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## Quality system at the hotel

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**Key words:** service, service traits, hotel service quality

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**S u m m a r y:** Increasingly many companies, including those operating on the market of tourist services, strive to obtain the certified quality management system according to ISO 9000 standards. The research being carried out shows that service companies with quality certificates receive a number of external and internal benefits by this virtue. External benefits of a company testify to: using its certificate for marketing purposes, a possibility of bidding for a bigger number of tenders and an increase in a company's prestige. Internal benefits usually include: ordering the organisational structure in a company and also ordering work procedures and methods, which is in favour of the general improvement of an organisation's functioning (Sikora, Bałaga, 2006, p. 130).

The aim of the article is to present the role which the quality management system plays in the functioning of a company active on the market of tourist services, using an example of the Hotel. Achieving the aim set in this way requires presenting the essence and the main features of the services, followed by attempting to define the quality of a hotel service, pinpointing the areas for hotel service improvement as well as presenting the operational principles of the quality management system on the example of the Hotel being analysed.

### 1. Role of quality in hotel services

In the subject literature there are different definitions of the term 'service'. The notion of service is defined as activities of a supplier consisting in performing actions which serve to meet the needs of a buyer (Ustawa, 1993). However, according to Kazimierz Rogoziński, "a service means accepting an order to perform work and benefits aimed at enriching personal qualities or merits or the volume of usable values which the buyer has at their disposal" (Rogoziński, 1993, p. 21–36). Another defini-

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tion of the term 'service' is provided by Philip Kotler who describes it as any activity which one party can offer to the other party. It is not palpable nor leads to any ownership. Its production can be connected or not with a physical product (Kotler, 1994, p. 426–446).

The essence of services is completed by pointing to their features which distinguish a service from a product. These features should include above all: immateriality, inseparability, uniqueness (changeability), impermanence (Mudie, Cottam, 1998, p. 18).

Another crucial trait of services is their quality. The definition of service quality, which is the fundamental, commonly accepted and in line with the marketing philosophy (assuming clients' perspective), says that service quality is the degree of satisfying buyers' expectations. According to this definition, a service has adequate quality if its provision meets or exceeds buyers' expectations. As it follows, buyers assess quality control by comparing the way of providing it and what they received during its provision, with their expectations (Jonas, 2006, p. 144).

In connection with the above, with reference to operations of a hotel, service quality should be understood as a given hotel's ability to satisfy its client's expectations to the highest standard.

At present the quality of hotel services (similarly to that of services offered in different fields) is defined by relevant standards (Karpziel, 2001, p. 44). This state of affairs is caused by the fact that quality and satisfaction plus customers' contentment are becoming increasingly important from the point of view of building a durable competitive advantage by hotels on the market of tourist services.

An improvement in the quality of hotel services requires realising the possibility of the five gaps which occur within this scope (Dziadkowiec, 2006, p. 26):

- the first gap is defined as the difference between the client's expectations and the perception of these expectations by the management of an organisation;
- the second gap is the difference between perceiving clients' expectations by the managerial staff and the specification of service quality;
- the third gap is the difference between the specification of service quality and the quality of service provision;
- the fourth gap defines the dispersion between the quality of service provision and the information which the client has received on its subject;
- the fifth gap is expressed by the difference between the level of meeting expectations and the client's service perception.

As it follows, high service quality, satisfying the client, leads to a situation devoid of gaps. The bigger the discrepancies, the lower the quality grade of services being provided. As a result, but introduction of the total quality (TQ) can bear fruit in the form of the consumer's full satisfaction. As it follows, it is essential to reach perfection on the three levels: designed quality, service provision quality and quality consistent with clients' requirements and expectations.

## 2. Quality system analysis at the Hotel

The Hotel being analysed has the quality strategy which is presented and discussed with the whole of the staff.<sup>1</sup> The strategy is based on the three most important modules: clients, employees, results. Combining these three elements guarantees coherent actions and ensures pro-effective organisational culture. In the first module concerning clients attention is focused on hospitability, exceeding mediocrity and empathy. An important element is innovation which is supposed to form the basis for the Hotel's competitive advantage. In the second module the central figure is an employee. Therefore the stress is on the environment favouring development of employees' competences. The key words are here: trust and mutual respect. Openness and transparency are to be achieved through training and peer care. The last module points to efficiency, innovations and selling techniques.

