

A SURVEY ON TOURISM EXPERIENCES BY HUNGARIAN TRAVELLERS: TOWARDS GUEST SATISFACTION

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Abstract: In the 21st century experiences got great significance in the every-day life and in tourism as well. Human popularity can achieve very good and happy moments e.g. by shopping (complex experience in shopping centres) by common spare time activities in the nature and in towns, also by having vacation at a special destination.

Animation/entertainment is a sphere of hotel services that is to help the guests sparing their free time on holidays in a good atmosphere, by providing experiential programs.

Good memories of a tourism service can make guests satisfied and build a returning clientele sphere. That is why it is awaited to map the (potential) guests' expectations and observations of services.

This paper discusses Hungarian tourists' experiences conducted in Hungary aiming to reveal the need for professional services focusing on the not-so-spread area, Animation.

The experiential dimensions of every-day life and tourism was studied by an own-edited questionnaire (N = 1000) in the half-year period of 1st August 2010 – 31st January 2011. This study was extended by quality of life since summer 2011 and I am going to compare the results of these two surveys with the aim of development suggestions in order to achieve a main level of guest satisfaction and a loyal sphere of clientele.

Key words: tourism, hotel services, animation / recreation, experience, guest-satisfaction

Introduction

As it was mentioned already in the abstract, surveying of my chosen areas are not so well-spread in the hospitality-tourism sphere. First of all, the animation / recreation / entertainment as a hotel service on its own, is presented only in some Hungarian accommodation. Since the author examined it in 2007, only 9.12% of the then net of hotels introduced this service to their guests. Nowadays the ratio is a little bit higher, but it is still not queried. In the 21st century not only hotels, but also camp sites has their own (mainly seasonal, for the summer time offered) entertainment program-series, such as the Balatontourist campings which are covered by the leading Hungarian national animation company the so called "Tiszta Dili".

The owners and operational leaders of accommodations decided by animation mainly on market-reasons (as the main competitors also has this service) and they would like to push the advantage of it: the happy returning clientele with a better quality of life, which covers children and adults, too.

Why can the animation service call forth these results, and how it is working? It can be understood if you take part

in (well-organized) entertainment programs or survey the participants' satisfaction factors which stand in the centre of the author's main study. It is a still unhidden area of service quality management and guest-satisfaction.

Materials and methods

Definitions and background of the study

As many authors have disclaimed in our new century the marketers meet a sphere of more conscious clientele, who are interested in personalized and high-level quality, also in tourism. It is issued also in the hotel room furniture and the offered services.

Árva and Dely-Gray (2011) mentioned the new types of tourists as visitors of motorway-highway stations, participants of educational tourism and musical youth festivals. But, after the own experiences of the author of this article, it can be also grouped for those (Hungarian) tourists who expect the personal experience of holiday as wellness or family-friendly services.

All of them are participants of experiential tourism (which is a part of experience economy).

The term of “experience economy” was first published in 1998, by J. Pine and J. Gilmore. It was disclaimed that the experience economy is next generation of economy after the agrarian economy, the industrial economy, and the most recent service economy. The consumers are disposed to pay more only for those goods on the market that has still value and gives them experience. Goods and services are no longer enough on their own. The consumer needs something more, which can be named as the fourth supply form on the market as it can be seen on Figure 1.

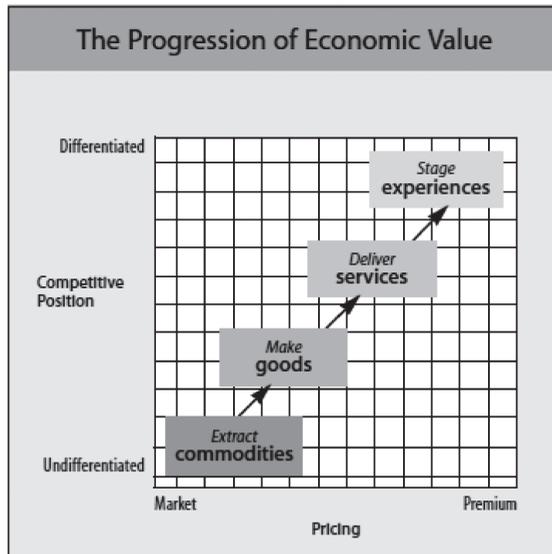


Figure 1. The Progression of Economic Value by Pine and Gilmore
Source: Pine, J. II – Gilmore, 1998, pp. 98.

