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THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS IN TOURIST PENSION

Case study

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Abstract

We can say that you cannot maintain yourself on the current market of rural tourism operators unless you provide customers with quality products and services, prepared foods safe for consumption, and, not least, if you do not prove you are concerned with ensuring a healthy and clean environment, environmental protection.

In this paper we intend to present some aspects of implementing an integrated management system of quality - food security - the average level of tourist pension, and highlight the benefits brought by this ongoing process to the respective operators in rural tourism. To this end, we studied the standards, references available in this area, and documents produced within guesthouses with the implementation of various management systems components of an integrated quality - environment - food security management system.

Introducing

The managers and employees of tourism companies (transporters, hotels and tourist pension, restaurants, travel agencies, entertainment, etc.) must provide the market only with maximum quality services and at prices as low as possible. Moreover, emphasis placed by customers on food security offered to them, increased greatly as well as the involvement of the management and implicitly the employee's operators working in tourism, especially rural tourism, in terms of environmental protection.

The answer to the question "*What to do to meet as much as possible the clients' needs relating to all these issues?*" is to implement an integrated quality - food safety - environment management system.

Therefore, guesthouses can retain customers and also gain new customers and the turnover, profit and market share may increase steadily and continuously.

All this is feasible if it is wanted, possible and known how to achieve quality, namely its evaluation and continuous improvement, regardless of the standard to which we refer, namely ISO 9000 - Quality Management System, ISO 22000 - Food Safety Management Systems, ISO 14000 - Environment Management System.

That is why in the world of tourism practitioners it is stated that you have the quality you control.

The forming of a culture in the field of touristic services' quality is an essential condition for the quality's continuous improvement, for the introduction of new methods and technologies, among which is, firstly, the total quality's management. The quality specialists have established that the key to a continuous improvement of quality is not technology, but management, that must preoccupy itself with the changing and forming of a culture adequate to the organization's specific, in the purpose of obtaining

sustainable performance, which will impose the company among its competition.

The organization's management must inform the employees that they have to change their mentality in what regards quality, to become aware of the fact that perfection is not impossible. The manager starts from the main objectives of the quality policy that it performs and sends it to all the employees.

From the outset, we mention that the name of the pension which we refer to in the paper is not real.

Tourism quality assurance issues

Travel services are often defined "as a set of activities intended to meet all basic needs of tourists during the move and in connection with it" (Barbu, 1981).

Tourism services have some specific features due to the special nature of tourism demand and supply, the way such correlation occurs, and the conditions in which the sale-purchase acts occur (Cruceu and Bica, 2013).

According to those presented at the World Tourism Organization (Istrate, Bran and Ro u, 1996), the quality of tourism is "the result of a process that involves meeting all the needs, requirements and legitimate expectations of consumers in terms of product and service at an affordable price, in accordance with the contractual terms of mutual agreement and determinants adjacent to quality, which are security and protection, hygiene, accessibility, transparency, authenticity and harmonization of tourism activity concerned of human and natural environment.

ISO 9004-2 (<http://www.consultanta-certificare.ro/articole/managementul-activitatilor-pt-calitatea-serviciilor.html>) recommends the clear definition of the service requirements in terms of characteristics observable by the client and likely to be judged by him. At the same time, it is necessary to define appropriate service

processes through features that are not always observed by the client, but which directly affects service performance.

And in the case of tourism, as in any other field of activity type services, we can say that they have identified one or more of the characteristics of service quality, such as tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, upgrading services that have caused customer dissatisfaction, the importance given to different features depending on the spatial and temporal coordinates of each specific service.

Improving the quality of tourist benefits is closely linked to improved management of organizations operating in the Romanian tourism (Cruceru and Bica, 2013; <http://www.consultanta-certificare.ro/articole/managementul-activitatilor-pt-calitatea-serviciilor.html>). This is achieved by applying a management of the services' quality which has, among the main concerns, the following aspects:

- Knowing the tourists' expectations;
- The maintenance of buildings and facilities as well as related utilities;
- Knowing tourists' satisfaction;
- Teamwork;
- Working with partner organizations;
- Promoting a fair employee motivation.

All this can be done if it is wanted, possible and it is known how to achieve quality, to assess and continuously improve that. Delivering the implementation of these goals represents the PDCA cycle which requires: planning, developing, checking and acting.

Concerns regarding the ensuring of the touristic services quality in the Pension "Dalina from Bucovina"

The management of "Dalina from Bucovina" Pension can help to ensure an optimal framework of activities just by improving all the management subsystems, which refer to (Internal Documents of the Pension):

- Management of human resources;
- Technology Management;

- Organizational/structural management;
- Management of supplying;
- Financial Management;
- Management of hygiene;
- Management of quality.

