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Review

QUALITY IN THE MANAGEMENT OF CATERING ESTABLISHMENTS IN ESTERN CROATIA

Quality has chrystalized as the crucial factor of the market race. It has become the principal instrument for securing a firm's future success through satisfied consumers. Catering firms independently create the marketing mix to raise themselves above the competition. To secure the quality of services provided by a catering establishment it is necessary to secure the quality of individual work, the quality of the process and the quality of entire firm. The catering establishment must aspire towards such an appearance on the market that will make the guest satisfied with the marketing.

Key words: marketing - mix, consumer - guest, catering firm.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper analyzes different aspects of quality in the economy, especially the quality of catering services, i.e., the quality of establishment regarding the catering business units. The purpose of the paper is to demonstrate the importance of quality in business transactions and development of catering companies. We would especially like to emphasize a marketing-bound approach to the quality and the place of the quality in contemporary managemental concepts.

2. THE NOTION AND ASPECTS OF QUALITY

In economic sense, pursuant to ISO 8402 [3, 34 - 35], *the quality is a conglomeration of designations and characteristics of a product, process, or service related to the possibility to satisfy the established or indirectly expressed need.*

Taylorism [2, 754] has divided a production process in the smallest working parts, so the assurance of quality is also separated from the production process. A thorough control is considered to be sufficient for the assurance of quality. Many production companies are still on this stage. In service-bound companies, the quality of a service is presupposed and controlled prior to the execution of the service.

The meaning of a service has changed in the recent centennial [2, 753 - 754]. The market has been transformed from the "producers' market" into the "buyers' market," whereas the purchasing power has significantly increased. The quality has crystallized as a decisive factor of market competition and as a chief instrument to assure the success of a product and the services in the future via satisfied buyers.

In addition to Taylorism, other qualities (not only the quality of a product) also have a decisive importance for a company [2, 755]:

- a) the quality of work, i.e., the quality as an attribute of personal work of an associate;
- b) the quality of a process, i.e. persistent directive of all the processes (productional, managerial, communicational, etc.) within a company toward efficacy and quality;
- c) the quality of the whole company regarding the quality of all the functions, activities, areas and collaborators in the sense of an overall quality management (Total Quality Management - TQM) and having in its focus the constant improvement in all fields.

We should emphasize that the processual management is always equal to the quality management since modeling of a process constantly determines the quality of all the products and services of a company [4, 241], i.e., TQM is the assurance of quality in the whole company based upon the orientation toward processes [5, 14].

This philosophy is a fundament of the currently domineering international norms related to the quality such as ISO 9000, the conceptual part of which it is, according to which the main determinant of quality is the quality of organization of a business system and only then the quality of its products and services [3, 34 - 35].

The objects of market competition are, as a rule, the same goods or services. However, the substitutes have the same characteristic [6, 22].

The information on the requested and the quality provided is important for the transparency (overview) of the market. Namely, the positive results of market competition in development and function of economy [7, 41, 44, 85, 721] (especially for consumers) are enabled only by the transparency of the market.

The quality could be evaluated from the technical aspect as well, i.e., from the point of view of adaptation of a product to the preestablished norms and standards. Of course, the information on harmonization of a product, process, or a company with determined standards enable the transparency of a market.

On the other hand, the state has set the quality norms due to an expressed importance of quality for the function of economic system as well as for the protection of consumers' interests, environment, and society as a whole. Naturally, the requests for quality in developed countries are significantly different from those in undeveloped ones. Nevertheless, without such a regulation many firms would spoil their products, misinform through their commercials, deceive through their wrappings, and attract by their prices [10, 104].

Developed countries protect themselves from the insufficient or poor quality through these measures [3, 34 - 35]:

- a) norms (standards) and regulations;
- b) market closure;
- c) repression (e.g., legal prohibitions);
- d) withdrawal of a product from the market or denial of the right to provide services.

Through its laws and regulations, the state requires for decades certain quality of products and services and conveys the quality know-how in that process [11, 77]. Thus, the Catering Facilities Categorization and Standardization Rule (Official Gazette *Narodne novine*, № 57/1995) tries to promote and forge the improvement and amelioration of quality with regard to our catering and tourist services [12, 31].

On the other hand, the economy itself develops a series of activities with regard to the quality (e.g., expiration and quality marks, etc.) as to ensure and elevate the quality level.

In services, the quality may be warranted on the basis of an accepted and determined business concept, e.g., through franchising. The following are the elements of franchising: commercial constants, unified idea of external design (e.g., façades), advantages of interior design, production recipes, advantages in assortment and prices, unified picture of personnel and its behavior, presentation procedures, common commercials, unified approaches aiming at the improvement of sale, and joint public relations activities.

