

FACTORS INFLUENCING CUSTOMERS' SATISFACTION AND THEIR ASSESSMENT

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Abstract. *Tourism in many countries and in particular cities is one of the most attractive business forms that enhances the expansion of supply and increases competition. Consequently, the quality of services is the key to a customer's choice. However, a complex character of SPA hotel services makes it necessary to explore not only the service quality, but also its mutual connection with other business processes. The research study is carried out within the framework of the RTA research grant "Assessment of hotel service development possibilities in Rezekne city". The aim of this research is to explore and assess the factors affecting satisfaction of the SPA hotels' customers, and correlations between service quality indicators. To evaluate factors influencing customers' satisfaction, an expert – client ("mystery guest") questionnaire was developed. Its practical approbation was carried out conducting a survey in three SPA hotels: Pühajärve Spa & Holiday Resort 3* (Otepää, Valgamaa, Estonia), Hotel Jūrmala Spa 4* (Jurmala, Latvia), Spa Vilnius Anykščiai 4* (Anykščiai, Lithuania). In the result, the conclusion was made that the questionnaire makes it possible to successfully assess the SPA hotel's business processes and its connection with the quality of services. The attributes identified in the 1st response area are the most important to the customers, though their quality is not proper. The management should pay the most attention to these factors and should accept management decisions to improve them. At the same time, these factors, according to Kano's model, are either "must-be" (directly affect a customer and shape the essence of the service), or "quantitative" (customer's satisfaction increases by increasing the quality of the indicator) in the opinion of the SPA hotel visitors.*

Keywords: customer satisfaction, SPA hotel, Hotel Jūrmala Spa 4*, Pühajärve Spa & Holiday Resort 3*, Spa Vilnius Anykščiai 4*.

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Introduction

The International SPA Association has defined the SPA as a place to indulge into well-being through a variety of professional services that encourage the renewal of mind, body, and spirit (ISPA's Definition of Spa..., 2016). SPA services is one of tourism products where demand and supply increase, accordingly determining a need to ensure a high quality service, innovation and products, which relate with the current market trends and requirements, that is – demographic changes and changes in consumer

behaviour, safety, demand for authentic offers, environmental protection, etc. A study carried out by the National Education Development Agency (Skaistumkopšanas nozares apraksts, 2015) confirms that the demand for SPA services increases, respectively, the competition among service providers grows.

Hotel chains, operating successfully in the global housing market, have developed their own evaluation criteria. Every visitor during his/her stay in the hotel (or after) can assess the company's services filling in a questionnaire. Consequently, valuable information is obtained providing an opportunity to improve the quality of services and, in the result, to increase competitiveness.

The aim of this research is to explore and assess the factors affecting satisfaction of the SPA hotels' customers, and correlations between service quality indicators.

The following tasks were set to achieve the aim:

- to study theoretical aspects of the factors that affect customers' satisfaction;
- to develop a questionnaire for evaluation of the customers' satisfaction;
- to test the questionnaire, and to analyse the survey data obtained.

The methods applied in the research: logical and constructive, synthesis and analysis, an empirical survey.

Object of the research: assessment of the SPA hotel business processes and service quality. Subject of the research: customers' satisfaction.

Hypothesis: Development of a new model for assessment of the hotel services quality with focus on improvement of the hotel business processes and service quality will contribute to a higher "perceived quality" assessment of the newly established Rezekne SPA hotel by its customers.

Theoretical aspects of factors influencing customers' satisfaction

"Perceived quality" assessment of the SPA hotel's services depends on an accurate choice of the factors (elements) affecting a customer's satisfaction (defining survey data processing methods, techniques for management decision-making and hotel business process improvement, etc.).