The management system of "Dalina from Bucovina" Pension seeks the orientation and improvement of the activity in concordance with the needs and motivations of the consumers.

The restaurants' primary activity is oriented towards satisfying and anticipating the customers' needs. An important role in this process is played by the knowledge of various aspects of behaviour.

For effective management, the issues that the management of "Dalina from Bucovina" Pension takes into account are (Internal Documents of the Pension):

- ✓ **Offered services** - including employees, their skills and attitude. The focus is placed on improving the work form teams' structure (recruitment, training, forming, etc.).
- ✓ **The image and reputation** - in other words what makes a unit be assessed as being interesting or dull, attractive or colourless.
- ✓ **Positioning** - placing on the market, at the top of the market or among the last providing companies, a leader or merely an actor of the market.
- ✓ **The quality** - also quantified through the number of complaints and referrals received. Staff is carefully selected and sent to training courses throughout the period of the extra season. Of great importance is what the management of the pension is doing by helping customers when something goes differently than expected, or the attention paid to the customers and how the staff communicates with them after they have called on the touristic prestations of the company in question.

The quality policy of “Dalina from Bucovina” Pension takes into consideration the competition’s capacity and the organization’s real possibilities, aiming towards the establishing the responsibilities of the departments which are directly or indirectly linked to quality. The person who has the most important role in a pension is the manager.

Implementing the total quality in “Dalina from Bucovina” Pension can be achieved only through a change of the mentality, the attitude of the entire staff, starting with the general manager. These changes are possible only after a transformation of the cultural environment of the organization in a culture of quality.

“Dalina from Bucovina” Pension is characterized by a culture of quality that is distinguished by several features such as (Internal Documents of the Pension):

- a) The slogan under which the organization operates materializes in employee behaviour;
- b) The messages from customers are taken actively for continuous quality improvement;
- c) Teamwork is predominant;
- d) Mid-level managers are actively involved;
- e) Responsibility for quality is not delegated;
- f) Supply terms are met, in order to achieve continuous quality improvement;
- g) A thorough training of employees in order to ensure they have the knowledge and skills for continuous quality improvement;
- h) Rewards and promotions occur according to each employee's contribution to quality improvement;
- i) The company considers suppliers as being partners, and the employees as internal customers.

In order to create a quality culture in the “Dalina from Bucovina” Pension the following

were considered (Internal Documents of the Pension):

▪ *Demonstrating commitment*

The top management of “Dalina from Bucovina” Pension demonstrated that the company's priority concern is and will be quality; this example that shows to employees that what it is said is true.

▪ *Contact with customers*

The managers of “Dalina from Bucovina” Pension seek permanent links with clients to determine their requirements in real time.

▪ *Empowering the employees to solve problems*

Through the direct involvement of the employees in process, it is likely that their proposed solutions are better than those of the managers. Often, managers opt to choose a quality improvement team, who has both authority and responsibility in this area.

▪ *Recognizing the efforts of employees and motivating them*

▪ *The involvement of employees from each level in discussing quality programs*

▪ *Promoting the employees' ideas*

▪ *Promoting teamwork, which is effective both in solving problems and in promoting a quality culture*

▪ *Adopting language of quality*

All employees should know and use basic terms of TQM. Thus, communication is improved and it raises awareness of the quality problem.

▪ *Expanding the vision of the organization's strategy and competitive position*

Focus should be on employees who need to understand that everyone is working to meet the customer's needs. This leads to the generation of new ideas to improve quality.

▪ *The employee has priority over the process*

People involved in quality improvement own that process, leading to an increased empowerment.

As stated, the decisive role in the success of the quality improvement process is owned by top managers who set the quality policy in order to give confidence in the commitment to quality.

Here are some minimum requirements for introducing total quality management in "Dalina from Bucovina" Pension that managers must take into account:

- Transmission of knowledge necessary for an effective quality management should be done through direct communication; the presentation of the interaction methods of the marketing activities, financial, research and development, production and distribution, in order to achieve a good management;
- Recourse to international standards which should provide a basis for discussion regarding the implementation of total quality;
- Establishing working techniques associated with TQM;
- Recognizing the importance of the quality of the products and services in satisfying the customers' desires.

Fundamental principles of the staff's behaviour in relationship with the client in "Dalina from Bucovina" Pension

Working in the pension meets the demands of modern life and the work cannot be considered any less noble or less worthy than any other work. That's why the tourism worker, from director to gatekeeper, according to the internal regulation of "Dalina from Bucovina" Pension (Internal Documents of the Pension), must not show a manifestation of contempt, nor should the employee feel humiliated when he must serve the customer.