Responsibility for the hotel's quality system functioning lies on the quality manager. Their main duties include: orientation at results and the client, leadership and repeatability of actions oriented at completion of pro-quality ventures, management through processes (with the help of, among others, such tools as: guests' comments, weekly 'walks', health-and-safety-at-work regulations), development, improvement, motivation, innovation and continuous learning, welfare and social responsibility.

Below, Table 1 compares the functional principles of quality system at the Hotel with ISO 9001 Standard requirements.

Table 1  
Description of quality system at the Hotel on the example of ISO 9001 Standard

Requirement name	Description of requirements	Situation at the Hotel
Quality management system		
General requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– existence of the documented quality management system;</li> <li>– existence of interdependence processes between them;</li> <li>– definition of criteria and methods ensuring efficient process course;</li> <li>– continuous monitoring, measurement and analysis of processes;</li> <li>– implementation of actions indispensable in order to achieve the results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the main processes were defined and described on the map of processes;</li> <li>– criteria and methods ensuring efficient process course were defined (e.g. the budget for a given year);</li> <li>– processes are described with the help of daily reports and controlled by department managers and the director;</li> <li>– examples of actions indispensable in order to achieve the results: training, audit actions of the quality manager, current actions of the management concerning the price policy</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Due to lack of permission of the Hotel's management its name is not revealed.

Requirements concerning documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– declaration of quality policy and aims concerning quality;</li> <li>– quality register;</li> <li>– required procedures;</li> <li>– documents essential in order to plan the course and supervise the processes;</li> <li>– required records</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– lack of the guiding document—the quality register;</li> <li>– lack of the procedures: supervision over documents, supervision over records, internal audits, corrective and preventive actions, handling incompatible products;</li> <li>– there are documents essential for efficient process course;</li> <li>– lack of certain required documents</li> </ul>
Management's responsibility		
Commitment of the management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– communication of the importance of the client's requirements;</li> <li>– establishment of quality policy;</li> <li>– setting of quality objectives;</li> <li>– conducting reviews of the management;</li> <li>– ensuring resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– client's requirements and quality policy are communicated to every employee in the form of a personal letter from the Director;</li> <li>– conducting reviews of the management;</li> <li>– ensuring resources is not maintained in every service stage</li> </ul>
Orientation to the client	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– definition and satisfaction of the client's requirements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– module: Clients</li> </ul>
Quality policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– relevant to an organisation's aims;</li> <li>– containing the obligation to satisfy requirements and continuously improve the efficiency of the quality management system;</li> <li>– communicated and understood in an organisation</li> <li>– reviewed periodically</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– lack of the declaration of satisfying legal requirements;</li> <li>– the policy is relevant to the business operations being run, the vision is amended on a yearly basis</li> </ul>
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– planning the quality management system;</li> <li>– integrity maintenance of the quality management system by planning and implementation of changes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the yearly planning takes place on the central level based on the results from the previous years and macro- and micro-economic analysis</li> </ul>
Responsibility, improvements and communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– definition and communication of responsibility, qualifications;</li> <li>– appointment of a member of the management responsible for the functioning of the quality management system;</li> <li>– existence of relevant communication processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– duties and responsibility are communicated in contracts of employment, lack of a formal transfer of qualifications;</li> <li>– the person responsible for the functioning of the quality management system is the quality manager;</li> <li>– internal communication is correct</li> </ul>
Overview of management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– conducting reviews of the quality management system in planned time intervals;</li> <li>– keeping the records from these reviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– lack of records from the quality management review</li> </ul>

