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## QUALITY AND SAFETY - TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN IN HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM

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**Abstract:** This paper will discuss some methodical aspects in doing research in the field of hospitality and tourism. Quality aspects have been dominant subjects for a long time in the industry, safety and security aspects were more or less not on the agenda in the early 90-ies. According to how society has developed, the experience of risk and danger has changed in the society over time and nowadays both safety and security as well as quality aspects has become important elements in the tourism products.

The question is, if those two different approaches can be used as mutual methods.

*Key words:* tourism, quality, safety, assessment, management, hospitality.

### INTRODUCTION

In the field of hospitality, tourism and travel, quality aspects have been the predominant subjects for a long time in the industry. Safety and security were more or less not on the agenda in the early 90-ies in the business.

First after facing disasters, like the terrorist attack at Luxor Egypt 1992 and 1993, the shipwreck of m/s Estonia in the Baltic Sea on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September 1994 when 852 passengers died, the terrorist attack on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September 2001 in New York, the Iraq war and the SARS epidemic in 2003 or the Tsunami disaster on the 26<sup>th</sup> of December 2004 in Thailand, the industry became fully aware of safety and security matters. Today more or less all companies in the business of tourism have a security plan as well as a quality plan.

Risk management/assessment as well as quality management/assessment focuses on improving the possibilities for a business to produce a product in a safe way and with a high quality, and finally to deliver it to their customers.

The question is, if those two plans can be merged together into one single plan, because quality and safety might be considered as two sides of the same coin. This paper will discuss that question.

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## 1. RISK MANAGEMENT

According to how society has developed, the experience of risk and danger has changed in the society over time. In the agrarian society the human being experienced the surrounding world as full of risks and dangers in many ways. Everything from bad harvest, poverty and a wicked sudden death, to the fear of the unknown and factors beyond his control, like natural disasters and plagues. Those risk experiences were mainly of individual and local character. It was the individual and his closest surroundings that were affected of what they considered as a risk or threat. Furthermore, the experience of risk or danger was closely related to the local place where the person was living and working.

Today, in the modern or post-modern society the individual sense of risk or threat still exists. But today this sense of risk is not only depending on the individual relationship to risk and danger. Nowadays risks often arise from a collective or global action, which the individual not can affect or influence in the same way as in the agrarian society. This globalisation of risks is discussed more extensively by U Beck<sup>2</sup> in his book *Risk Society*. In the agrarian society one could via own activities minimise or remove possible risks or dangers. In today's society it is not enough to take your own precautions to avoid or minimise an experienced risk. Driving a car can be a good example of this statement, it does not matter how carefully you are driving your car if not all the other road-users also are careful drivers. Here the risk experience is not linked only to the individual in the same way as in the agrarian society.

It is the same way with the claim that the experience of risk was local in the agrarian society. It was the local conditions, which caused the experience of risk, and often it could be affected in many ways. In the modern society the source of the experience of risk is rarely local; it is very often the opposite. What is experienced as a risk or danger can emanate or origin from a quite another part of the globe. Dust from an earthquake in India or an emission of hazardous waste in USA can fall down in Scandinavia with negative effects. One can say that the experience of risks have been collectivised and globalised in our modern society.

Thus, society has become more complex with new types of risks, dangers and threats at the same time as the man, more obvious than before, wishes to control the situation. From this wish and from the experience of risks people will make their own risk assessment and make their own decisions how to act. The consciousness of risk is discussed more extensively in the book *The Consequences of Modernity*<sup>3</sup>.

The research of risks has mainly been focused on medical, technical and natural science aspects with the human being as an actor, exposed to different kinds of risks as well as contributing to creating risks in the society and for him-self.

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<sup>2</sup> Beck, U. (1992). *Risk society: towards a new modernity*. Sage, London.

<sup>3</sup> Giddens, A. (1990). *The consequences of modernity*. Stanford University Press.

Examples can be drawn from nuclear plants, environment pollution and gene manipulation. In that kind of research one can see a focus on accidents. "Technology is a source of help as well as harm".<sup>4</sup> With a brief survey of literature and research reports within the field of risk research it is quite obvious that the reports focus on threats, dangers and risks as mentioned above. The main part of the studied reports and books describes different types of consequences of what will happen if man does not change his habits and behaviours. In other words, a very much quantified and technological description of future consequences, for man, and suggestions in which way he has to act to avoid these future negative consequences. More seldom appear descriptions of how man experience and interpret different signals about danger, threat and risk in his own environment and in his specific situation. When these descriptions occur it is often in a very brief way and more as a complement to the main track in medical, technical and natural sciences.

