

QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN A TOURIST DESTINATION, A STRUCTURAL EQUATION ANALYSIS

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Abstract: The paper is based on the premise that customers aspire to achieve maximum satisfaction of the products or services they buy so that knowledge of customer satisfaction enables an organization organized according to provide quality services assuming that levels higher quality leads to higher levels of customer satisfaction. Its empirical research was carried out in the tourist destination Holguín, northeastern Cuba, including more than 2,000 tourists and 70 tourism service providers, and was designed to provide information on the relationship between the level of tourist satisfaction and the variables of quality assurance in the destination. By means of the compilation and analysis of the obtained data a model of structural equations was constructed to visualize the nature of the relations that they were intended to demonstrate. The obtained results indicate that there are relations between the variables that assure the quality and the satisfaction of the customer leaving identified the possibilities of improvement.

Key words: quality management, customer satisfaction, tourist destination, tourism, structural equation analysis

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Introduction

Tourism in Cuba has been recognized as the most dynamic sector of the national economy. In particular the tourist destination of Holguín, Cuba, located in the northeastern part of the country, with a territorial extension of 9,292.82 km² has seen a growth of tourists from sending countries such as Canada, Germany and England being the most important. The destination is defined by its integrality and variety, where the sun, the beach, nature, history, archeology, culture and local traditions are uniquely combined. This makes it a favorite destination due to its authenticity and diversity, with a high level of sustainability, which makes it one of the fastest growing tourist destinations in the Greater Antilles, backed by the natural attractions of the region.

There is a strong potential of natural resources, mainly concentrated in its beaches (with 58.5 km of length), bays and zones of diving; As well as natural landscapes, cays, rivers, waters and medicinal muds, all of which can be exploited by tourism.

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There are specialized medical clinics and multiple research and training centers, which can promote tourism flow. Almost all tourists arrive at the destination through the Frank País García International Airport, with capacity in the international terminal for 600 passengers. The destination has a capacity of 3,000 rooms. The extra-hotel network of the tourist region is located mainly in the areas of Guardalavaca and Estero Ciego, integrated by restaurants, kiosks, bars, among other offers. It also has a large network for commerce. Along with the prosperity of destiny, the challenge of continuing to improve the quality systems with the objective of satisfying the demands of the visitors to the destination and the constant adaptation of the tourist offer in relation to the market segments that are served.

The paper aims to contribute to the tourism development of the destination Holguín exploring how the variables related to quality assurance influence the satisfaction of tourists, which will serve as a basis for the construction of a model that allows understanding this relationship facilitating future actions of improvement.

Literature Review

Quality research shows three great perspectives for its approach: that of quality theorists supported by the proposals of its founders such as Juran, Deming, Ishikawa, Feigebaun and that evolved to what is now known as Quality Total or Total Quality Management (Mellat-Parast, 2015); the quality awards mechanism adopted by countries, regions or organizations that have sought to promote quality, among these awards stands out the Deming Prize (Titu and Bucur, 2016), which is considered one of the precursors of the remaining ones, and others of wide existence in time like the EFQM Prize (Sabella et al., 2015; Parra-González et al., 2016), the Marcom Baldrige Prize (Ziaei et al., 2016) and (3) the quality standards where the family of Standards ISO 9000 (Schulingkamp and Latham, 2015) stands out due to its scope and geographical extension.

This research, in turn, has two different aspects: those aimed at creating the conditions for quality to emerge and exist in a sustainable way by ensuring the presence and effectiveness of the principles and variables that ensure that the products or services have the qualities which will enable it to meet the requirements of customers and those that address to evaluate by assessing the degree of satisfaction that originates in the customers if the quality is reached or not (Ali and Raza, 2015; Drosos and Tsotsolas, 2014).