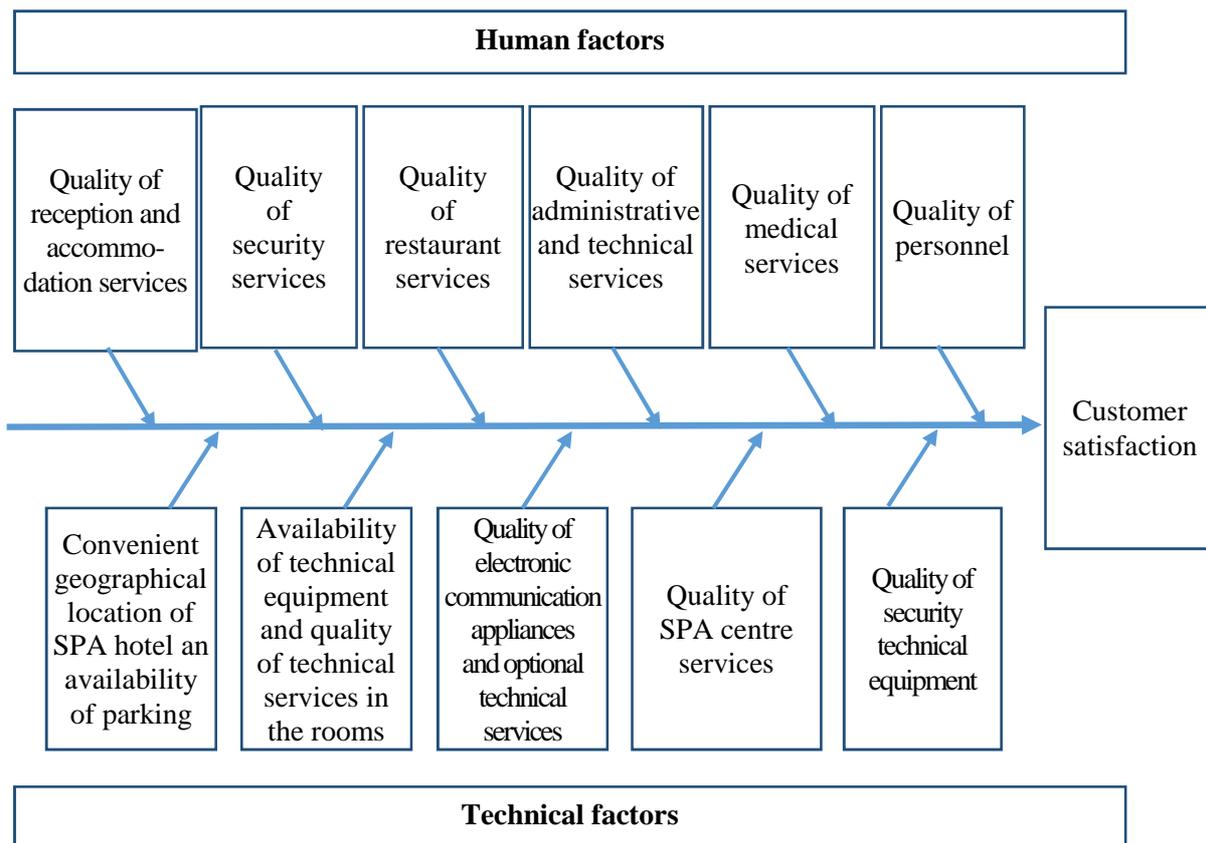


Fig.1 Ishikawa's Cause and Effect Diagram reflecting factors affecting the customers' satisfaction with SPA hotel services
(Source: compiled by the authors, based on Ishikawa, 1990)

After an assessment of a number of SPA services valuation models that reflect factors influencing customer's satisfaction, the authors chose the following:

- Ishikawa's Cause and Effect Analysis (diagram) that allows to perform a logical analysis of impact factors, although it does not provide a numerical equivalent of significance of the factors;
- Noriaki Kano's model for evaluation of service significance (importance) of SPA Hotels, assessing the SPA hotel services from an expert point of view;
- Linking the factors affecting SPA hotel guests' satisfaction with specific business processes (Wu, Liang, 2009).

Further in the paper, these models and their usability for SPA services evaluation will be described.

Ishikawa's Cause and Effect Diagram (also called "a fishbone diagram") is a systemic approach based on the graphical display, which, in a compact form, allows arranging in logical order causes of a variety of events. The given method was developed by Kaoru Ishikawa (Ishikawa, 1990) and for the first time was applied in the Japanese steelworks industry in the

1950s. Based on his research, Ishikawa concluded that a particular case is rarely based on a one single reason and absolutely not on the one reason, which seems obvious. Possible causes should be mainly sought for in the following four areas: man, machine, method, material (so-called “four M” areas).

At the same time, practical application of this method provides a certain freedom to choose one’s own areas of reasons that reflect the specific aspects of the SPA hotel organization, and a particular research problem. Now, such areas of reasons as “environment”, “management”, etc. are often added to the original ones.

Analysis of the SPA hotel services and the experience of the global hotels made it possible to identify a number of human and technical factors that affect customers’ satisfaction (Wu, Liang, 2009).