Management of resources		
Ensuring of the resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– definition and ensuring of resources essential to implement and maintain the quality management system, boost the client's satisfaction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– too few internal auditors</li> </ul>
Human resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– definition of requirements concerning employees' competences;</li> <li>– ensuring essential training courses;</li> <li>– awareness guarantee of the essence and significance of employees' actions;</li> <li>– maintenance of records concerning employees (education, skills)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– minimum and wanted competences are defined if need be on the basis of market conditionings;</li> <li>– every employee has a separate personal file and career plan;</li> </ul>
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– definition, guarantee and maintenance of infrastructure essential to achieve compatibility with requirements concerning the products</li> </ul>	cf.: Table 2—weaknesses of the quality system and directions of its improvement
Working environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– defining the working environment essential in order to achieve compatibility with requirements concerning the products</li> </ul>	cf.: Table 2—weaknesses of the quality system and directions of its improvement
Product completion		
Product completion planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– planning and preparation of the processes needed for product completion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– processes needed to manufacture the products are planned</li> </ul>
Processes connected with the client	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– definition of requirements concerning the products;</li> <li>– execution of the review of requirements concerning the products;</li> <li>– definition and implementation of an efficient method of communication with the client</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Law of the Minister of Economy on tourist services;</li> <li>– reviews of requirements are conducted through a written and electronic confirmation of product offer receipt;</li> <li>– communication with the client is conducted through brochures, guide books, the website, magazines, sponsoring</li> </ul>
Designing and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– planning and supervision of product designing and development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– shaping of the product takes place both on the central level and at particular hotels</li> </ul>
Purchases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– ensuring that the product bought satisfies the requirements concerning the purchase;</li> <li>– execution of suppliers' analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– lack of formally established criteria of suppliers' assessment;</li> <li>– lack of records from suppliers' assessments</li> </ul>

Production and service provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– service provision should take place according to plan and in supervised conditions;</li> <li>– validation of every process of service provision whose results cannot be verified as a consequence of monitoring or measurement;</li> <li>– identification and identifiability;</li> <li>– an organisation should exercise care over the client's property</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– there are work instructions, e.g. the reception guide;</li> <li>– the conditions are supervised by managers of particular departments, records are checklists;</li> <li>– all processes are possible to be monitored;</li> <li>– records in the electronic system ensure identification and identifiability;</li> <li>– the hotel ensures care through monitoring, a porter, security workers, a guarded parking place</li> </ul>
Supervision of monitoring and measuring equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– definition of monitoring and measurements as well as tools indispensable to carry them out</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– in the processes being executed there are no measuring devices subject to the surveying law</li> </ul>
Measurements, analysis and improvement		
General provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– planning and implementation of the processes of monitoring, measurement, analysis and improvement in order to, among others, demonstrate compatibility of products</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– monitoring and measurement processes take place with the help of spreadsheets, check lists and internal reports</li> </ul>
Monitoring and measurements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– definition of the method of obtaining and using information concerning the client's satisfaction;</li> <li>– execution of internal audits;</li> <li>– measurement and monitoring of the product and process' features</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– client's satisfaction is achieved through surveying, interviews;</li> <li>– conducting an audit by a person responsible for the quality system is not objective;</li> <li>– product monitoring and measurement takes place with the help of inspections, processes are monitored by department managers</li> </ul>
Supervision over an incompatible product	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– ensuring that a product incompatible with the requirements is identified</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– lack of the supervision procedure over incompatible products</li> </ul>
Data analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– definition, gathering and analysis of relevant data in order to demonstrate the usefulness and efficiency of the quality management system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– through financial results</li> </ul>
Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– continuous efficiency improvement of the quality management system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– lack of the procedure of corrective and preventive actions</li> </ul>

Source: author's own study based on ISO 9001.

The hitherto effects of functioning of the quality system at the Hotel have been concentrated on improving and enriching the offer of services being provided, organisational changes and, as a result, enhancing satisfaction of the Hotel guests.

### **(1) Improvement and enrichment of services being provided**

Apart from standard rooms the Hotel has specially prepared rooms, bearing business guests in mind. These rooms are the response to increasingly higher expectations of guests. They are supposed to be the symbol of the highest quality and the showcase of the Hotel. Their prestige is also improved by the location on the highest floor with a beautiful view of the old town. Special rebates and discounts have been introduced for people using the room, among others: a 20% discount for one massage per person per stay to be used in the leisure centre, free daily press.

Another innovation concerns the parking offer. In order to encourage guests to use the parking place, e.g. a guarantee of feeling of safety was introduced by seeing guests off to the car or offering a bottle of water as a gift.

Other important improvements concerning operations of the Hotel which have been introduced recently include: a change of course presentation in the restaurant and bar menus, introduction of new decorations in the restaurant and bar, opening a small beauty parlour, an efficient loyalty programme being valued by guests, wireless Internet, addition of new disabled facilities.

The above-mentioned actions were undertaken on the basis of a profound analysis of hotel guests' needs so that the quality of services being provided could be improved.