The scope of these investigations are diverse in terms of their objects of application; however, a predominance of investigations in the field of services is observed, including those associated with hospital services, banks and airlines (Mosadeghrad and Ferlie, 2016; Elias et al., 2015). In the same way, it was possible to appreciate the development of multiple investigations associated with tourism in general (Karim et al., 2016; Vajčnerová et al., 2016) and with the different actors involved in the provision of this service, observing research carried out in hotels, travel agencies, restaurants, tourist attractions and in general tourist

destination (Pereira-Moliner et al., 2016; Drosos and Tsotsolas, 2014; Abubakar and Mavondo, 2014). In tourist destinations there is a predominance of research aimed at evaluating or explaining the satisfaction of tourists. Pandža Bajš (2015) analyzes, through a model of structural equations, the way in which variables such as quality of service, emotionality of experiences, previous reputations as well as monetary or non-monetary costs affect the conformation of perceived value, and this in turn is related to the satisfaction experienced and the subsequent behavior. Similar analyzes are carried out by Chen and Chen (2010), introducing the concept of experienced quality, while Da Costa Mendes et al. (2010) value the relationship between satisfaction with attributes and previous expectations with satisfaction of tourists and how this in turn affects the loyalty that they express or demonstrate. These investigations have in common to consider, in one way or another, as part of their items the elements of the destination that motivated the trip and the expectations of the tourists. Both aspects are considered for this proposal, the first as part of the attributes that are evaluated and the expectations are valued through the perceptions formed by the tourists in their contact with the destination and that finally condition their general satisfaction. Expectations are considered part of the perceptions from assuming the idea that what is perceived is the result of: what you expected to obtain, what you really get and the emotional or affective situation of the customer that evaluates in order to holistically experience your satisfaction. However, previous research does not go into depth, at least explicitly, on the incidence of quality management variables in the perception of the value of what is obtained, which is the objective of this research. Taking into account the reviewed literature it was possible to identify the variables that ensure quality (see Table 1).

Table 1. Variables approached for quality management

Variables	Analytical Perspectives					Acceptance percentage
	TQM	EFQM Prize	Deming Prize	Baldrige Prize	ISO 9001: 2015	
Management	Shewhart cycle (PDCA) Policies and objectives Road map	Leadership and constancy	Policies Organization Future plans Improving activity	Leadership	Principle of leadership Policies Responsibility and authority Performance evaluation Improvement	100
Human Resources	Training and motivation Responsibility for errors Organization for quality Education and Training	Development and involvement of people	Development of human resources	Organizational learning and for people Participation and employee development	Principle commitment of people Competencies Raising awareness	100

Docu- men- tary system	Design of products and processes Quality records	Events manage- ment	Information and standardi- zation	Manage- ment based on facts	Principle decisions based on facts Documented information	90.9
Resour- ce mana- gement	Relations with suppliers Supplier Evaluation	Develop- ment of partner- ships and resources	Activities quality assurance	Innovation Manage- ment	Principle relationship management Resources	90.9
Process mana- gement	Quality tie or life cycle of products Total control	Process mana- gement	Results	Focus on results and value creation	Principle process approach Operation (processes quality tie)	90.9
Custo- mer appro- ach	Market research After Sales Service	Focus on results and customers		Customers approach	Customer approach principle	90.9
Mains Authors	(Mellat-Parast, 2015)	(Sabella et al., 2015)	(Titu and Bucur, 2016)	(Ziaei et al., 2016)	(Schulingkamp and Latham, 2015)	

The variables identified from the positions of different authors were evaluated by experts (11 PhDs, with more than seven years of experience in research related to quality and tourism and more than two high visibility publications), to verify the relevance of them in the context of this research. These variables will be the object of study in this research with the aim of explaining how they behave in order to ensure quality in a tourist destination and how they relate to the levels of satisfaction experienced by tourists.

Method

The main steps followed in the research are summarized below. It must start by establishing two different samples the first aimed at assessing the satisfaction of tourists with destiny, as an expression of the quality of services of the destination. The second one oriented to evaluate or determine the state of the variables that are presumed conditions the quality of the service in the destination. The destination Holguín receives more than 400,000 visits per year, a population from which a sample of 2,726 tourists was extracted to evaluate the satisfaction with the tourists of the destination; this is characterized in Table 2.