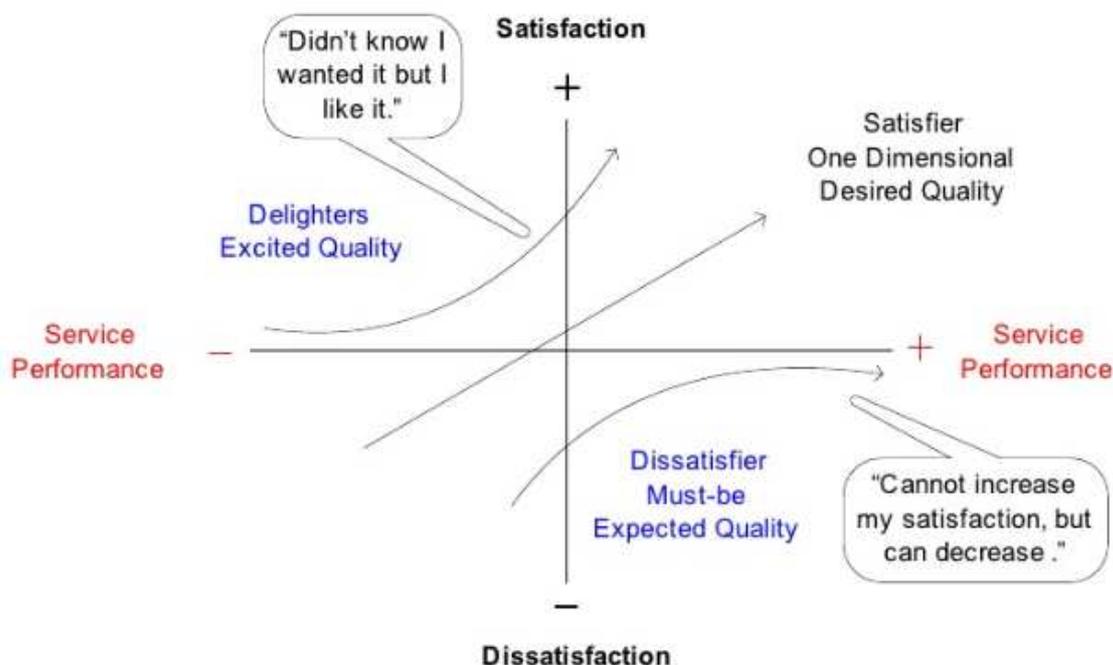


Fig. 2 Kano’s model: three main categories of factors (attributes) affecting customers’ perception of the offered service
(Source: Kano, 1996)

In Figure 1, Ishikawa’s Cause and Effect diagram is provided, reflecting the above mentioned factors (without dividing them in elements) that affect customers’ satisfaction with the SPA hotel services.

To assess services of the selected SPA hotels, the authors have used an adapted Ishikawa’s diagram reflecting the customer’s satisfaction and the factors influencing it.

Significance (importance) of different service attributes to the customer defines the range of neutral area, consequently – the higher is the

significance, the lower will be the extent of neutrality of the customer regarding the proposed service.

Kano has identified 3 categories of attributes that influence the customer's perception of the services offered (Kano, 1996). He has noted that certain elements of service can lead to the positive or negative customer's reaction.

"Quantitative" factors of the service - O (OMAIR is an international abbreviation (see explanation further in the text) that is used to describe the factors influencing customers' satisfaction) (Ramanathan, Ramanathan, 2011). In this case, the customer's satisfaction (i.e., known customer's value) increases along with improvement of a quantitative or qualitative factor. As we see in Kano's model (Fig. 2), dependence of the customers' satisfaction on such factors is reflected by a line drawn in a 45 degree angle from a ground zero. These factors sometimes are also called "steady".

Must-be service qualities (threshold attributes) - M. These are the main attributes that directly influence the customers and they are the essence of the services offered. Customers have acceptable minimum standards, so the must-be qualities have to be satisfied first. If the hotel wants to survive in today's competitive environment, they have to do everything to offer particularly these attributes of the service.

As examples of the hospitality service (SPA Hotel is a product of hospitality area) the speed of serving guests upon their arrival and at their departure from the SPA hotel, comfortable rooms, quality furniture and bed linen, cleanliness in the rooms and public spaces, SPA area, friendly and attentive staff attitude, safety, healthy meals, and others shall be mentioned. These elements are critical because they can cause a negative customers' reaction in case the service standards are violated. If the customers' requirements in this regard are not respected, the "perceived quality" significantly decreases.

Unexpected (excitement attributes, or attraction qualities) factors - A. These factors can cause a positive reaction, if the customers' expectations from the SPA hotel are satisfied and even surpassed. Absence of a certain service (product) attribute will not affect a client, because she/he just does not expect it. As an example, a diversity of the offer in the hotel SPA centre's sauna area and existence of a pool-bar, room service, beverages and flowers generously placed in the guests' rooms, and different additional services could be mentioned.

Additional services allow the SPA hotel to excel in comparison with analogue hospitality businesses. Hotel customers will not oppose free additional services (flowers, snacks, etc.), they will be pleasantly surprised by finding them in their rooms.

Neutral, or indifferent categories – I. The factors that make up a maximally neutral zone and do not significantly affect customers' response. Those include colours of hotel staff uniforms, a colour palette of the hotel interior, etc. These elements are not worth of spending a huge management effort on, as they have a little influence on the customers' satisfaction.

Reverse qualities (factors influencing customers' satisfaction) – R. Presence or absence of a certain attribute of the service can lead to equally both satisfaction or indifference, or even dissatisfaction among certain guests. This group of factors occur due to the heterogeneity of the surveyed customers.

Using Kano's model for evaluation, the SPA hotel can identify the impact of own actions on a customer's perceived value of service; it can instantly find out which are the service's attributes that have to be basic (must-be); what are qualities that could become "an icing on the cake" attracting customers; what are indicators that should be accurately dosed by analysing the costs of achieving them and estimating increase in the number of buyers (quantitative values). Furthermore, it can be identified that some of the service qualities are of low significance, so the money for their creation is spent in vain.

Taking into account that the customers' needs are determined by the conditions, the efficiency of the service strategies should be conditional, too.