### **(2) Organisational changes**

The most important organisational change concerning directly qualitative matters is initiating a programme of training courses which brings closer the role of quality to every employee, unites the staff's activities and introduces qualitative aspects to all the organisational units of the Hotel.

### **(3) Effects concerning guests' feelings**

The best examples of high quality of the services being provided are utterances of the hotel guests as such, e.g. "An excellent hotel and staff. Very friendly and helpful. We will recommend your hotel", "Service like in a five-star hotel. The staff is very competent and friendly", "Everything was exceptional".

Recapitulating, it should be stressed that the Hotel guests valued highly: accessibility and marking of the Hotel, the fact of being found easily, greetings, cleanliness of the room and the bathroom, breakfast abundance and taste.

## **3. Systematic assessment of the quality system at the Hotel**

The data analysis included in Table 1 allows preparing the strengths and weaknesses of the quality system at the Hotel from the point of view of the three perspectives: processes and procedures, employees and system functioning (Table 2).

Table 2

## Strengths and weaknesses of the quality system at the Hotel

Strengths of the quality system		
Processes and procedures	Employees	Services and functioning of the system
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the main processes were defined and described;</li> <li>– criteria and methods ensuring efficient process course were defined;</li> <li>– the processes are being monitored, measured and analysed;</li> <li>– existence of appropriate communication processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the client's expectations and quality policy are communicated in an excellent way;</li> <li>– a post responsible for the functioning of the quality system was appointed;</li> <li>– minimum and desired competences are established if need be based on market conditionings;</li> <li>– efficient methods of communication with the client were defined and implemented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– actions essential in order to achieve increasingly high results are being undertaken;</li> <li>– the quality policy and qualitative objectives were defined;</li> <li>– management reviews are being conducted;</li> <li>– the policy is relevant to the business activities being conducted;</li> <li>– integrity of the quality system is maintained through planning and implementation of changes;</li> <li>– requirements concerning products were defined;</li> <li>– reviews of requirements concerning product quality are being conducted;</li> <li>– identification and identifiability are ensured by an adjusted computer system</li> </ul>
Weaknesses of the quality system at the Hotel		
Processes and procedures	Employees	Services and system functioning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– lack of the procedures: supervision over documents, supervision over records, internal audits, corrective and preventive actions, handling incompatible products;</li> <li>– lack of certain required records: records from a review of the quality management system;</li> <li>– lack of formal definition of suppliers' assessment criteria;</li> <li>– probability of wrong actions, particularly in the reception department, caused by lack of the supervision procedure over documents and records;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– lack of the quality deputy manager or another employee conducting internal audits, problems with staff turnover and number;</li> <li>– lack of conducted training courses for currency cashiers;</li> <li>– lack of clearly communicated qualifications;</li> <li>– loss of employees' initiative and lack of use of good ideas, caused by lack of a good 'bottom-top' communication tool;</li> <li>– a decrease in employees' satisfaction with their work at the Hotel, caused by flaws in the working environment;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– appearance of shortcomings in maintenance of the infrastructure essential in order to achieve compatibility with the requirements concerning the products;</li> <li>– the working environment is not perfect, making it difficult to achieve compatibility with the requirements concerning the products (lack of the reception base);</li> <li>– lack of devices checking notes;</li> <li>– lack of the guiding document, e.g. the quality register;</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– a possibility of the wrong reaction to views and complaints on the part of guests, caused by lack of a conduct procedure in the event of incompatible products;</li> <li>– a possibility of providing a low quality service, caused by lack of the supervision procedure over incompatible products;</li> <li>– a possibility of accepting bad suppliers, caused by lack of the formal establishment of suppliers' criteria and methods of their verification plus lack of assessment records</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– a possibility of overlooking discrepancies by the auditor, caused by repeatability of actions and lack of another person being able to carry out the inspections as well as lack of records from the review of the quality system;</li> <li>– carrying out an audit by a person responsible for the quality system is not objective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– lack of the declaration of satisfying the legal requirements;</li> <li>– a possibility of providing a low quality service, caused by shortcomings in ensuring the essential resources;</li> <li>– a possibility of disturbing the process course due to lack of the formal transfer of qualifications;</li> <li>– a possibility of forwarding wrong information, caused by lack of a formal transfer of qualifications</li> </ul>
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S o u r c e: author's own study based on the data from the Hotel.