This kind of economy has been realized also in the sphere of tourism. Some examples: the guest are much more pleased if they get a special atmosphere for their dinner in the restaurant (not only candle-light, but e.g. flambée) or high-tech services in the hotel (e.g. X-box or smart-phone or iPad-controlled services in the room), beside the off-line music played by radio, bigger fun can be given by the live-music or instead of watching TV is better to get a stage-production performed by a dance group or by the entertainment team.

The characteristics of experience (declared by Pine and Gilmore, 1998) can be found also in the games and shows in the frames of animation / entertainment:

- *customer participation*: the animation games can be organized only by the active participation of the guests, who are the players or racer at activities. They get much bigger experience if they take part in quizzes, children activities, guest-shows, etc. and not only watch them as an audience.
- *connection*: it means first of all as Pine and Gilmore stated that environmental relationship unites customers with the event or performance. In second it can be also mentioned, that in animation activities the participants play with each other in groups so they can build additional friendships.

If the guests are satisfied with the (animation) programs they feel that the service’s quality is good or premium-level and they can await more visiting of the activities.

Customer satisfaction expresses that how the service suits the customers’ expectations. If it surpasses the customers will be satisfied, if not, they will be unsatisfied.

As Kenesei & Kolos (2007) mentioned satisfaction has several business advantages: contributes to the competitive edge; the satisfied customers are not so sensitive to the competitor propositions, they consume more often and makes propaganda for the firm’s better image.

In order to increase customer satisfaction, the company should identify those factors, having (some) impacts on it. It can be stated that getting to know the customers’ (guests’) prior expectations and – related to the former part – the functional dimensions of quality besides the performance level of services are the most important elements in this process.

Techniques and methods of examination

As it was declared above satisfaction is a judgement of service-value determined by the customers or guests after (or in some cases during) the consumption of the given service, e.g. hotel animation/entertainment.

Many experts have dealt with measuring service quality. Probably the most well-known survey is related to Parasuraman and his colleagues (1985, 1988 and 1990). In their study they listed 10 aspects of service quality: reliability, responsiveness, competence, access, courtesy, communication, credibility, security, understanding the customer and tangibles. This model is known as SERVQUAL. By these indicators they measured the gap between customer expectations and experience.

In the original SERVQUAL-questionnaire there were presented 22 statements on quality in order to be evaluated by a Likert-scale from 1 to 7. The author modified this questionnaire and declared 18 elements in 2010-2011.

Later the number of factors was reduced to 15 which can have role in the development of experience by animation activities.

In the categories the following service-elements of animation experience were divided:

- *Reliability* (originally 5 indicators): familiar game.
- *Empathy* (5 original indicators): the animateur (playmaster) himself.
- *Tangibles* (4 indicators): equipment; place of game; pool-game; playing for music.
- *Responsiveness* (4): getting gifts; more winners.
- *Assurance* (4 indicators originally): activity lead in Hungarian; many participants (players); playing with friends.
- *Other* (differently from the original method, those indicators that cannot be listed in any above category): the game itself; activity lead in more languages; a few participants; good weather for the game; newish game; playing with new people; recurrence during the day (played more times, e.g. not only in the morning).

The survey was a quantitative research by questionnaire which was sent to the respondents by e-mail or was used in a printed version in face-to-face communication by the help of the entertainers/animateurs of Tiszta Dili Hungarian animation company.

During the first research between August 1st 2010 and March 31st 2011 and also in the second one which is not yet closed, between July 1st 2011 and 31st December 2011 'convenience sampling' was used. The first research resulted 1000 pieces of valuable questionnaires (Magyar, 2011), and the second one has yet 698 participants' opinion.

Data-processing was by SPSS Statistics 17.0 software. The data were weighted by the Hungarian population's statistics (by place of residence and gender) for being representative.

Results and discussion

As it was mentioned before it is necessary to map the guests' prior expectations and also the "feel" after consuming.

In my two surveys I tried to analyse the prior expectations, by giving the most meaningful deciding criteria by planning vacations. In the first survey I did not ask the participants to state a priority order, only to mention the five criteria which are important for them in planning. But in the second query I applied a five-grade Likert-scale for evaluating each mentioned services.

As it can be seen in Table 1, the priority of travelling consideration among the Hungarians has not a huge difference between the two surveys. Animation activities are still only

on the 13th place before the last awaited service: local guide (N=32). Still the favourable prices and "hunting" for new experiences lead the role.