The authors, on the basis of Ishikawa's principles described above, including hotels' service quality assessment models used by the leading global hotel networks (Bojanic, Rosen, 1994), Kano's model for assessing the significance of various hotel services, etc., have defined a certain set of factors affecting hotels' customers' satisfaction. Based on the above mentioned, the authors have developed an expert ("mystery guest") questionnaire to assess the factors influencing SPA hotel's customers satisfaction and mutual correlations among these categories.

The factors were divided into 11 groups (Table 1). *Factors influencing a SPA hotel's customer satisfaction* are defined and provided for development of the expert ("mystery guest") questionnaire with the aim to assess the satisfaction with the services provided. In the third column of the table, a respective category of factors in accordance with Kano's classification is indicated, as identified by the experts. In some cases, two possible categories are provided, if it cannot be determined unequivocally.

Table 1 Factors affecting customers' satisfaction and their categories in the SPA hotel
(Source: compiled by the authors)

No.	<i>Factors affecting a SPA hotel's customers satisfaction</i>	<i>The factor's categories in accordance with Kano model (experts' opinion)</i>	<i>Connection of the factor with business processes and activities of the SPA hotel</i>
1.	Impressions arriving at the SPA hotel		
1.1.	SPA hotel is easy to find	Quantitative/ Must-be	Communication and dissemination of information in external and internal environment. Marketing and market forecast.
1.2.	Convenience of car parking at the SPA hotel (space available, lighting, etc.)	Must-be/ Reverse	Development and design of basic and additional services. Additional services' processes.
2.	Human factors		
2.1.	Quality of reception and accommodation services department		
2.1.1.	Speed and efficiency of reception and accommodation department operations.	Quantitative/ Must-be	Guest service cycle (providing a service)
2.1.2.	Responsiveness of the reception and accommodation service staff during a guest's stay	Must-be	Guest service cycle (providing a service). Personnel management
2.1.3.	Speed and efficiency of checkout procedures	Quantitative/ Must-be	Guest service cycle (providing a service)
2.1.4.	Presence of concierge service	Unexpected/ Indifferent	Processes providing additional services
2.2.	Security		
2.2.1.	Efficiency and quality of the SPA hotel's security service	Must-be	Development and design of basic and additional services. Ensuring the safety of life.
2.3.	Quality of the SPA hotel's restaurant service		
2.3.1.	Ability to provide 24h catering service	Unexpected	Development and design of basic and additional services. Processes providing additional services
2.3.2.	Variety of meals offered in the restaurant menu	Quantitative	
2.3.3.	Evaluation of food quality	Must-be	
2.3.4.	Speed of service	Quantitative	
2.3.5.	Attention and responsiveness of the restaurant staff	Must-be	
2.3.6.	Presence of a breakfast offer	Must-be	
2.3.7.	Assortment of a breakfast offer	Reverse/ Unexpected	
2.4.	Quality of administrative and technical services department		
2.4.1.	Cleanliness of the lobby and public space	Must-be	Development and design of basic and additional services. Guest service cycle (providing a service)
2.4.2.	Quality of daily room cleaning service and cleanliness of the room	Must-be	

Table 1 continued

2.4.3.	Quality of bed linen	Must-be	
2.4.4.	Towels and replacement of towels in bathroom	Must-be	
2.4.5.	Presence of towels in the SPA centre and towels replacement possibility.	Reverse/ Unexpected	
2.4.6.	Compliance with hygiene requirements in the SPA centre (e.g., an opportunity to rinse seats in the bath area, etc.)	Must-be	
2.5.	Presence and accessibility of the SPA centre		
2.5.1.	Availability and accessibility of medical services at the hotel	Must-be	Processes ensuring basic and additional services
2.5.2.	Existence of SPA services offer and its diversity	Quantitative / Must-be	
2.5.3.	Existence of beauty treatments and its diversity	Reverse / Unexpected	
2.5.4.	Existence of sauna area and diversity of sauna services	Quantitative / Must-be	
2.5.5.	Existence and diversity of the pool area	Quantitative / Must-be	
2.5.6.	Existence and diversity of massage services	Quantitative / Reverse	
2.5.7.	Lounge existence	Reverse / Unexpected	
2.5.8.	Existence of fitness centre	Quantitative / Must-be	
2.5.9.	Existence of pool-bar	Reverse / Unexpected	
2.6.	Quality of hotel staff work in general		
2.6.1.	Attentive service	Must-be / Reverse	Guest service cycle (providing a service). Processes ensuring additional services. Personnel management
2.6.2.	Communicability and responsiveness of the staff	Must-be	
2.6.3.	External appearance of the staff	Must-be	
3.1.	Quality of technical appliances		
3.1.1.	Temperature of the room and bathroom, presence of air-conditioner	Quantitative / Must-be	Guest service cycle (providing a service)
3.1.2.	Quality of sound isolation in the room	Quantitative/ Must-be	
3.1.3.	Presence and proper functioning of TV in the room	Must-be /Reverse	
3.1.4.	Presence of bathroom equipment and its usability, comfort in the bathroom	Must-be	
3.1.5.	Presence and proper functioning of refrigerator and minibar in the room	Reverse	
3.1.6.	Comfortable furniture in the room	Must-be / Reverse	
3.2.	Presence and proper functioning of electronic communication equipment		
3.2.1.	Presence and proper functioning of communication system in the room	Must-be	Guest service cycle

