

## CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN TOURISM

LENKA ŠVAJDOVÁ – MICHAL ČERVINKA – TOMÁŠ TYKVA

**Abstract:** The presented paper titled *Customer satisfaction in tourism* aims to familiarize readers with the specifics of the concept "customer satisfaction" in the tourism sector. The basis of this article is in number of features that are typical for tourism. Traveling is widely considered as one of the markets with the greatest competitive pressure, this pressure is forcing all its subjects to satisfy the wants and needs of its customers to the fullest extent possible. At the same time, however, due to its characteristics must face a number of difficulties in reaching a single objective, which is a satisfied customer. This article aims to analyze the key factors affecting customer satisfaction in tourism. The article used information from secondary and field research of the author.

**Keywords:** Tourism– customer satisfaction – ITQ Code – Tour-operator

**JEL Classification:** M15, M21

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of achieving the main goals of the tourism services - customer satisfaction is based on almost complete saturation coverage and demand in the current markets (a measure of demand in tourism is mainly influenced by external factors that neither the customer nor the company can affect). Density of competition in the tourism market is high. This fact is evident in TABLE 1: "Number of licensed touroperators/ travel agencies". In the Czech Republic in the last 5 years, can be seen the increasing number of licensed travel agencies, but also declining number of sold package holidays. On the Czech market, in recent economically turbulent years the number of touroperators and travel agencies increased. It can be stated that in the field of tourism did not show - the clean of market, from "weak" players - one of the positive effects of the crisis. The above condition makes travel agencies seek a satisfied customer who will be loyal to such a touroperator or travel agency and will become a key tool for the competitiveness of itselfs.

**Table 1** Number of licensed touroperators/ travel agencies

Number/ Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Licensed travel agencies	1291	1368	1394	1457	1501
Sold package tours (in thousand)	2501	2097	2225	2088	2050

Source: [1]

The customer satisfaction should be based on high quality services but the measurement of quality is not so easy in the field of tourism. The quality of tourism services is wide term and it can be viewed from many angles. Most important, however, is the customer view for whom the product is good , in so far as it had expected , or something more. Tourism services , however, are mainly provided in the form of a " package " which means to ensure the same quality of service of individual suppliers. At the same time it is necessary to ensure quality throughout the service chain from properly assembled ,offered and mediated product through flawless execution of all services to safety way home. Measurement and maintenance of service quality is difficult , because even if facilities meet the highest quality

standards , the quality can be degraded by access of staff providing services or overall weak interconnection and accessibility of the services. To measure the quality of tourism services (particularly in quality of destination) is therefore most appropriate to apply a comprehensive quality management, which takes into account the overall satisfaction of all stakeholders, such as consumers , service providers and the local population.

### 2. SCIENTIFIC AIM, METHODOLOGY/METHODS

The presented article aims to analyze the key factors affecting customer satisfaction in tourism. The article used information from secondary and field research of the authors. For the purpose of creating the article the method of the literature search and expert articles have been applied, further, author have analyzed the expert studies. To reach the aim of the article diagnostic mission methods have been used along with the vertical analysis of selected indicators, as well as primary research method - questionnaire survey was conducted among respondents. Quota selection has been applied. With the aim of creating the final part of the article, synthetic and deductive procedures have been applied too.

### 3. FINDINGS

#### 3.1 Customer satisfaction in tourism

Customer perceive service quality especially in terms of tangibility services, service providers reliability and ability to respond to comments, service provider credibility and empathy of employees.

Tangibility of services is usually presented with image of the establishment in relation premises, equipment, personnel and promotional materials that creates confidence.

Empathy should be based on a sensitive approach in the time of providing such care that evokes a feeling of personal interest for the customer.

Credibility suppliers lies in the ability and behavior of employees that convince the customer that all the stuff will properly serve to meet it needs.

Reliability of tourism is assessed on the basis of ability to provide the expected service dependably and accurately.

The ability to respond to comments is then a cornerstone for good communication between the operator and the customer and at the same time an essential element of building long-term relationships with customers.