The experiences during the hotel stay were measured on a ranking scale in my first survey (the best experience was marked by 1, however, the worst by 10). Analysing these experiences it can be stated that by the first query for the Hungarian holiday-makers still the "conventional" services are experience-full, such as the experience from the location (3.88), friendly and helpful staff (3.33), and the cleanliness (2.63). However, the active leisure time relating services, such as the sports facilities (6.36), animation (7.04) and wellness (5.30) give not yet a so big experience factor for them, not like as e.g. in Austria or in the Mediterranean Region.

In the second survey I edited for this topic an open question, for which the participants should have answered in their own mind about their hotel-experiences both in Hungary and abroad.

The following order can be stood up in Hungary on the hotel-experiences:

1. *Experiences related to Wellness (and thermal) services:* n = 492
2. *Experiences related to F&B services:* n = 400
3. *Experiences related to the hotel room:* n = 352
4. *Experiences related to the staff:* n = 198
5. *Experiences related to the location:* n = 182
6. *Experiences related to other hotel services:* n = 153
7. *Experiences related to Fitness and sport services:* n = 100
8. *Experiences related to Animation:* n = 112
9. *Experiences related to facultative programs:* n = 110
10. *Experiences related to favorable prices:* n = 68
11. *Other experiences:* n = 41

In the second query there can be found another priority role among the Hungarians. The wellness experience dominates such as the satisfaction gotten by the F&B services, but unfortunately the active leisure time activities are still at the end of the list.

It can be stated that in animation programs in both surveys the most important factors are the persons who are responsible for this service and the "warm" environment of friends and relatives, beside the (good) characteristics of the games.

The other factors have not so relevant differences in these two surveys. The Hungarian participants at animation programs do not need so that there is an activity held also in the morning and in the afternoon, they need variety. They play not exactly for the gifts or placing, but for fun. They need more the new games than the familiar ones they played many times before. (Table 2.)

Table 1. Priority of Hungarian holidaymakers' travelling considerations

Priority of travelling considerations	Survey 1			Survey 2	
	answers	percent	place of order	priority (mean)	place of order
favourable prices	696	69,60%	1.	4,35	1.
looking for new experiences	691	69,10%	2.	4,30	2.
varied (facultative) programs nearby	587	58,70%	3.	3,52	8.
travelling with friends or mate	568	56,80%	4.	4,03	3.
water-front hotel	545	54,50%	5.	4,00	4.
nearness of green nature (e.g. woods, hills)	408	40,80%	6.	3,72	7.
travelling with family-members	422	42,20%	7.	3,95	5.
visiting former destinations with good feelings	317	31,70%	8.	3,20	9.
many (hotel) services included	207	20,70%	9.	3,81	6.
children / family friendly hotel services	107	10,70%	10.	2,31	12.
high-qualified hotel	63	6,30%	11.	2,42	11.
other respect	55	5,50%	12.	2,97	10.
hotel animation / recreation services	53	5,30%	13.	2,27	13.
local guide	32	3,20%	14.	2,00	14.

Source: own calculations

Table 2. Experience service elements of animation activities

Service elements	Value (Survey1)	Value (Survey2)
the animateur him/herself	4.17	3.97
good weather	4.04	3.40
playing with friends	3.94	3.84
the game itself	3.72	3.80
pool-games	3.59	2.82
music	3.59	3.64
new games	3.56	2.92
playing with new people	3.55	3.41
in Hungarian lead activities	3.23	2.81
many players	2.72	2.88
familiar games	2.72	2.25
more winners	2.71	2.39
getting gifts	2.69	2.29
recurrence	2.17	2.01
only a few participants	2.10	1.77

Source: own calculations

Conclusion and suggestions

Animation / Entertainment is already a service that is entered also to the market of Hungarian commercial lodgings, but it is still not so developed as in abroad. Among the holiday-makers there can be found those who already have participated in animation activities e.g. in the Mediterranean where there is a tradition of this service, so they could have got good impressions which they expect also at home. If they were satisfied they are pleased to talk to their friends about this newly service, and the providers employ own or rented animateurs.

We should focus on the guests' satisfaction factors and on the basis of them it is needed to provide such a variety of animation activities that meet the expectations not only in the hotel room but also in the active recreation and entertainment.

There can be found also good examples in the Hungarian market. The hoteliers can get proofed "packages" from routine-full animation companies such as the "Tiszta Dili"

that entertains the guests of hotels, camp sites and spas in approximately 20 different places in Hungary in 2012. Their main advantage is the creative and personalized variety of programs, which are suitable not only for the children but for the teenagers and the adults, too.

In this intensifying market competition the hoteliers should provide their guest services that are always on higher level, because the clientele are looking for premium quality for favorable prices. "All inclusive" is a challenge for them and animation can also help to be satisfied with the hotel services and the life itself.

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