Table 1 continued

3.2.2.	Presence and quality of <i>Wi-Fi</i>	Reverse/ Must-be	Processes ensuring additional services
3.2.3.	Computer access in the SPA hotel	Reverse/ Unexpected	
3.3.	Additional services related with technical assistance		
3.3.2.	Presence of shoe-polishing machine	Unexpected/ Reverse	Processes ensuring additional services
3.3.3.	Laundry services	Unexpected/ Reverse	
3.4.	Presence of technical appliances needed for ensuring safety and security		
3.4.1.	Security control equipment or video cameras in public areas	Unexpected	Processes ensuring additional services
3.4.2.	Presence of individual safe-boxes	Reverse/ Must-be	
3.4.3.	Electronic door lock with a safety lock inside the room	Reverse	

The fourth column of Table 1 includes SPA hotel's business processes and activities related to the indicated hotel service quality factors.

Development of an expert-customer („mystery guest”) questionnaire

Based on the studies described above and analysis of different service quality evaluation models, including models of C. Grönroos and A. Ravald (Grönroos, Ravald, 2011), T.G.Vavra (Vavra, 1997), A. Parasuraman, V.A. Zeithaml and L.L. Berry (Parasuraman et.al., 1984), D. Vojanic and L. Rosen (Vojanic, Rosen, 1994), A. Gavrilova (Гаврилова, 2011), M. Kobjak and S. Skobkin (Кобяк, Скобкин, 2008), T. Ponomareva and M. Suprjagina (Пономарева, Супрягина, 2005), S. Skobkin (Скобкин, 2005), D. Uiler and D. Chamber (Уилер, Чамберс, 2009), N. Kano (Кано, 1996), as well as the quality assessment models used by the leading global hotel networks, a new model for evaluation of the hotel's service quality was developed with focus on the improvement of the hotel's business processes and service quality.

The model is based on the significant advantages of the above mentioned models and is adapted with regard to the specifics of the SPA hotel services. Choosing factors related to the SPA hotels' customer satisfaction with the services provided (in this case an expert-customer "mystery guest" questionnaire) and selecting attributes to be included in the questionnaire, the first, "must-be", "quantitative" and "reverse" factors in accordance with Kano's model were considered. It was also necessary to consider a range of "unexpected" factors as they, in many ways, determine an image of the hospitality company and have a positive impact on the visitors' loyalty.

One of the fundamental differences of the proposed model is that a client (an expert - "mystery guest") assesses not only the quality level of a particular attribute - "perceived quality of the service provided", but also

“degree of importance” of each given factor from the point of view of a particular expert-customer (“mystery guest”) – “expected quality”.

Further, the “importance” and “perceived quality” of the factors will be explained as assessed by the experts – SPA hotel customers – the staff (2 lecturers) of the Faculty of Economics and Management of RTA (SPA hotels were evaluated within the RTA research grant “Evaluation of hotel service development possibilities in Rezekne city”) during the survey. They go to these SPA hotels, use their services and evaluate according questionnaire. This survey was organized according Rezekne Academy of Technology scientific grant “Assessment of hotel service development possibilities in Rezekne city” and Rezekne city municipality choose our lecturers as expert for this survey. These expert has necessary knowledge’s, skills, experience and age. According it survey conform with objective evaluation of SPA hotels. Within the research project, it was established that, to test the SPA hotel expert-customer (“mystery guest”) questionnaire, a sample of three hotels would be chosen – one in each of the Baltic States within a radius of 270 km from Rezekne. In the result, the following SPA Hotels were selected: *Pühajärve Spa & Holiday Resort 3** (Otepää, Valgamaa, Estonia), *Hotel Jūrmala Spa 4** (Jūrmala, Latvia), *Spa Vilnius Anykščiai 4** (Anykščiai, Lithuania).

In the proposed SPA hotel service quality evaluation model and survey, 46 attributes (factors) were selected and divided into 11 subgroups (Table 2). To evaluate the factor’s “importance”, a 10-point scale was used (1 – absolutely unimportant; 10 – extremely important; 2 to 9 points correspond to the level of importance or unimportance of a given factor). An evaluation of the “perceived service quality” was carried out on a 10-point scale (1 – very bad service; 10 – excellent service; intermediate points are 2 to 9).

According to the Kano model, the dimension “Importance-Quality” is the key management decision-making tool according to the expert-client (mystery guest) survey results. Based on the information gathered, it is possible to define group (in accordance with groups of factors defined) and integral (in the SPA hotel in general) indicators of the SPA hotel service quality in order to perform regular monitoring and to track dynamics of changes of these indicators. Though, the most important thing is that the data obtained allow identifying the most critical areas that need service improvement, require proper management decisions, and call for implementation of remedial actions in these areas.