According to many opinions it is too much of medical, technical and natural sciences aspects in risk research and too little of aspects from human and social sciences. Even if there have been reported some aspects about "social related vulnerability," which relates to equitable patterns of action.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, one can discuss the question of social changes and how man exposes himself to greater risks than before. The risk experience is discussed both in books about Risk analysis<sup>6</sup> and in books about quality management.<sup>7</sup> "The perception of risk is a social process. All society depends on combinations of confidence and fear".<sup>8</sup> It is not always the rational man who creates the systems, with it's built in human weaknesses and omissions, who will be the one to help the human being to control and minimise experienced risks and threats. Anyhow, in the last years, it can be noted an increase of reports and books with focus on how human beings experience and interpret threats, dangers and risks.

One can say that there are essentially three different interest groups in a risk discussion, having expectations, needs and demands that should particularly be considered. These groups are the tourists, the owners/managers and the society/customer.

A way to illustrate how risk assessment can be seen by the tourist will be summarised in the figure below.

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<sup>4</sup> Douglas, M. & Wildavsky, A. (1982). *Risk and culture: an essay on selection of technological and environmental dangers*. University of California Press cop., Berkley, p. 4.

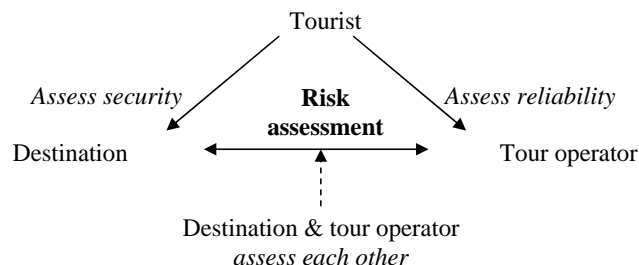
<sup>5</sup> Putnam, R. & Nanetti, R. (1993). *Making democracy work. Civic traditions in modern Italy*. Princeton University Press. N.J.

<sup>6</sup> Hamilton 1996, Almér et al 1996, Beck 1992, Giddens 1990, Douglas & Wildavsky 1982.

<sup>7</sup> Crosby 1996, Grönroos 1983, 2000, Edvardsson & Thomasson 1989 and Peters & Austin 1985.

<sup>8</sup> Douglas, M. & Wildavsky, A. (1982). *Risk and culture: an essay on selection of technological and environmental dangers*. University of California Press cop., Berkley, p. 6.

**Figure 1:** Risk assessment by the tourist



The tourist assesses the security at the destination and the reliability of the tour operator before he makes his decision to go to a certain destination with a specific tour operator. In the same way the tour operator assesses the security and safety at the destination before opening up this new destination. And in the same way the destination probably has to assess the tour operator as a reliable partner to start cooperates with.

One can say that safety and security concerns will prevail. Whether terrorism, natural disasters or pandemics, the industry will face shocks, which will impact performance. On the positive side, tomorrow's traveller will take greater ownership of his or her safety and security through increased use of internet for travel risk assessment.<sup>9</sup>

## 2. QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Quality management is a social process in the same way as Douglas and Wildavsky<sup>10</sup> describes risk analysis. In risk analysis one tries to predict possible accidents or incidents in the daily work, in quality management one tries to predict what kind of quality a customer wants to have when he/she buys a product or service.

The roots of quality management can be traced to early 1920's production quality control ideas. In the early 1950's, quality management practices developed rapidly in Japanese plants, and become a major theme in Japanese management philosophy, such that, by 1960, quality control and management had become a national preoccupation.<sup>11</sup>

"In 1969 the first international conference on quality controls, .... was held in Tokyo.' In a paper given by Feigenbaum, the term 'total quality' was used for the first time, referring to wider issues such as planning, organisation and management

<sup>9</sup> Kyriakidis, A. & Rach, L. (2006). *Hospitality 2010. A five year wake up call. An in-depth report into driving shareholder value in the hospitality sector.* Deloitte and New York University. New York.

<sup>10</sup> Douglas, M. & Wildavsky, A. (1982). *Risk and culture: an essay on selection of technological and environmental dangers.* University of California Press cop., Berkley.

