

ANALYSIS OF SATISFACTION LEVEL IN THE CLIENTS OF THE PARÂNG CHALET, HUNEDOARA COUNTY, ROMANIA

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Abstract: *Tourism market plays an increasing role on the domestic markets of countries, turning into a distinct segment of the service market. It differs from the goods market because it is strongly segmented and it has a high level of diversification and it differs from the goods market because it is strongly segmented and it has a high level of tourism product diversification and complexity; it is characterised mainly by the moving of potential customers to consumption places. The size of tourism market is given by its structure, area, and capacity. The tourism potential of destinations, the infrastructure, the complementary services, the quality and professional training of the service staff play an important role in market size. The tourism firm aims at spreading information on its activity, products, and services, as well as on the way consumers appreciate them through its promotional means policy.*

Key words: *market, demand, offer, price, customer.*

INTRODUCTION

At present, consumers rely on an increasingly high range of available products and services. The firms need to know the elements that can satisfy customers. [1]

Customer satisfaction is what a purchaser feels after purchasing from a firm whose performance is above expectations. [8] Purchasers are satisfied when their expectations are met and thrilled when their expectations are overcome. Satisfied customers remain faithful for longer periods, buy in larger amounts, are less influenced by the price, and describe the firm in nice colours to other people. [6]

Total quality management is nowadays the most suitable way of getting customer satisfaction and firm profitability. [5] A firm needs to know the way consumers perceive quality and what they expect to get. This is why it needs to try and offer more than its competitors in quality. This needs total management and involvement of firm staff, as well as implementing proper control, analysis, and evaluation systems and methods. [7]

The firms need to switch from a product sale philosophy to a client and marketing philosophy. The key to success is better meeting customers satisfaction needs.

Customers need value maximisation and their choice is influenced by costs, knowledge, mobility, and income. [2] They compare the value of product consumption to the value expected. The result of this comparison influences their level of satisfaction and their purchase behaviour. Consumers form certain opinions on the value of market offers and make purchase decisions depending on their opinions. Consumer satisfaction depends on the results of the use: expectation ratio. If product performance does not meet expectations, consumers are dissatisfied. If the performance is above expectation, then the customer is very satisfied or even thrilled. [9] Expectations are based on past experiences, on friends' and colleagues' opinions, on the information and promises of the providers and competitors on the market. [11] Operators need to be very careful about the proper level of expectation. If expectation level is very low, they will be able to satisfy the customers, but they will fail in attracting new customers; but, if the expectation level is very high, the customers will be disappointed. [4]

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Surveys are scientific research activities that allow the evaluation of a firm's processes. The phenomena and processes that are subjected to marketing research need proper investigation instruments. Such an instrument is often a survey, a very effective way of measuring and evaluating.

Evaluating customer satisfaction should be a constant process because without evaluation, without a survey, a firm would never know the results obtained or if they meet previously established objectives. What nobody measures cannot be controlled or managed. [6]

A survey is a set of complex activities relying on concepts, methods, and procedures clearly defined: it is only when observing them that one can speak of the accuracy of the estimate of parameters – in our case, the satisfaction level of a firm's customers. A survey is a challenge from the perspective of the accuracy level and of data relevance level.

Conceptually, literature mentions a wide range of initiatives and nuances in defining customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction. Thus, according to Oliver (1981), satisfaction is seen as a post-consumption evaluation containing both cognitive and affective elements.

Unlike Oliver, Tse and Wilton (1988) consider that satisfaction is “the response of a customer to the evaluation of the discrepancy between his/her expectations (or other performance norms) and the actual performance of the product/service such as perceived after the consumption”. The model at the basis of this definition is the model of unconfirmed expectation. According to this model, we can identify three determiners of a customer's satisfaction/dissatisfaction: expectations, perceptions, and lack of confirmation.

Expectations are formed before purchasing a product/service and they represent a standard for the comparison of performance. The result of such comparison could be a confirmation (when the performance meets expectations) or a non-confirmation (when there are discrepancies between expectations and performance). [4] Positive confirmation and non-confirmation lead to consumer satisfaction, while negative non-confirmation leads to dissatisfaction. The importance of measuring the level of satisfaction in customers resides in the possibility of creating competitive advantage that helps the firm differentiate from other similar companies. [6]

RESEARCH RESULTS

Customer satisfaction is what a purchaser feels after purchasing from a firm whose performance is above expectations. Purchasers are satisfied when their expectations are met and thrilled when their expectations are overcome. Satisfied customers remain faithful for longer periods, buy in larger amounts, are less influenced by the price, and describe the firm in nice colours to other people.

The Parâng Mountains are part of the Meridional Carpathians, of the mountain group Parâng-Șureanu-Lotru; it is the largest in area of all Romanian mountain ranges. They are crossed by the highest road in Romania, the Transalpina, that reaches up to 2,200 m, providing extremely rare landscapes. [14]

The Parâng Mountains are notable for their massiveness similar to that of the Făgăraș Mountains; the large number of glacial lakes (Mija, Câlcescu, Roșiile, Iezerul Înghețat, etc.) is similar to that of the Retezat Mountains; they are also among the wildest mountains in Romania.