The choice of “central” lines is individual for each hotel, and is defined in accordance with responses to these questions:

- what are the values of “importance” factors that would make the management to consider these factors as utterly important for the

- customers, and what are the values of “quality” factors that are acceptable in the particular hotel;
- what are the resources (tangible and intangible) the management is ready to channel for improvement of the service factors’ quality, where they are proved to be lower acceptable standards;
 - what are the results of statistical data processing of the expert-customer (“mystery guests”) survey results in comparison with the internal standards of the hotel in relation with “importance”, “quality” and other aspects of service factors.

Conclusions and suggestions

After processing the experts’ questionnaires, the factors included in the 1st response area are identified. Those factors are the most important to the visitors, but they are not of sufficient quality in visitors’ opinion, so these factors have to be treated with the greatest attention by the hospitality company’s management in order to make appropriate management decisions with an aim to improve these factors (for example, “What are your impressions upon arrival at the *Pūhajarve Spa & Holiday Resort?*”).

The factors included in the 2nd response area also are of certain importance to the customers, still their quality is assessed as sufficiently good and additional actions are not required at the moment (for example, “What are your impressions upon arrival at the *Hotel Jūrmala Spa* and *Spa Vilnius Anykščiai?*”).

Quality of the factors included in the 3rd response area is valued highly, although they are of less importance, therefore no further actions are required (for example, existence and diversity of beauty treatment services in the *Pūhajarve Spa & Holiday Resort*, *Hotel Jūrmala Spa*, and *Spa Vilnius Anykščiai*).

The factors included in the 4th response zone has low importance and low quality, thus, it is a call for the management to make proper decisions in order to improve these factors, although this is not a primary task (for example, lack of a pool-bar in the *Pūhajarve Spa & Holiday Resort*, *Spa Vilnius Anykščiai*).

The factor “*impressions upon arrival at the SPA hotel*” is very important to the customers (“importance” – 10), particularly – is it easy to find the hotel and is it convenient to park a car at the hotel (“importance” – 9.5) in case she/ he arrives with a personal car. It is relatively easy to find *Hotel Jūrmala Spa* and *Spa Vilnius Anykščiai*, as there are signs entering the city, as well as in the largest streets of the cities (actual perceived quality – 8). Instead, it was not so easy to find *Pūhajarve Spa & Holiday Resort* (actual perceived quality – 7), because there were no signs on the largest roads (there was a

sign just next to the hotel), although the hotel's parking was the most spacious and comfortable in comparison with other two hotels (actual perceived quality – 10).

The hotels' evaluation according to the category "*human factors*" was performed by the experts in a range of aspects.

"*Reception and accommodation services quality*" was assessed. In the experts' opinion, the factors related with speed and efficiency of the reception and accommodation services, responsiveness, speed of checkout procedures is of high importance ("importance" – 9), though, the perceived quality of received services in all three hotels did not reach the "importance" indicator in several positions. Long waiting time for completing check-in procedures upon arrival, information about breakfast was not provided, there were problems to prepare specific invoices.

In the experts' opinion, the "*concierge services*" are not so important ("importance" – 4.5), none of the hotels provide this service.

"*Efficiency and quality of the security service*" at the hotel is very important in accordance with the experts ("importance" – 9.5). All three hotels provide security to their guests in accordance with the hotel's own security concept.

The factor "*Quality of restaurant service of the SPA hotel*" was evaluated in several aspects. Possibility to use catering service 24-hour ("importance" – 8) was provided only in two hotels in good quality, i.e., there was a possibility to order meals to the room 24-hours a day (*room service*). In the *Pühajärve Spa & Holiday Resort* this service was not available. The diversity of the restaurant menu, food quality, speed of service, and attention and responsiveness of the restaurant staff, which is "important" in the experts' opinion, were provided in high quality in all three hotels. All main categories (groups) of meals are included in the restaurants' menu, the number of meals in each category corresponds to the menu of full service restaurants. Drinks menus include four categories of beverages – spirits, wines, cocktails, and soft drinks. The group of non-alcoholic beverages includes a wide assortment of freshly squeezed juices that satisfies SPA hotel restaurant customers. SPA hotel restaurant planning takes into account the number of expected visitors, so one seat occupancy and restaurant daily load is about 50%. Importance of breakfast in the room, in the experts' assessment, is 7. Breakfast in the room is offered in the *Hotel Jūrmala Spa* and *Spa Vilnius Anykščiai*. The assortment of breakfast menu available is wide. In *Pühajärve Spa & Holiday Resort*, this service is not available. In *Spa Vilnius Anykščiai*, breakfast can be ordered filling out the breakfast order, and placing it on the outside of the door until a certain time at night. Actual perceived quality was rated with 1, because the service was not provided,

breakfast was not brought, and the order form was not picked from the door handle (ordering time was respected).