<sup>11</sup> www.businessballs.com

responsibility. Ishikawa gave a paper explaining how 'total quality control' in Japan was something different, meaning "company wide quality control", and describing how all employees, from top management to the workers, must study and participate in quality control in the production process. Management of company wide quality control was common in Japanese companies by the late 1970's.<sup>12</sup>

The quality revolution in the West was slow to follow, and did not begin until the early 1980's, when companies introduced their own quality programmes and initiatives to counter the Japanese success. Total quality management (TQM) became the most common method for these efforts.<sup>13</sup>

A Swedish researcher in quality defines the concept of quality as:

- Quality is a nuance concept. Someone has said that quality is like beauty - it lies in the eye of the beholder. It emphasizes the key role of the customer. Quality in service lies, to a large degree, in the eye of the customer.
- Quality is defined in ISO 9004-2:1919 (E) as - all the combined characteristics of a product, which gives it the ability to satisfy the expressed and understood, need. A common definition of service quality is that a service shall meet the customer's expectations and satisfy their needs.<sup>14</sup>

In quality discussions, there are essentially three different interest groups with expectations, needs and demands, who should be particularly considered. They are the customers, the personnel and the owners/managers. Quality is therefore defined as satisfying the needs and expectations of these three groups.

A Finish researcher provides another definition of quality: "The quality experience can be seen as the consumer's subjective comparison between what he expected and the service he felt he experienced".<sup>15</sup>

Why is the concept of quality so hard to define? Because the question of what quality is depends upon who is defining it. Grönroos separates *technical quality* and *functional quality*. He states that the customer gets something through the service that Grönroos calls the technical quality, for example the check-in process and other technical processes. There is also the functional quality, which refers more to the interplay between the actors on the providing side and the actors on the receiving side. These two dimensions build, according to Grönroos, the total quality. Grönroos describes the experienced quality because it is often hard to discuss and measure actual quality. The experience of the service varies depending upon the people who are part of the providing as well as the receiving sides.

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<sup>12</sup> [www.dti.gov.uk/quality/evolution](http://www.dti.gov.uk/quality/evolution)

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*

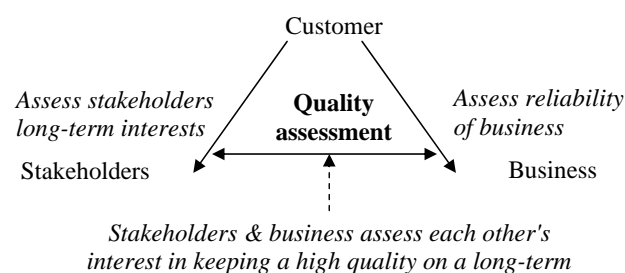
<sup>14</sup> Edvardsson, B., et al. Eds. (1993). *Att utveckla och styra tjänsteverksamhet: tjänstprocessen i fokus*. Centrum för tjänsteforskning. Högskolan i Karlstad, p. 37.

<sup>15</sup> Grönroos, C. (1983). *Marknadsföring i tjänsteföretag: en introduktion*. Liber förlag, Malmö, p. 17.

In a report about service quality makes a simple statement: "The central aspect is a service quality which can be seen to be the result of the difference between the expectations and the experience".<sup>16</sup> Quality is maybe no more difficult than so, the question is how to measure the difference which occurs between the customer's expectations and the experienced quality, a difference which can have both positive and negative implications.

The above can be described and summarised in the figure below.

**Figure 2:** Quality assessment by the customer



Here can be seen that figure 2 shows, more or less, the same structure as in the earlier figure 1. The customer assesses the business reliability to keep a high quality in their products as well as he assesses the stakeholder's long-term interest that the business keeps a high quality in their delivering of the products. In the same way stakeholders and business have to assess each other's interest in delivering high quality products over a long-time.

### 3. METHODS – QUALITY AND RISK ASSESSMENTS

This part is not going to discuss methods of quality and risk assessments in detail; it will only make some brief comparisons and try to find some similarities between the two fields of quality and risk.

One model, or method, suitable for both risk and quality assessments, can be the *Ishikawa diagrams*. This method is used both in developing total quality with an emphasis on the human side, and in risk assessments when looking at individual unwanted accidents. This method is also called *Fishbone* diagram where you look at causes and its effects, and analyses the real causes behind a problem or defect and how to improve quality.

Another method is *Problem Detection Study* (PDS). In this method one goes through every step in the production of the business commodities to find the weak points and then make improvements, either from a quality or risk perspective.

<sup>16</sup> Liljander, V. & Strandvik, T. (1992). *Estimating zones of tolerance in perceived quality and perceived service value*. Svenska Handelshögskolan, Helsingfors, p. 1.