A synthetic assessment of the quality system at the Hotel testified to the existence of numerous weaknesses of the system. Identification of the weaknesses served to pinpoint the directions to improve the system.

#### 4. Directions of improvement of the quality system at the Hotel

Improving the quality system at the Hotel should be initiated by formalising the system, i.e. preparing the quality register. The register as such, apart from a description of elements of the quality system, should include a declaration concerning potential pro-quality objectives of the Hotel.

Subsequent actions should cover preparation of the procedures, particularly supervision over documents, supervision over records, those of internal audits, corrective and preventive actions. It is this stage that can be of the greatest importance for the efficient functioning of the quality system at the Hotel. A hotel guest will feel the difference owing to more efficient service in the event of occurrence of any deviations from the assumed processes, e.g. the complaint process is going to run more smoothly and more professionally whereas employees are going to receive clear work instructions, which will definitely make it easier for them to take decisions. In this respect it will be helpful to communicate them clearly their duties, rights and responsibilities.

Special attention should also be paid to determining the criteria for suppliers and their subsequent assessment. Ensuring resources and infrastructure maintenance as such should be executed unconditionally.

Immediate correction and actions should take place in case of, among others, improvement of monitoring methods and protection of hotel guests' properties.

Finally, creating records from the review of the management would give a clear picture of the situation and condition of the quality system at the Hotel. For the above-mentioned reviews to be objective and susceptible to innovations, another person conducting audits must be employed.

A matter giving rise to a number of problems is the issue of staff turnover. Solving this problem requires reconsidering working conditions, e.g. the reception base should be built.

An improvement in work results is feasible by continuous qualitative training courses, particularly in the Restaurant. An improvement in the taste and quality of dishes being served, coupled with improved service will undoubtedly turn away the unfavourable trend within the result area 'mysterious client'.

Informing employees about the aims of the quality policy, care for process quality and communication with the client are the fundamental priorities of the Hotel's quality system.

## 5. Conclusion

To sum up, one can state that every organisation has at its disposal its own, unique quality system. Some of them have numerous certificates, others, by the trial and method, work out their own quality standards. The proposed possibilities of improving the Hotel's quality system are mainly focused on completing the requirements of the standard ISO series 9001. In this respect special attention should be paid to creating procedures, records and work instructions.

It should be stressed that the most important aspect of the hotel service quality is the human factor. Well qualified, strongly motivated to work and skilfully managed personnel can efficiently translate formal records into practical actions. It is shop-floor workers that have the biggest influence on the end assessment of the hotel service quality. Therefore providing hotel employees with decent working and pay conditions can become the key to obtaining a durable competitive advantage based on the quality of the hotel services being provided.

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## System jakości w hotelu

**Streszczenie:** Coraz więcej firm, w tym również działających na rynku usług turystycznych, dąży do uzyskania certyfikowanego systemu zarządzania jakością według norm ISO 9000. Przeprowadzone badania wykazują, iż firmy usługowe posiadające certyfikaty jakości uzyskują z tego tytułu wiele korzyści zewnętrznych i wewnętrznych. Wśród zewnętrznych korzyści firmy wskazują na: wykorzystanie posiadanego certyfikatu do celów marketingowych, możliwość przystąpienia do większej liczby przetargów i poprawę prestiżu firmy. Natomiast do korzyści wewnętrznych najczęściej firmy zaliczają: uporządkowanie struktury organizacyjnej w firmie oraz uporządkowanie procedur i technik pracy, co sprzyja ogólnej poprawie sprawności działania organizacji (Sikora, Bałaga, 2006, s. 130).

Celem artykułu jest ukazanie roli, jaką pełni system zarządzania jakością w funkcjonowaniu firmy działającej na rynku usług turystycznych na przykładzie hotelu. Realizacja tak postawionego celu wymaga przedstawienia istoty oraz głównych cech usług, następnie podjęcia próby zdefiniowania jakości usługi hotelarskiej, wskazania obszarów doskonalenia jakości usług hotelarskich oraz zaprezentowania zasad funkcjonowania systemu jakości na przykładzie badanego hotelu.

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Słowa kluczowe: usługi, cechy usług, jakość usług hotelarskich

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