In order to evaluate the state of the variables that are presumed to condition the service quality at the destination, an intentional non-probabilistic sampling was used, instruments were applied in 78 organizations linked to the provision of tourist services at the destination as described in Table 3, covering at least more than 75% of the entities that interact in the sector, a total of 166 executives were interviewed in these organizations to evaluate their quality leadership and 661 employees.

Table 2. Demographic characteristic of the respondents

Variables	Description	%	Variables	Description	%
Geographical zone	Germany	33	Employment	Professional	48
	France	33		Employee	32
	Canada	25		Retired	10
	USA	6		Students	6
	Latin-American	3		Own business	3
Type of tourism	Beach & Sun	77		Age (years)	Housewife
	Nature	10	25 - 44		49
	Health	5	45 - 60		44
	Events	5	Lower than 24		5
	Other	3	Over 60		2
Gender	Female	56	<i>e</i> = 2.38%; <i>Z</i> = 2; <i>p</i> = <i>q</i> = .50. Proportional stratified sampling		
	Male	44			

Table 3. Composition of the sample to evaluate the quality of the service

Type of organization	Number	Type of organization	Number
Airport	14	Restaurant	17
Travel agency	3	Hotel	12
Business service companies	2	Shops	10
Service companies (communication, public transport, etc.)	5	Manufacturing companies	15

To evaluate the satisfaction of tourists, a survey was conducted to measure the level of satisfaction. This was developed through two stages: the first one aimed at establishing the attributes that condition client satisfaction, initially identified 40 attributes, which were evaluated by 9 experts (5 PhDs with research in the sector and 4 professionals with more than 15 years of experience), these discarded 9 attributes for not being selected by at least 80% of the evaluators. With the 31 attributes selected, grouped in: access (10 attributes), facilities (8 attributes), lodging (7 attributes) and attractions (6 attributes), a survey was designed that asked to evaluate the satisfaction of attributes on a scale of 1 to 7 being the latter the highest rating. In the same way, instruments were designed to measure each of the groups of variables identified and discussed before linked to the quality assurance of the service, combining surveys and checklists for measurement. In the surveys designed for the variables of the quality such as the direction or the human resources a scale of 7 values was used with a conception similar to the one of satisfaction of the tourists. Table 4 summarizes the variables, attributes and instruments used for the evaluation.

Table 4. Summary of the instruments used to evaluate quality variables

Variables	Attributes evaluated	Instruments
Management	- Policies - Objectives - Definition of responsibilities	Checklist applied in audits Survey leadership

Variables	Attributes evaluated	Instruments
	- Leadership for quality - Quality Control	
Human Resources	- Training - Motivation - Quality of selection - Quality of planning	Checklist applied in audits Surveys workers
Documentary system	- Existence of the documentary system - Quality of documentary system - Knowledge of the documentary system - Implementation of the documentary system	Checklist applied in audits
Resource management	- Availability of resources - Quality of resources - Variety of resources - Supply opportunity - Operation of equipment - Sufficiency of equipment - Quality of equipment	
Process management	- Quality of commercial research - Quality design products and processes - Quality of provision - Quality of Marketing	

All instruments designed were analyzed for their reliability and apparent validity and content. Specifically in the case of the survey applied to tourists, a construct validity analysis was performed and reliability degrees were established for each of the expected dimensions as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Variables of the satisfaction of tourists with a destination
(outputs from IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows 23.0)

Essential dimension	Essential attributes		Explained variance	Cronbach Alpha
Lodging	Front desk service	Entertainment	25.80	0.94
	Variety of food and beverages	Quality of food and beverages		
	General cleaning	Professionalism of staff		
	Comfort lodging			
Facilities	Transport staff professionalism	Technical condition of transport	22.00	0.91
	Comfort transport	Excursions		
	General information	Gastronomy		
	Entertainment	Shopping		
Access	Professionalism of the airline staff	Professionalism of airport staff	21.93	0.88
	Airline security	Comfort Airport		
	Immigration and customs	Service time		
	Luggage handling	Service on board		
	Airline Punctuality	Comfort airline		
Attractions	Price - quality comparison	Safety	13.26	0.85

