and the asymmetry of information.<sup>1</sup>

The share of ratings 4% and 5 % (analysis of the response given on a five-point scale) to the question of the influence of individual factors on the decision to choose the hospitality object showed that most respondents pointed to cost of the service (77%), quality of the service (76%) and home decor/atmosphere in the property (72%). Such factors as awards and prizes (56%) and belonging to the hotel network/systems (51%), according to the respondents had the least influence on the decision of the selection of the hotel (Table 4). According to the research conducted by the agency Market Matrix among European consumers of hotel services a crucial factor while choosing a hotel was the location, subsequently the price and the experience of earlier stays. Interestingly, in fourth place among factors influencing the decision of European customers was loyalty programs, while for the participants of the presented study this had no significant meaning (Barsky, 2012).

Table 4. Opinions of respondents on the impact of factors upon the decision about choosing a hotel

Specification	Share of ratings 4 and 5 (%) <sup>*</sup>
Price of service	77
Service quality	76
The interior decor/ atmosphere	72
Standard of the hotel	72
Friends/family opinions	71
Own experience from previous years	71
Recommendations of others	70
Location	69
Exterior decor	69
Brand/reputation	67
Hotel category	66
Loyalty card (lower prices for services)	61
The length of the operation of the hotel	60
Information on the website about the hotel	56
A wide range of additionally provided services (e.g. SPA&Wellness)	59
Hotel awards and prizes	56
Belonging to a hotel network/system	51

<sup>\*</sup> Evaluation of a five-point scale, where the rate "1" indicates the least impact on the decision, and the rate "5" means the biggest one about choosing a hotel.

Source: own research.

<sup>1</sup> For more information about the nature of the services and features of the characterization go to: Styś (1996); Pluta-Olearnik (1995); Czubała (2012) (pp. 13–18).

Considering the education of the respondents it was observed that persons with higher education assessed individual factors as being more important than those respondents declaring other levels of education. The obtained data show that the price of services has a bigger influence on the choice of the hotel for the respondents with higher, secondary, incomplete secondary and vocational education than for the respondents with school, incomplete school and basic vocational education. The quality of service was least important for the respondents with school and incomplete school education (72%) (Table 5).

Table 5. Evaluation of the impact of individual factors influencing the choice of hotel and the facilities including the education of the respondents (share of ratings 4 and 5%)\*

Specification	Total share of ratings 4 and 5	Education			
		primary, incomplete primary	basic vocational	secondary, incomplete secondary, vocational	higher
Cost of service	77	73	73	78	84
Service quality**	76	72	74	76	79
The interior decor/atmosphere	72	71	68	72	81
Standard of the hotel**	72	72	66	72	75
Friends/family opinions	71	70	67	74	72
Own experience from previous years	71	68	68	72	73
Recommendations of others	70	72	66	70	75
Location	69	65	64	72	74
Exterior decor	69	68	65	70	76
Brand/reputation	67	64	62	69	74
Hotel category	66	63	60	66	73
Loyalty card (lower prices for services)	61	58	58	62	65
The length of the period of operation	60	58	58	60	64
Information on a website about the hotel**	56	51	42	59	61
A wide range of additionally provided services (e.g. SPA&Wellness)**	59	52	55	69	69
Awards and prizes	56	54	56	57	58
Belonging to a hotel network/system	51	51	49	52	52

\* Evaluation of a five-point scale, where the rate "1" indicates the least impact on the decision, and the rate "5" meaning the biggest one about choosing a hotel.

\*\*  $p < 0.05$  (Chi<sup>2</sup>).

Source: own research.

Among all the factors respondents with higher and secondary education least frequently pointed out was possessing awards and prizes belonging to a hotel network/system.



#### 4. Factors influencing the quality of hotel services

In the presented study respondents were asked to express an opinion on the extent to which individual factors influence the quality of hotel services. Respondents assessed 12 from the 15 factors that influence the quality of hotel services, and mentioned them as being important or very important. Most frequently they pointed out the confidence and professionalism of service (83%), the tendency of employees to help their guests (81%) and the individual approach to customers (81%). Least frequently respondents pointed out the appearance of the reception desk (74%) (Table 6).