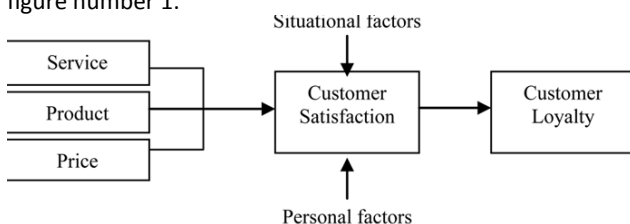
If we are talking about marketing of tourism services is necessary to realize some specific features that distinguish them from the services provided in other sectors. These aspects also affect the assessment of customer satisfaction with the provided services. Marketing specialist in services must convince the customer about two things: first, the appropriateness of the service itself and, second, the company's ability to deliver the promised.

Based on the above, we can conclude that the key point in the use of the service that will decide the future customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction is the moment of sale. At this point it is necessary that the seller realize that it is good to remember the golden rule in the moment of selling and providing services - "promise only what we are able to comply with." Precisely the discrepancy between promised things, expectations and reality, can lead to a sense of dissatisfaction on the part of the customer.

The whole issue of measuring satisfaction in tourism comes from the fundamental characteristics of the services provided in this sector. The basic ones are:

- Intangibility of the product.
- Inability to store service.
- High involvement of the customer in consumption.
- High consumption of human capital.
- Are the result of many business sectors that contribute to the client participation in tourism.
- Realization has the character of personal services.
- Providing, realization and consumption of tourism services is placely and timely connected. [2]

In general the customer satisfaction is based on service, product and price; influenced by situational factors, personal factors and could lead to customer loyalty see figure number 1.



**Figure 1** Customer satisfaction

Behind the specific characteristics of services and its marketing solutions there are other factors which are having direct impact on customer satisfaction like price, deferred consumption, references, the fact that tourism is based on personal services, destination image, perceived value. For those subjects doing their business in tourism the only way to ensure customer satisfaction with the service provided or package of services it's imperative that the subject know the maximum about customer behaviour. In recent years when the turbulent changes in the tourism market - said increased competition. The boom of modern information technologies is becoming increasingly difficult to understand and predict customer's behaviors.

This is mainly for the following reasons:

- The behavior of customer is influenced by many variables.
- These variables are often in opposition.
- Tourism entities usually don't know these variables.
- Every client is different and the decision-making varies over time.

### 3.2 Solving the problem

Among the factors that influence the level of satisfaction in tourism include price, the deferred consumption, reference and the fact that it is a personal service connected with high consumption of human capital and the involvement of the customer in consumption, destination image.

#### Price

The price is decisive factor very often. Price has the ability to limit demand. It's something that a buyer must sacrifice to obtain a benefit (package holiday). The customers' income plays a major role in this transaction, The increasing price not only limits the usefulness of the estate, but it changes the structure of expenditure. In services, the price has also the role of communication, provides information about the economic substance, costs, or if you want the amount of work, but also indicates the benefit that the consumer can expect. When making decisions besides the prices co-decide the brand image. Purchaser assumes that higher price means higher quality and higher profit.

It might be said that due to the combined effects of both factors the price has bilateral effect on demand. The higher price on the one hand is limiting the demand, discouraging the purchase, but it also indicates a higher benefit and therefore increases demand. Within the tourism in addition the price performs as the direct holder of profitability and acts as a magnet to customers can either attracts or deters them of purchasing the service and applies the direct correlation - higher price means for customer the higher quality of provided services. [4]

Buying a holiday in most cases is very expensive. Buying a holiday requires a change of attitude from customers for consumption of his disposable income. Purchase and implementation of a holiday, in most cases has significant impact on the budget of an individual or family. In the last few years is the domain of Czech travel agency customers buying trips to in the last moment price. It's estimated that the number of package holidays purchased at the last minute price achieves 30-40% of the total volume of sold package tours. The problem is that, despite the relatively lower cost client expects a high quality.

#### Deferred consumption

Between the time of purchase services and its used in many cases there is a long time lag (for example eight months - customer buys a package tour for the first moment in December, but realises it, for example, in August). This time lag is increasing the customer sense of expectation. Very often there may be a misrepresentation of available staffed, or information acquired in the moment purchase. If a situation occurs, that these expectations at the time pumping services are not met, it may lead to a sense of dissatisfaction of customers with the service provided. [2]

At this stage, the internet plays an important role, on the one hand facilitates marketing communication of touroperators / travel agency, on the other hand, in the customers' hands gives a powerful tool. This tool the customer can use positively or negatively. Customers are by exploiting modern communication technologies more informed than in the past.