In a franchising system as a business concept created by a well-known company, the consumers are guaranteed a certain level of quality regarding the service, whereas the franchiser is guaranteed his business success (e.g., McDonald's restaurants chain).

As to achieve a unified approach to the quality, some countries try to establish the standards for a quality system. It is especially visible when observing the products of the military industry and nuclear technology [15, 36]. Recently, many countries have betrayed their national quality system standards.

The year 1987 is considered to be a significant turnover regarding the quality at the international level, when the European Community issued a series of norms called ISO 9000 [15, 37 and 40]. These standards create a barrier for the goods of poor quality and simultaneously open the space for a free circulation of high-quality goods [16, 155].

The norms of the ISO 9000 series encompass ISO 9001, 9002, 9003 and 9004. This series has been ordered now with the purpose of a facilitated understanding of their contents; the focus has been put on the prevention regarding the assurance of quality [17, 9]. However, the currently valid norms will be operational up to 2000 [17, 9].

3. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF QUALITY, CATERING, AND MARKETING

A. Oess [18, 1421] adduces 12 characteristics of quality: usability, functional ability (effectiveness), equipment status, reliability, request fulfillment, firmness, serviceability, environmental acceptability, security, validity, design, and subjective quality. Some of them are interdependent and can be jointly produced (e.g., reliability and request fulfillment). A firm should produce such a mixed quality as to elevate itself from the competitors on the market and successfully and durably sustain its newly discovered possibilities.

But it is necessary to emphasize that the quality of a product or a service could be defined based upon its congruence with the prescribed technical and/or subjective standards, e.g., the aspects of the requestor [19, 301]. It is important to assure a further "value" with the expenses as low as possible, but the expenses cannot be lowered under certain optimal of quality [19, 1421].

For a contemporary understanding of the quality [2, 754], only the perfect fulfillment of requests once set is not essential, but we should observe it more widely, so that the usual quality on the market is solely the starting point for a strategic planning of a company. The quality today is the fulfillment of all the preset or agreed requests regarding a contemporary or future product or a service.

So far, the quality has been treated from the aspect of a production firm. Naturally, the concept of quality management is applicable on the service companies as well: trades [19, 1420], catering firms [20], etc. In catering firms it concerns not only the quality of a product (food and beverages) but also the quality of services. The service is integrated in the purchasing and sale process and the process of serving as the key processes of a catering firm (wherein a consumer-or a guest-is directly included) but also in the other processes offering additional facilities.

As in addition to a price competition there is a competition regarding the quality, the quality is a component of a market complex. Namely, the chief postulate of marketing is to achieve the satisfaction of a consumer, what is enabled solely by the quality of a product or a service.

The economic quality relates to an achieved appropriateness of the offer, being the result of market relations [21, 79]. It should create the consumer's satisfaction regarding the marketing used. The economic quality is actually a relativized expression of quality ensuing from the quality-price relation [22, 79].

When contemplating the quality of products and services in gastronomy, one should respect the expectations of the guest [20, 40 - 43]. The lesser a difference between the expected and the realized (purchased) product (food and beverages) and services, the better business transactions a catering business unit would have [23, 40]. The key factors of realization of a product or a service in gastronomy are quality, choice, quantity, and price level of food and beverages. Of course, the realization of the product and the service is also dependent on the personnel and atmosphere created in a catering facility.

The guests enter a catering business unit having certain requests. In that sense, *the ability of a caterer to meet these requests should be understand as the quality in the catering sector.*

The marketing elements in catering industry, as a “tool in the marketing technique,” must be accurately weighted, mutually harmonize, and coordinate in their combination in a marketing complex [20, 21].

The marketing interlace in catering industry is created as a result of marketing efforts of a caterer to meet the requests of a consumer-guest. It is depicted on Fig. 1 [20, 22].