Essential dimension	Essential attributes		Explained variance	Cronbach Alpha
	Aesthetic and environmental (spatial attractions)	Reason for travel. (Depending on the type of tourism being practiced)		
	Accessibility to facilities	Social life		

Similar analyzes were performed with the surveys applied to the managers and employees. From the sample sizes established and the instruments designed, the instruments were applied, with which, once applied, the analysis was started using the descriptive statistics with the mean as statistic of central tendency and the standard deviation to evaluate the dispersion of values. In order to analyze the relationship between quality assurance variables and their influence on satisfaction, the Structural Equations Model (SEM) was used to find the structural relationships between latent variables. This is due to the advantages of the structural models to propose the type and direction of the relationships that are expected to be found among the various variables contained in it, to pass later to estimate the parameters that are specified by the proposed theoretical relationships. For the construction of the model we used the IBM SPSS AMOS 23. Once the model has been identified and estimated, the fit of the data to the proposed model is evaluated.

Results

The sample of tourists answered the survey designed to evaluate the satisfaction with the services received in which the dimensions and attributes summarized in Table 5 were evaluated. The survey applied to evaluate satisfaction identified the main entities visited by tourists So that it was possible to correlate the results of the measurement of satisfaction with those of quality assessment. In the case of the instrument to evaluate satisfaction, a construct validity analysis was performed in which the validity of the instrument was verified with an explained variance of 82.91% and a KMO coefficient of 0.928. The result of this survey and a univariate analysis of the variables related to quality management are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics of variables
 (outputs from IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows 23.0)

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Satisfaction of tourist	5.00	7.00	5.69	0.53737
Process management (PM)	4.50	6.50	5.47	0.55997
Human resource management (HR)	4.50	6.50	5.43	0.60450
Resource management (RM)	4.50	6.50	5.51	0.56106
Document management (DM)	3.00	7.00	4.81	0.86702
Direction (D)	4.00	7.00	5.94	0.89572

The result of the satisfaction showed an average that indicates a high level of satisfaction (in a scale of 7 points) on the part of the tourists surveyed. As it is

possible to appreciate, in a scale of 7 points, of the different evaluated elements related to the quality the most critical of them is the Documentary Management and the one that has better evaluation is the Direction.

Analysis of Relationship between Variables and their Influence on Satisfaction

The model was constructed with all the studied variables. Assuming that the theory is correct, one could derive from the model the variances and covariances between the observable variables. Table 7 characterizes the initial data used for the construction of the recursive model and its variables.

Tabla 7. Data model (*outputs from IBM SPSS AMOS 23.0*)

N	78		
Number of variables in the model	12	Number of exogenous variables	6
Number of observed variables	6	Number of endogenous variables	6
Number of unobserved variables	6	Degrees of freedom (21-13)	8
Number different moments of the sample	21	Number of different parameters to be estimated	13

It is possible to emphasize the significant relationships between the analyzed variables of the quality management and the satisfaction of the tourists. It is noteworthy that in the specific case of the target studied, document management has little influence on Process Management; this can be caused by the nature of the target analyzed that is in a phase of growth and has concentrated efforts in the human talent management of and to guarantee material and technological resources. As shown in Table 8, only the relationship between Management and Process Management is not significant, but it is not conceived as a direct relation in the previous model established. Management influences the management of processes through three mediating variables: resource management, document management and human resources management.

Table 8. Standardized regression weights (*outputs from IBM SPSS AMOS 23.0*)

			Estimate	Standardized Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P Label
HR	<---	D	0.535	0.792	0.019	28.536	***
DM	<---	D	0.546	0.564	0.036	15.003	***
RM	<---	D	0.390	0.623	0.022	17.488	***
PM	<---	HR	0.527	0.628	0.004	144.776	***
PM	<---	DM	-0.003	-0.004	0.002	-1.112	.266
PM	<---	RM	0.476	0.526	0.004	126.911	***
SAT	<---	PM	0.772	0.781	0.028	27.453	***

The results computed standardized estimates are shown in Figure 1, showing the causal relationships.