Table 6. Assess the impact of various factors affecting the quality of hotel facilities in the opinion of respondents

Specification	Median	Share of ratings 4 and 5 (%) <sup>*</sup>
Confidence and professionalism of service staff	4.00	83
The willingness of staff to help guests	4.00	81
Individual approach to hotel guests	4.00	81
Ways of handling guests	4.00	81
Professional skills and behaviour of the staff	4.00	81
Responsibility for helping guests in the case of some complications	4.00	80
The temporality of service support	4.00	81
Kind and helpful staff	4.00	80
Experience and constant retraining of the staff	4.00	78
Interior design and condition of the facilities of the hotel	4.00	77
The type of services provided	4.00	76
Staff appearance	4.00	74
Exterior decor of the hotel and its external environment	4.00	74
The category of the hotel	4.00	74
Reception area appearance	4.00	74

<sup>\*</sup> Evaluation of a five-point scale, where the rate “1” indicates the least impact on the decision, and the rate “5” means the biggest one about choosing the quality of a hotel.

Source: own research.

The share of ratings 4 and 5 (%) of the factor “category of the hotel” was in the opinion of the respondents about 74%. According to Firlej and Szychalska (2015) categorization regulations are intended to impact on the level of provided services. Belonging to this category allows hotels to raise or maintain the level of provided services. It means that customers can expect a certain quality of services, which is documented in the regulations by setting minimum requirements, when performing below a certain standard, is unacceptable.

Studies conducted by the Batyk (2012) on a group of 250 hotel guests showed that the degree of meeting the expectations and needs of accommodation services affects primarily the gastronomy service carried out in the hotel (4.54) and its location (4.46). Subsequently there was an offer of additional services (3.94) and professional service (3.60).

Considering the age of respondents it should be stated that persons at the age of 30–39 more often pointed out to the importance of such factors as “confident and professional service”, “way of handling guests” or “the temporality of service support”. The oldest respondents as a rule assessed the validity of each factor the lowest (Table 7).

Table 7. Evaluation of the impact of individual factors influencing the perception of quality of hotel facilities in the opinion of respondents based on age (share of ratings 4 and 5 %)\*

Specification	Total share of ratings 4 and 5 (%)	Age					
		15–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60–70
Confidence and professionalism of service staff**	83	81	80	89	84	81	77
The tendency of staff to help their guests**	81	76	84	85	87	79	72
Individual approach to guests	81	81	80	86	73	82	73
Ways of handling guests**	81	80	81	88	81	81	71
Professional skills and behaviour of staff	81	79	80	85	86	81	69
Responsibility for helping guests in the case of some complications	80	78	80	73	83	80	76
The temporality of service support	81	82	83	87	81	78	74
Kind and empathetic staff**	80	74	80	78	85	78	71
Experience and constant retraining of staff	78	78	75	83	84	74	74
Interior design and condition of the facilities of the hotel	77	73	74	86	82	77	69
The type of services provided**	76	81	75	84	79	75	84
Staff appearance	74	69	74	77	81	73	69
Exterior decor of the hotel and its external environment	74	68	75	79	78	71	68
The category of the hotel	74	74	74	78	73	84	70
Reception area appearance	74	74	70	80	79	71	66

\* Evaluation of a five-point scale, where the rate “1” indicates the least impact on the decision, and the rate “5” means the biggest one about choosing the quality of a hotel.

\*\*  $p < 0.05$  (Chi<sup>2</sup>).

Source: own research.

According to Nasution and Mavondo (2008) the interpretation of quality as a value for each customer is a reference point in relation to what the customer expects when acquiring goods or services. Importantly, the consumers of hotel services are increasingly paying attention to factors other than price when choosing the best offer for themselves (Martin, 2006).

## Conclusions

Quality of services is key to the creation, value and satisfaction of the customer. However, the concept of service quality is very subjective and depends on the perception of the consumer. Hence, on the one hand it should be emphasized that among the factors influencing the choice of a hotels facilities most often respondents pointed out to the price and quality of service. On the other hand, the high rank quality of service is confirmed by the perception of the quality of hotel service, as according to Polish customers on the quality of hotel services consist primarily in confidence and the professionalism of hotel staff and the desire and readiness to help guests.

To summarize, an effective analysis of customer expectations, skilful use of collected information and the effective implementation of tools fulfilling these needs, translates into the improvement of the quality of hotels and what they provide and contributes to the increase of customer satisfaction and the reduction of costs while increasing the competitiveness of hotels.

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