In case the customer is rude, impatient or arrogant, the employee must always remember that there is a dignified way to respond, more effective than any form of protest: the calm and polite attitude that imposes respect. The employee has the role to respond to the customer, influencing his assessment,

tactfully, safely, using effectively this knowledge of customer psychology, guessing his wishes, meeting his requirements, encouraging him to return, turning him into a client of the house. We can say that during the contacts with the client, a mutual education process takes place. Educational values of worker behaviour in the relation with the client, component of the generally educational role of tourism, involve a personal example, a pattern whose decline can only bring serious harm to the unit's prestige.

To avoid behaviour mistakes, the employee must meet the following fundamental principles (Internal Documents of the Pension):

- *The equal treatment of all customers*
- *Honesty and fairness* - it is not about refusing the tip; the tip is an expression of customer satisfaction.
- *Discretion* - a defect from which the employee must definitely abstain is unjustified curiosity and gossip. He must be interested only in matters connected to his work therefore he will give any course to any comment made by a client and much less to inform others about details of a customer's life.
- *Assuming mistakes* - any complaints from the customer is acknowledged by the worker as if he were to blame; any response to the client's dissatisfaction must begin with the words "Excuse us"; the exoneration does nothing other than throwing a shadow over the pension, inducing the impression of guilt to the customer.
- *Representativeness* - the worker's ambition to be identified with the pension, fulfilling his tasks with method, conscientiousness and pleasure.
- *Carrying out the activity in silence* - among the employee's obligations should be found the abstention from causing unnecessary noise, from talking aloud and to noisy use of the

equipment, utensils, and appliances of the unit. Silence is one of the most important prerogatives of a good accommodation place and it must be ensured by investing in soundproofing materials and facilities and the ambient must be the staff's concern.

- *To protect the pension's assets* - the compliance with the rules concerning the maintenance of the pension's equipment, installations, tools and facilities, is a sign of education and civilization on behalf of the workers. Defects must be remedied immediately; the cleanliness of the workplace should not be neglected by the worker; indifference to the degradation of the building and material goods is one of the most serious shortcomings.
- *Maintaining the unit's reputation* - a reputation of being a good accommodation is created with patience and hard work by generations of workers; and its up keeping shall be the professional target of each employee; it is the best advertising and thus a guarantee of income growth. The most reliable way of acquiring reputation is striving not to let any customer leave the pension unhappy; the satisfied customer returns in the hotel or recommends it to other potential clients.
- *Customer loyalty* - addressing every client; ongoing interest towards the quality of the services, the art of conquering is the sure recipe for meeting any demands and the guarantee of the client's loyalty.

Among the professional customer relations rules from could the "Dalina from Bucovina" Pension we find (Internal Documents of the Pension):

1. Client does not depend on us, we depend on him;
2. The customer is the purpose of our activity;
3. Our client is doing us a favour by choosing our pension, we do not do them a favour by serving him;

4. Client is not a statistical figure, but a human being with feelings, emotions, and prejudices.

Elements of professional behaviour in relation with the customer - are typical representations of their requirements dictated by social customs and habits.

They express the degree of evolution of a people's civilization, of a touristic culture and are part of being a hotel worker: the physical attire is the unit's business card, the clothing attire, the greeting, the smile, using the client's name, presentation, conversation.

The conversation will never be initiated by the worker. It will be limited to answering any questions from client, briefly, objectively, professionally. A well led conversation is a professional information source, a way to correct and improve the quality of services, an optimal way to prevent or resolve the issues raised by the client. During the conversation one should avoid: interrupting the client, manifesting a disinterested or bored attitude, arrogantly demonstrating a better knowledge of the discussed field than that of the client, using slang expressions, negative remarks.

Conclusions

The policy of quality at the top management within "Dalina from Bucovina" Pension takes into account the competition's capacity and the real possibilities of the organization, aiming to establish the responsibilities of the departments connected directly or indirectly to quality.

Factors influencing the quality of tourism services provided within "Dalina from Bucovina" Pension include competence, reliability, reactivity, accessibility, comprehension, communication, credibility, courtesy, security, tangibility.

The quality measurement system within "Dalina from Bucovina" Pension takes into account two aspects: *the one*

concerning the client, which includes various measures of satisfying the wishes of this customer and of complying with the quality standards that control and analyze complaints and grievances; and the one related to the organization, which includes those measures regarding efficiency (cost/benefit relation of internal processes), quality costs, employee performance, etc. This category includes the assessment of the processes which take place within the organization.

The measuring system concerning the client, allows the estimation of effectiveness, that is to what extent was the quality achieved. The system can be based on two types of indicators: subjective and objective: *subjective indicators* include customer satisfaction studies and are designed to determine the perception they have about the quality of the services. These indicators may relate to factors such as general satisfaction with the service, availability, trust, kindness; *objective indicators* focus on measurements of quantifiable issues such as production time, number of errors or response time.

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