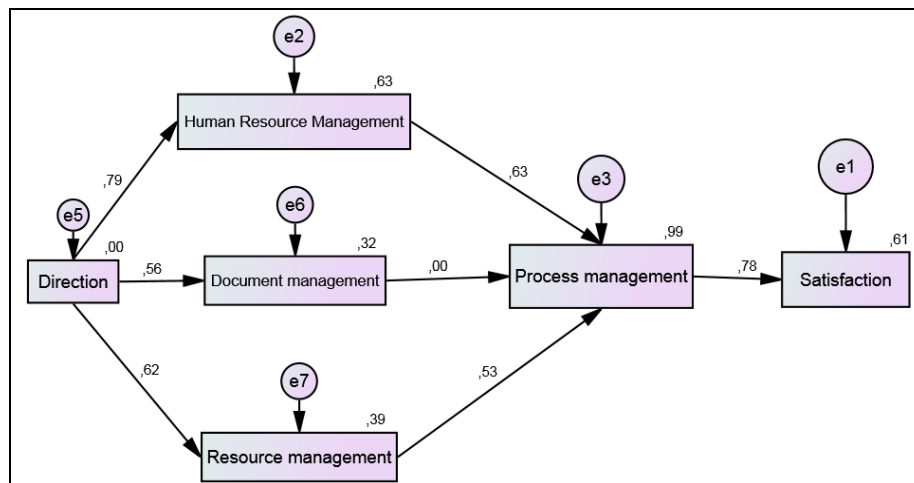


Figure 1. Structural equation model, standardized estimations
 (outputs from IBM SPSS AMOS 23.0)

From the analysis of the square multiple correlation for each endogenous variable (proportion of its variance that is counted by its parameters), it is possible to determine that the reliability of Process Management (GP) is 99.4% and Satisfaction (SAT) is 60.9%, which could be interpreted as that the variable GP explains in a summarized way in 99.4% the behavior of the variables that precede it in the model and of the same form the satisfaction of the tourists is consequence in a 60.9 % of Process Management. Evidence that satisfaction is not the result only of quality management, even though it is strongly conditioned by it, but in the satisfaction of tourists influence other external variables to the management between which could be found variables that act directly in the psyche of customers or others that cause changes in the management environment. The specific measures of the model adjustment are shown in Table 9. The default model is considered for the adjustment measure.

Table 9. Adjustment indicators of model obtained
 (outputs from IBM SPSS AMOS Ver 23.0)

Measure	Obtained value	Measure	Obtained value
CMIN / DF (Statistical chi-squared not centered)	2.755	RMR (Rquare root of the average of squared residuals)	0.041
NFI (Normed fit index)	0.902	PNFI (Parsimonious normed fit index)	0.881
RFI (Relative fit index)	0.816	PCFI (Parsimonious goodness of fit index)	0.882
IFI (Incremental fot index)	0.904	AGFI (Adjusted goodness fit index)	0.842
CFI (Comparative fit index)	0.903	PGFI (Relative goodness of fit index)	0.814
GFI (Goodness of fit index)	0.826		

The observed results express that the obtained model is good and that it allows to demonstrate the relations between the variables analyzed. The findings of empirical research developed support the notion that the satisfaction of tourists with destination in general is significantly influenced by the variables that ensure the quality in the entities that provide services in that destination. The findings are in line with previous studies (Aktepe et al., 2015; Ali et al., 2016), which in one way or another demonstrate from different perspectives of the study that the management of the quality of a tourist destination is a complex process of interrelations between different actors of the destination whose effective interaction is can achieve high levels of tourist satisfaction.