Fig. 1 Marketing mix in Catering Industry



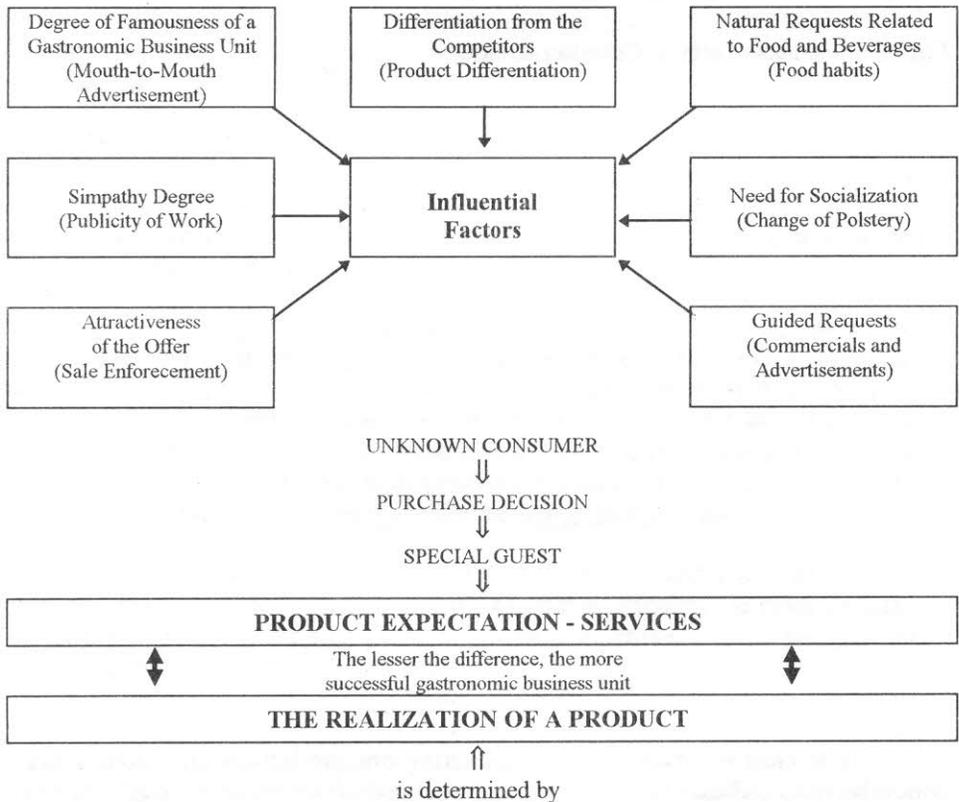
The creative instruments of marketing are product-oriented policy, price policy, services and care for the guest, and sale mode. The possibilities of a catering business unit to obtain a better, cheaper, quicker or unified offer necessitate a meticulous creative planning.

A creative marketing-bound instrument of services and care for the guest is used on one side as a supplement to the product-oriented policy and on the other side as a direct communication with the market. When the price levels in the catering sector are almost the same, decisive are the “care for the guest” and the “buyer’s service” requested by the guest. Herein belong the provision of advice regarding gastronomic presentations, provision of tourist-oriented information, answers to guests’ questions, and professional guest claims processing. The substitutional

possibilities and complementarity of different marketing instruments enables more optimal combinations of a creative and communicative marketing instrument pool in practice.

The importance of quality of products and services in a catering business unit is visible on Fig. 2 [20, 43], depicting the problems related to the products and services in gastronomy.

Fig. 2 Product-Oriented Problems and Services in a Gastronomic Business Unit



- FOOD AND BEVERAGES, e.g., quality, choice, quantity, prices
- PERSONNEL, e.g., promptness of a service, guest care, behavior, sincerity, advisability, attention, expert qualification
- ATMOSPHERE, e.g., inner decoration, furniture, illumination, cleanness, odor, music, number of visitors, offer presentation, mood, sale-promotive activities

Of course, the figure does not relate only to the products and services but also to other components of a marketing complex.

4. PROCESSUAL MANAGEMENT IN THE CATERING SECTOR

Two main phases take place in the working process of the catering business units [24, 128]:

- a) preparational-productive phase;
- b) service-, purchase-, and sale-oriented phase.

These phases are frequently connected and interlaced, so it is difficult to mutually differentiate between them easily.

In addition to these processes, the other processes needed for its overall function are also developed in a catering firm.

In a modern management, the concept of processual management (primary transformation of existent processes and subsequent processual management) has been developed. This process designates a change of the recent functional model of a firm. The function of a firm has been theorized on the basis of an orientation toward the buyers and the processes commencing with the gradation of power and functional-hierarchic organisms. The relations between the "buyers" and the "suppliers" are also developed in that sense. The said relations do not exist exclusively between the businesses and extern buyers but exist within a business firm itself between the main processes and the other processes that assist them.