#### References

References are indirect marketing communication tool [2], which can affect the overall perception of the quality of services and follow-up satisfaction dissatisfaction of customers. Reference often play a significant role in the selection of services, in the phase of expectations but also in the post-sale phase. Based on the basic characteristics of services and their intangibility. For reference, as well as in the phase prior to purchase of holiday package plays an important role internet. The fundamental problem is the credibility and relevance of these references. Due to the variability of services and the fact that it is a cross-sectional sector, where the final product is the result of cooperation of more subjects may differ the level of one customer satisfaction

#### Personal service connected with high consumption of human capital and the involvement of the customer in consumption.

People act within the tourism industry in the two positions as employees and customers. The employee are part of the services offered to the customers. The customers is understand as a starting point for the creation of customer mix. The most challenging task facing the HR professional touroperators travel agencies is that in positions of vendors and representatives of its entities abroad were qualified people who are able to cope with stressful and challenging situations that can occur during the purchase of services and its utilization. Urgent necessity are a perfect knowledge of the product, and preferably personal experience that the vendors can get through fun trips. (Study tour for employees of touroperators/travel agencies, which aims to familiarize them with product they offer). In case of Representatives knowledge of the local environment and conditions in specific destinations is required.

It seems that right at this factor has a significant influence cross-sectional characteristic of tourism and the necessary cooperation between actors. For travel agencies that seek the maximum extent of highly qualified personnel, can be a bottleneck staff cooperating entities. This is a factor that virtually travel agency's cannot control (eg willingness of air staff, reception staff, local guides and drivers). It should therefore be the main objective of these tour operators to work with reputable and proven partners. Here, the situation varies from individual travelers, who are sometimes preferring the low cost and not the quality. This exception proves the information about Ryanair the low cost carrier, which has a long-term problem with the quality of services provided by the staff, but in the long run is one of the most fully occupied LCO carriers. According to the poll of British consumer magazine Which? Ryanair is the worst of hundreds of the biggest brands operating in the UK market. Periodically there are reports of not very sensitive

approach to customers, including those who find themselves in need. [3]

#### Destination image

The destination image has been frequently proved to have direct effect on tourist behavior, i.e. tourist expectation and perceived value. The destination image is defined as an individual's mental representation of the knowledge, feelings, and overall perception of a particular destination. In fact, several dimensions related to the tourist behaviors, such as their expectations and perception of value, are conditioned by the image that they have from the destination. From the discussion it is obvious that any pre-travel expectation of the tourist can be formed and affected by the image of his/her destination. Furthermore, any tourists' assessment of the money paid and service that they receive is perceived based on the image that the tourists have from the destination.

#### Perceived value

Perceived value is defined as the customer's assessment of the services based on the perceptions of what is received and what is given". This perception directly influences the satisfaction of the customer. The basic rule in this theme is that the satisfaction is created when the tourists perceive that the quality of services given to them is greater than the money paid by them.

#### The importance of satisfied customer

The result of satisfied tourist it's the tourist loyalty. Maintaining the customer loyalty has become the most important challenge for the service enterprises in the recent competitive environment. According to the loyalty can be defined as the feeling of commitment or affection for a particular service or product.

It can be believed that the concept of loyalty for tourists can be summarized as two behaviors; the loyal tourist not only may revisit the destination, but also recommend it to the others. It is obvious that the tourist's loyalty is the consequence of satisfaction from the travel.

The importance of loyalty tourist is based in following golden rules:

- Get a new client is more expensive than to keep an existing one.
- The fact that we have regular customers, we will be better in attract new ones.
- Dissatisfied clients communicate their dissatisfaction to 12 people.
- Satisfied clients communicate their satisfaction to 5 people
- 83% of clients leave us without saying the reason
- 5% loyal clients involved in 25% percent of the total revenue.

#### 4 DISCUSSIONS

In practice, there are two approaches that can guarantee customers satisfaction respectively. Compliance with the quality and quantity of services purchased. The first option is called ITQ Code (Code - International Travel Quality). Thanks to this ITQ Code, the client knows exactly what financial compensation in the event of breach of contract, be entitled. ITQ Code includes about fifty criteria to specifically determine the amount of compensation claims as a percentage in relation to the price. The holiday

package price in this case means the price including airport and other taxes, such as fuel surcharge. The first travel agency that began to provide the system of ITQ Code in the Czech Republic was Travel agency Fischer in 2008. [5]. Its introduction has clearly become a turning point not only for Fischer, but for the tourism in the Czech Republic. The main benefit of this code is that it brings a whole new standard in handling complaints. The Fischer company was gradually joined by other big players in the market such as Blue-style travel, CK Alexandria. It is noteworthy that Eximtours, ČEDOK and other large travel agencies have not yet implemented the ITQ code.