In the experts' assessment, the factor "*Quality of administrative and technical services*" is very important ("importance" – 8-10). *Hotel Jūrmala Spa* and *Spa Vilnius Anykščiai* have the highest actually perceived quality ratings: cleanliness of lobbies and public areas – 9, daily cleaning of rooms are performed qualitatively, bathroom cosmetic accessories are refilled daily, quality of bed linen is good – linen clean, with no visible damages, is not worn out. The number of towels corresponds to the number of persons in the room, towels are clean and being replaced regularly. In SPA areas, special towels are provided at no extra charge. During repeated SPA visits, each time fresh towel is provided. In the *Pūhajärve Spa & Holiday Resort Hotel*, the room is cleaned carelessly, window glass is filthy. In the bathroom, the shower area is not separated from the rest of the room, the cleaning tool (mop) is located in the bathroom. When visiting the SPA area, a towel has to be taken from the room, there is no possibility to change it.

"*Existence and accessibility of SPA services*" in the hotel was evaluated in several aspects. "*Existence and availability of medical services*" is evaluated by the experts as having "importance" of 7.5. Real perceived quality in two hotels: *Hotel Jūrmala Spa* and *Spa Vilnius Anykščiai* was rated higher – respectively 8 and 9. Perceived quality in the hotel *Pūhajärve Spa & Holiday Resort* was rated with 7.5, as it was not noticeable by the customer.

The existence and diversity of water treatment ("importance" – 10) is the best in the *Hotel Jūrmala Spa*. The hotel offers various underwater massages, two *jacuzzi* baths, water cascades. In the hotel *Spa Vilnius Anykščiai*, the offer of water treatment options in the SPA centre is more limited: one *jacuzzi* bath, a couple of underwater massages. In the *Pūhajärve Spa & Holiday Resort* hotel: one water cascade, one small *jacuzzi* bath (for 6 persons max).

Beauty treatments are available in all the hotels.

The perceived quality of "*Existence of sauna area and diversity of sauna services*" ("importance" – 9.5) is rated with 8.5 points in *Hotel Jūrmala Spa*. There are two saunas with different temperatures, an aroma bath, a steam bath, a sault bath. Perceived quality in the *Spa Vilnius Anykščiai* was rated with 6 points. There were two saunas – one steam bath, another – a Finnish sauna, as well as a Turkish bath, although the last one wasn't functioning during the visit and only massage treatment was available for the Turkish bath area. Actual perceived service quality in the hotel *Pūhajärve Spa & Holiday Resort* was rated with 4.5 points. It offers two saunas – a steam bath and a Finnish sauna, separately for men and women. An important aspect is compliance with hygiene requirements in the SPA centre, for instance, an opportunity to rinse seats in the bath area or a strict requirement to use an

individual towel in the dry sauna. In the hotels *Hotel Jūrmala Spa* and *Pūhajärve Spa & Holiday Resort* these requirements are not met. In the hotel *Spa Vilnius Anykščiai* these requirements are satisfied.

The factor “*Existence and diversity of pool area*” is very important in the experts’ opinion (“importance” – 9.5). There are several pools (3) in the *Hotel Jūrmala Spa* – a warm water pool with several underwater massage options, a cold water pool next to the steam sauna, and a swimming pool with a back-current. The hotel *Spa Vilnius Anykščiai* has a warm water pool with underwater massage options and a pool for children. In the *Pūhajärve Spa & Holiday Resort*, there is a large pool with two areas – for a “slow” swim, and two lanes for “fast” swimmers”. There is a warm water pool for children. In all the hotels, there is a comfortable entrance into the pools – stairs.

In all the hotels, massage treatments are available – a wide assortment of treatments for all body zones – both relaxing and invigorating, and as a beauty treatment.

Both in the *Hotel Jūrmala Spa* and *Spa Vilnius Anykščiai* lounges are available. The experts’ rating of “importance” of this factor is 6. In the *Hotel Jūrmala Spa*, the lounge is located in the beauty treatment area, where guests are offered tea, water, magazines after massage. In the hotel *Spa Vilnius Anykščiai*, the comfortable chairs with a remote control are situated in the lounge. Tea, water is offered to all clients of the SPA area and beauty treatment customers. There is no lounge in the hotel *Pūhajärve Spa & Holiday Resort*.

The importance of existence of a pool bar is rated by the experts with 7 points. Pool bar services are offered only in the *Hotel Jūrmala Spa*.

There are fitness centres (gyms) in all the hotels.

“*Quality of hotel staff work*” is evaluated considering the following aspects – attentive service, communicability and responsiveness of the staff, appearance of the staff. The quality of staff work is on a high level in all three hotels.

The experts evaluated several aspects of the factor “*Hotel’s technical resources*” in the hotels.

Temperature in the room and in the bathroom, as well as the presence of air conditioning is extremely important (“importance” – 10). In hotels *Hotel Jūrmala Spa* and *Spa Vilnius Anykščiai* the temperature complies with requirements, rooms are equipped with air-conditioners. The temperature in the hotel *Pūhajärve Spa & Holiday Resort* did not meet requirements. Sound isolation of rooms is an important attribute as well; it proved to be of good quality in all the hotels. In all the hotels, the TV, bathroom equipment, a fridge is of good quality and properly functioning.