Conclusions

The degree reached in the management of the quality of a destination is a reflection of the state of determining variables of the actors that operate in it. The actors of the destination ensure the quality of the process management through three fundamental factors: the management of its human resources, the management of the resources with which the service is assured and the degree of standardization of the processes manifested in the existing documentary system, contributing the above to the satisfaction of tourists (Ali et al., 2016; Vajčnerová et al., 2016).

This research has critically reviewed the literature on quality management and its influence on satisfaction by finding the key variables to determine the nature of this relationship. Secondly, it has shown that there are identifiable relationships that are bound to discover future lines of action in order to improve the level of satisfaction in a tourist destination.

The presented research also suggests a model that can be perfectible, but that serves as a tool to be used by the administrators of the tourist entities to identify those variables of the quality on which it is priority to work in function of a better satisfaction. Based on the review of the literature, this paper proposes the variables to be taken into account in this type of study to test the relationships among the variables studied. Those responsible for the management of the tourist destination studied and the entities those compose it should base their decisions on those variables related to quality management that influence satisfaction taking into account the magnitude of such influence. All of the above ensure that the tourist supply meets the needs of the visitors of the destination.

It should be noted that although the results of this study shed light on important issues, it is necessary to consider some limitations. First, the size of the sample could be increased to make the conclusions reached more generalizable. Additional studies should be conducted at other tourist destinations in the country to increase the opportunity to make comparisons and obtain more information. It is necessary to point out that the results of the study are fundamentally framed in the own and particular conditions of a specific destination of sun and beach, reason why it is possible to assume the necessity to deepen in the repetition or not of the model observed in tourist destinations of sun and beach with other specific peculiarities or

in tourist destinations that operate in different tourist modalities. Finally, the satisfaction of tourists will be a direct expression of the quality of process management, but will be affected by other factors exogenous to the management itself, which could and should be the object of future research.

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ZARZĄDZANIE JAKOŚCIĄ I SATYSFAKCJA KLIENTA W MIEJSCU PRZEZNACZENIA TURYSTYCZNEGO, ANALIZA RÓWNOWAŻENIA STRUKTURALNEGO

Streszczenie: Artykuł opiera się na założeniu, że klienci dążą do osiągnięcia maksymalnej satysfakcji z kupowanych produktów lub usług, dzięki czemu wiedza o zadowoleniu klienta pozwala zorganizować organizację zgodnie z dostarczaniem wysokiej jakości usług, zakładając, że wyższa jakość prowadzi do wyższego zadowolenia klienta. Niniejsze badanie empiryczne przeprowadzono w miejscowości turystycznej Holguín w północno-wschodniej Kubie, wzięło w nich udział ponad 2000 turystów i 70 usługodawców turystycznych, a jego celem było dostarczenie informacji na temat związku między poziomem zadowolenia turystów a poziomem jakości świadczonych usług. Za pomocą kompilacji i analizy uzyskanych danych skonstruowano model równań strukturalnych, celem zwizualizowania charakteru relacji, które zamierzano zademonstrować. Uzyskane wyniki wskazują, że istnieją powiązania między zmiennymi, które zapewniają jakość i satysfakcję klienta, pozostawiając zidentyfikowane możliwości poprawy.

Słowa kluczowe: zarządzanie jakością, zadowolenie klienta, destynacja turystyczna, turystyka, analiza równań strukturalnych

旅游目的地的质量管理和客户满意度, 结构方程分析

摘要: 本文的前提是客户渴望达到他们购买的产品或服务的最大满意度, 以使客户满意度的知识使组织按照提供优质的服务组织假设质量更高的水平导致更高的客户满意度。其实证研究是在古巴东北部旅游目的地Holguin进行的, 包括2000多名游客和70个旅游服务提供者, 旨在提供游客满意度水平与目的地质量保证变量之间关系的信息。通过对获得的数据进行汇编和分析, 构建了一个结构方程模型, 可视化他们打算演示的关系的性质。得到的结果表明, 保证质量的变量与顾客的满意度之间存在关系, 确定了改进的可能性。

关键词: 质量管理, 顾客满意, 旅游目的地, 旅游, 结构方程分析