After the introduction of ITQ Code, started to appear clients who might belong to the category of "the chronic complainers". These clients use the ITQ code as a new vehicle for their argument with travel agencies desiring their money back after returning from their holidays. If there is trial, the winner in most cases is the client even if the trial solves the absurd claim type - "a small space in the restaurant and the erosion of customer privacy during pumping catering services", the thing that the tour operator can hardly influence.

For travel agencies the feedback is crucial, for example Fischer company identifies client satisfaction through a questionnaire that clients, after returning from vacation, complete using a mobile phone which evaluates all key components of their holidays - transport, accommodation, rep services, transfers to / from the airport, others.

Information of these surveys are carefully recorded and evaluated and used to improve their service in the future.

## 5 CONCLUSION

Based on the methods described in chapter two of this article has been found that customer satisfaction is a key factor in the success and competitiveness of entities operating in the field of tourism. The best strategy to the travel agency which want to succeed in the highly competitive tourism market is to promise less and deliver more.

Accepted ITQ Code a few years ago was one of the key factors that influenced the efforts of the travel agencies in their will to provide high quality services. Another breakthrough could be expected application of the new Civil Code, which dedicate to tourism, customer satisfaction and protection of their rights considerable attention. The issue is very wide and within the next survey would be appropriate to focus on a deeper analysis of how the customer perceives the relationship between the brand and quality. For more accurate results expand the number of respondents, possibly extending the portfolio of subjects, eg accommodation or tourist destination. With this expansion of research would be possible to define the model of the impact of individual factors on overall customer satisfaction, which will be portable and usable for any sub-sector of tourism.

## REFERENCES

- [1] ČTK. Počet cestovních kanceláří dál stoupá, je jich víc než 1500. *Finanční noviny: ekonomický server ČTK*. [online]. 03.03.2013 [cit. 2013-12-02]. Dostupné z: <http://www.financninoviny.cz/zpravy/pocet-cestovnich-kancelari-dal-stoupa-je-jich-vic-nez-1500/908872>
- [2] JAKUBÍKOVÁ, D. *Marketing v cestovním ruchu --: Jak uspět v domácí i světové konkurenci*. 2012. vyd. Praha: Grada Publishing, a.s., 2012. 2., aktualizované a rozšířené vydání. ISBN 978-80-247-4209-0.
- [3] SŮRA, J. iDnes.cz/ekonomika. *iDnes*. [online]. 20.9.2013 [cit. 2013-12-02]. Dostupné z: [http://ekonomika.idnes.cz/ryana-air-bude-k-cestujicim-vlidlejsi-db4-/eko-doprava.aspx?c=A130920\\_164202\\_eko-doprava\\_suj](http://ekonomika.idnes.cz/ryana-air-bude-k-cestujicim-vlidlejsi-db4-/eko-doprava.aspx?c=A130920_164202_eko-doprava_suj).
- [4] ŠTVERKOVÁ, H.; ČERVINKA, M.; HUMLOVÁ, V. *Strategie modrého oceánu v cestovním ruchu a letecké dopravě. Ekonomicko-manážérské spektrum*, 2011, vol. V, no. 2, p. 12–17. ISSN 1337-0839.
- [5] VORLÍČKOVÁ, H. *Zkažená dovolená? Peníze zpět dostanete už i v Česku. Aktuálně.cz* [online]. 2008, s. 1 [cit. 2013-12-02]. Dostupné z: <http://aktualne.centrum.cz/finance/volny-cas-a-nakupy/clanek.phtml?id=621944>.

**Lenka ŠVAJDOVÁ, Ing. Bc. Ph.D.**

**Michal ČERVINKA, Ing. Ph.D.**

**Tomáš TYKVA, Ing. Mgr.**

Vysoká škola podnikání, a.s.

Michálkovická 1810/181, 710 00 Ostrava-Slezská Ostrava, Czech Republic

e-mail: lenka.svajdova@vsp.cz, michal.cervinka@vsp.cz, tomas.tykva@vsp.cz