Its southern part is notable due to its lime formations harbouring caves such as Peștera Muierilor, in the Galbena River valley, and Peștera Polovragi, in the Olteț River valley. [15]

The Parâng Chalet is located in the homonymous mountain massif, 15 km from the town of Petroșani, 1,650 m altitude; it can be reached by road (not in winter) and it has its own parking lot. The Parâng Chalet has 34 rooms with 88 beds. The rooms with 2 and 3 places have their own bathrooms. Heating and hot water are supplied from the chalet own heating system. There is digital TV (digitv and Boom), Internet Wireless, and a rental service for sledges, skis, and snowboards. The tariff per night is between 120 and 210 RON. [15]

We carried out a survey among the chalet's customers to identify their satisfaction level, their opinion on the quality of services offered, and the price level, to see what could be done to improve the firm's image among its customers.

We need to mention that before the qualitative study there was a pre-survey whose conclusions were validated after the quantitative study. The research place was the Parâng Chalet, and the subjects were the tourists of the chalet.

The questionnaire of the survey consisted in 10 questions. It was a non-exhaustive survey (the survey rate was below 14.3%, and the sample was above 30 people). Our sample consisted in 50 respondents.

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How did you find out about the Parâng Chalet?

- a. Through travel agencies
- b. From the Internet
- c. From people I know
- d. Other sources

Table 1

Through travel agencies	From the Internet	From people I know	Other sources
4	36	8	2
8.0%	72.0%	16.0%	4.0%

As one can easily see, the main source of tourism information is Internet (72.0%).

2. How was your reception at the Parâng Chalet?

- a. Very good
- b. Good
- c. Satisfactory
- d. Unsatisfactory

Table 2

Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
32	14	4	-
64.0%	28.0%	8.0%	-

As for the way tourists were met at the Parâng Chalet, it was very good (64.0%).

3. What made you choose the Parâng Chalet?

- a. The service quality: price ratio
- b. The seriousness of the staff
- c. The services
- d. The staff competency and kindness
- e. The location of the chalet

Table 3

The service quality: price ratio	The seriousness of the staff	The services	The staff competency and kindness	The location of the chalet
15	12	6	5	12
30.0%	24.0%	12.0%	10.0%	24.0%

The service quality: price ratio was the main reason why tourists decided to choose the Parâng Chalet (30%), followed by the location of the chalet (24%) and by the staff's seriousness (24%).

4. How satisfied were you with the quality of the services offered at the Parâng Chalet?

- a. Very satisfied
- b. Satisfied
- c. Unsatisfied
- d. Very unsatisfied

Table 4

Very satisfied	Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied
35	14	1	-
70.0%	28.0%	2.0%	-

Seventy percent of respondents said they were very satisfied with the services offered.

5. Does the Parâng Chalet have a very good location?

- a. Totally agree
- b. Agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Totally disagree

Table 5

Totally agree	Agree	Disagree	Totally disagree
40	8	2	-
80.0%	16.0%	4.0%	-

As far as the tourists' opinion on the location of the chalet, 80% of them said it is very good.

6. Is the ambiance of the Parâng Chalet a pleasant one?

- a. Totally agree
- b. Agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Totally disagree

Table 6

Totally agree	Agree	Disagree	Totally disagree
42	5	3	-
84.0%	10.0%	6.0%	-

As for ambiance of the Parâng Chalet, 84.0% of respondents said it was a pleasant one.

7. Is the staff of the Parâng Chalet competent?

- a. Totally agree
- b. Agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Totally disagree

Table 7

Totally agree	Agree	Disagree	Totally disagree
38	10	2	-
76.0%	20.0%	4.0%	-

As far as the staff competency is concerned, 76.0% of respondents said it was competent.

8. How was the service quality: price ratio at the Parâng Chalet?

- a) Very good
- b) Good
- c) Adequate
- d) Inadequate

Table 8

Very good	Good	Adequate	Inadequate
40	6	2	2
80.0%	12.0%	4.0%	4.0%

Eighty percent of respondents said the service quality: price ratio of the Parâng Chalet is very good.

9. Do you intend to return to the Parâng Chalet to spend your next weekend?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I do not know

Table 9

Yes	No	I do not know
48	2	-
96.0%	4.0%	-

Ninety-eight percent of tourists said they intended to return to the Parâng Chalet to spend their next weekend.

10. What would you make not return to the Parâng Chalet?

The reason why tourists would not return to the Parâng Chalet is the access road, very difficult to drive on and useless in winter.

11. Please mention the recommendations for the improvement of the services offered or the source of your discontent at the Parâng Chalet.

The respondents said they were satisfied with the services offered by the Parâng Chalet and they would recommend it to those interested in spending a weekend in a mirific landscape with lots of quiet and green.

12. Your identification data:

- Name:**
- Phone:**
- E-mail:**

CONCLUSIONS

The fundamental element in ensuring high-quality products/services is to reach and overcome the customers' needs and expectations. Information related to customer satisfaction are basic input/output data that any organisation should include in its monitoring and measuring process.

In our study on the customer satisfaction at the Parâng Chalet, Hunedoara County, Romania, we have seen that they were satisfied with the quality of the services offered at the Parâng Chalet.

- ✓ Strengths:
- ✓ Location of the chalet;
- ✓ Well trained staff;
- ✓ Clean, well-tended interior and exterior of the chalet;
- ✓ Good price: quality ratio;
- ✓ Strong brand image.
- ✓ Weaknesses:
- ✓ Difficult access particularly in winter
- ✓ Too little promotion of the chalet.

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