A very common method both in quality and risk assessments is to build *Checklists*, which can be the basis of analyses and evaluation of a system or activity, which then can be compared and evaluated against an established standard. This method is quite common both in quality and risk assessment, but it can be used only if there is some kind of general standards for the business trade.

Talking about methods of measuring quality, something has to be mentioned about *Benchmarking*. This is a method to compare, on key factors, how your own organisation performs in comparison with the standard in the business trade or with the best competitors in the same trade.

In a *Core process* you describe your business process, like what needs to be done to deliver success in your performance. Working with core processes one can either do it from a quality perspective or from a risk perspective.

When working with the quality perspective one starts from a vision and mission statement that describes what the organisation wishes to be in the future, wants to achieve. Then the *Critical Success Factors, CSF's*, for reaching this vision, had to be identified. Thereafter one has to identify the *Key Performance Indicators, KPI*, which are used to indicate whether the CSF's are being achieved or not.

This core process can be used also when working with risk assessment but instead of using CSF's one now uses the *Critical Incident Factors, CIF's*. Here one has to identify what happened when things went wrong and one faced an incident or failure.

Another technique to use is *Brainstorming*, a group creativity technique designed to generate a large number of ideas for the solution to a problem. During the work the group has to focus on quantity, no criticism, unusual ideas are welcome as well as combining and improving ideas. When the group creativity slows down it is time to summarize and evaluate the ideas and find a strategy to implement the idea.

A technique similar to Brainstorming is the *Delphi technique*. A research team creates a scenario of a wished future, which a panel of individual experts has to consider and make a judgement whether this scenario is probable. The research team collects all different responses and re-write a new scenario based on the responses from the experts and then the experts have to respond for a second time on the new scenario. This will go on till the experts reach some kind of congruence about the scenario, which will be the most likely in the future.

Finally *Self-assessment* or *Gap analysis* has to be mentioned. Self-assessment is a method assessing your own organisation or performance against a trade standard or a set of requirements made up by internal audit. Gap analysis identifies the differences in experienced quality/risk between managers, employees or customers, and identifies the sources of the problems to finally reduce the gap. Self-assessment and Gap analysis are quite similar and can be used on the same kind of problems.

Talking about the management level in general and specifically in the Gap analysis, one has to mention *Management by walking around (MBWA)* established by T Peters.<sup>17</sup> He says that leadership is central to the quality improvement process, discarding the word “Management” for “Leadership”. The new role is of a facilitator, and the basis is MBWA, enabling the leader to keep in touch with customers, innovation and people, the three main areas in the pursuit of excellence. This is valid for the area of risk assessment as well.

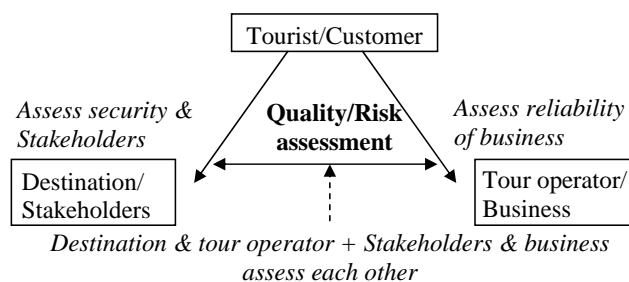
### CONCLUSION

One striking difference between risk assessment and quality assessment is that we have seen much more of discussions on a macro level when we are studying risk assessments and not so much when we are looking at quality assessments.

Risk, safety and security concern all inhabitants in a society, but quality concerns only those who are directly involved in a transaction or a production process, mainly the business managers, the employees and the customers, sometimes also the stakeholders. Because of that, we have seen two different discussions, and in neither area has anyone recognised the similar discussions in the other area. As a consequence of that we also have developed two different research fields and quite similar research methods for studying more or less the same kind of problems. It is just the starting point that differs.

On a micro level both risk, safety and security research and quality research have a focus on internal aspects of a business, but in quality research also external considerations to customers, stakeholders etc. have to be taken.

**Figure 3:** Merging two models into one combination of assessments.



Risk assessment as well as quality assessment focuses on improving the possibilities for a business to produce a product in a safe way and with a high quality, and finally to deliver it to their customers.