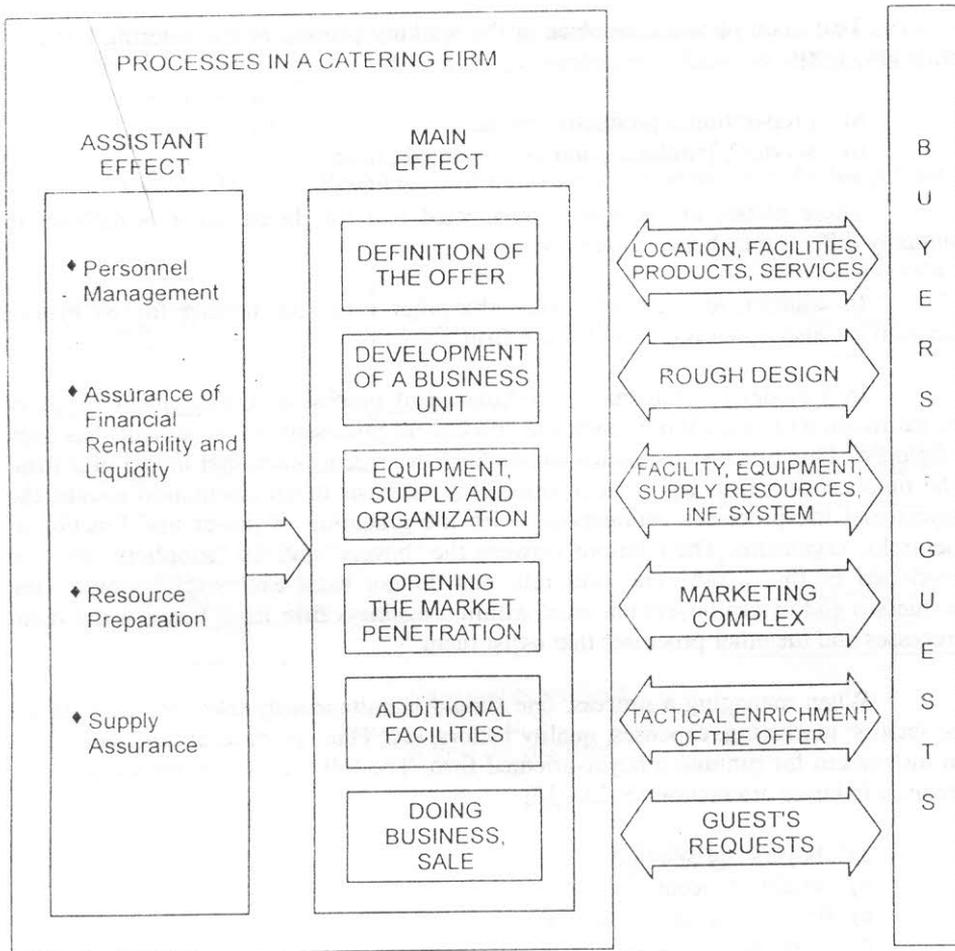
When managing a process, one should simultaneously take into account all the factors: marketing, expenses, quality factors, etc. Thus, processual management is an instrument for running a buyer-oriented firm. The following four special concepts are used in buyer orientation [5, 13 - 18]:

- a) buyers' satisfaction;
- b) quality concept;
- c) time management concept;
- d) processual expenses concept.

All the four concepts are mutually interconnected. A model of a market-oriented catering firm is depicted on Fig. 3 [5, 17].

Six main effects based upon six relations between a catering firm and the market also determine six main processes of the firm. Thus, the main effect enables six main processes, while the assistant effect enables four assistant processes. Main processes are both market-oriented and directed toward the so-called intern buyers, and the assistant processes are directed exclusively toward the intern buyers.

Fig. 3 Processual Model of a Catering Firm



5. CONCLUSION

There are different aspects of quality in the economy, especially in the catering sector. There is also connection between quality and marketing in general and between the quality of a product and the quality of catering services, i.e., between the foundation of catering business units, respectively.

The quality of a catering service, i.e., of a catering business unit, is conditioned by the quality of investment of a marketing junction, i.e., by the quality of a process related to a catering firm.

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Sažetak

KVALITETA U MANAGEMENTU UGOSTITELJSKIH PODUZEĆA ISTOČNE HRVATSKE

Kvaliteta se iskristalizirala u odlučnoga čimbenika tržišne utakmice. Postala je glavni instrument za osiguranje uspjeha poduzeća u budućnosti, putem zadovoljnih kupaca. Ugostiteljska poduzeća samostalno kreiraju miks kvalitete, da bi se izudigla iznad konkurencije. Da bi se osigurala kvaliteta usluga ugostiteljske poslovne jedinice, potrebno je osigurati kvalitetu osobnoga rada, kvalitetu procesa i kvalitetu cijeloga poduzeća. Ugostiteljska poslovna jedinica treba težiti takvom svom tržišnom nastupu s kojim će kod gosta stvoriti zadovoljstvo marketingom.

Ključne riječi: marketinški splet, potrošač - gost, ugostiteljsko poduzeće.