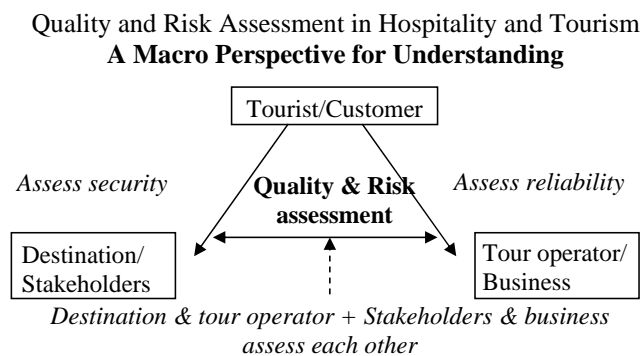
<sup>17</sup> Peters, T. & Austin, N. (1985). *A passion for excellence: the leadership difference*. Collins, London.



The question is, if these two plans can be merged together into one plan only, because one can consider quality and safety/security as two sides of the same coin. A further elaboration of the methods discussed above will probably verify that assumption, so the answer can to some extent be a Yes, but more research has to be done, applied on the business, before we can say that a plan for quality and risk management can be the same.

A graphical summarization of the paper will be shown below on a macro-level!

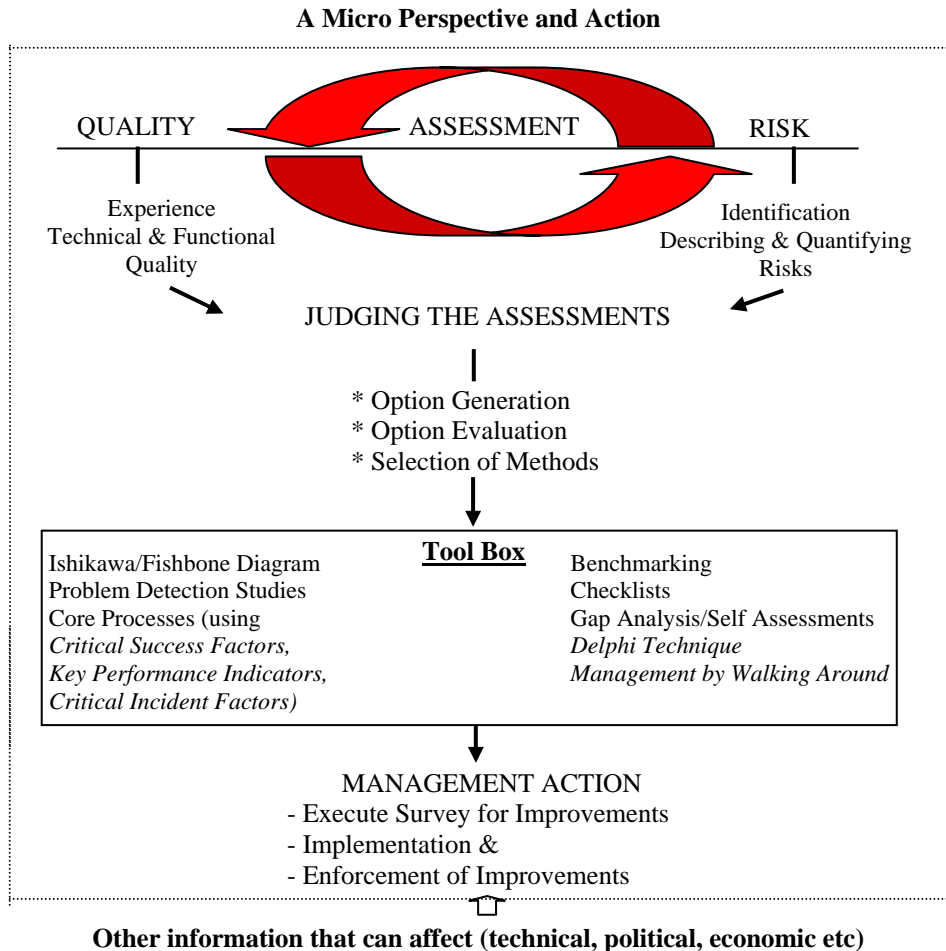
**Figure 4:** A graphical summarization of the paper



A flow chart showing the interplay between quality and risks assessment can probably look like the chart below.

A very important thing, from the above discussion, will be to brake down the model to a micro level, so the model will be a useful tool in daily work for scholars as well as for practitioners.

**Table 1:** Flow-chart showing interplay between quality and risks



At the moment we have to be satisfied with the knowledge that when we are working to create a quality plan or a safety plan we can take advantage from what has been done in the other field.

But in the future the above ideas have to be elaborated much more to create some useful tools for the hospitality, tourism and travel industries.

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