“*Existence of comfortable furniture in the room*”, in the experts’ opinion, is very important (“importance” – 9). In hotels *Hotel Jūrmala Spa* and *Spa*

Vilnius Anykščiai, furniture is comfortable, qualitative, the number of chairs corresponds to the number of persons in the room. In the hotel *Pūhajarve Spa & Holiday Resort*, furniture is outdated.

The existence and quality of *Wi-Fi* is the most important element in the evaluation of the attribute “*Electronic communication equipment*”, which was highly rated in all the hotels.

Additional technical service is a shoe-polishing machine. That is offered only in the *Hotel Jūrmala Spa*. Furthermore, laundry services are offered only in the *Hotel Jūrmala Spa*.

The attribute “*Presence of technical appliances needed for ensuring safety and security*” is important enough (“importance” – 7-9). Video cams are situated in the public areas of *Hotel Jūrmala Spa* and *Spa Vilnius Anykščiai* hotel, the rooms are equipped with individual safes, electronic keys and safety door lockers inside the rooms. There are no such technical appliances in the hotel *Pūhajarve Spa & Holiday Resort*.

The attributes identified in the 1st response area are the most important to the customers, though their quality is not proper. The management should pay the most attention to these factors and should accept management decisions to improve them. At the same time, these factors, according to Kano’s model, are either “must-be” (directly affect a customer and shape the essence of the service), or “quantitative” (customer’s satisfaction increases by increasing the quality of the indicator) in the opinion of the SPA hotel visitors.



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Appendix 1

Results of the expert-customer (mystery guest) survey carried out in the SPA hotels *Pühajärve Spa & Holiday Resort 3** (Otepää, Valgamaa, Estonia), *Hotel Jūrmala Spa 4** (Jūrmala, Latvia), *Spa Vilnius Anykščiai 4** (Anykščiai, Lithuania) (Source: compiled by the authors)

Groups of factors	Factor №	Name of factor	Rating of importance	Rating of quality			Response areas №			Factor's category according to Kano's model	Relation of factor to the hotel business processes
				Hotel Jūrmala Spa	Pühajärve Spa & Holiday Resort	Spa Vilnius Anykščiai	Hotel Jūrmala Spa	Pühajärve Spa & Holiday Resort	Spa Vilnius Anykščiai		
1	Your impressions arriving at the SPA hotel										
	F1.1	Was it easy to find our SPA hotel?	10	8	7	8	II	I	II	Quantitative/ Must-be	Communication and dissemination of information in external and internal environment. Marketing and market forecast
	F1.2.	Was car parking at the hotel convenient? (space available, lighting, etc.)	9.5	8	10	8	II	II	II	Must-be/ Reverse	Development and design of basic and additional services. Processes of additional services.
2	Human factors										
	Quality of reception and accommodation services department										
	F2.1.1	How do you evaluate speed and efficiency of reception and accommodation services?	9	8	7	8	II	I	II	Quantitative/ Must-be	Guest service cycle (providing service)
	F2.1.2.	Responsiveness of the reception and accommodation service staff during your stay	9	7.5	7	9	I	I	II	Must-be	Guest service cycle (providing service). Personnel management
	F 2.1.3.	Speed and efficiency of checkout procedures	9	9	7	8	II	I	II	Quantitative/ Must-be	Guest service cycle (providing service)
	F2.1.4.	Presence of concierge service	4.5	1	1	1	IV	IV	IV	Unexpected/ Neutral	Processes ensuring additional services

Appendix 1 continued

3	Security											
	F2.2.1.	Efficiency and quality of the SPA hotel's security service	9.5	8.5	8	9	II	II	II	Must-be	Development of basic and additional services. Ensuring safety of life.	
4	Quality of the SPA hotel's restaurant service											
	F2.3.1.	Ability to provide daily catering service	8	8.5	1	9	II	I	II	Unexpected	Development and design of basic and additional services. Processes of additional services	
	F2.3.2.	Variety of meals' offer in the restaurant menu	8	9.5	10	7	II	I	II	Quantitative	Development and design of basic and additional services. Processes of additional services	
	F2.3.3.	Evaluation of food quality	9	9.5	10	9	II	II	II	Must-be	Development of basic and additional services and design. Processes of additional services	
	F2.3.4.	Speed of service	9	9	10	8	II	II	II	Quantitative	Development of basic and additional services and design. Processes of additional services	
	F2.3.5.	Attention and responsiveness of the restaurant staff	9	9	9	8	II	II	II	Must-be	Development of basic and additional services and design. Processes of additional services	
	F2.3.6.	If you had ordered breakfast to the room, how do evaluate this service?	7	1	1	1	IV	IV	IV	Must-be	Development of basic and additional services and design. Processes of additional services	
F2.3.7	How do you evaluate the assortment of breakfast offer?	7	9	9	8	III	III	III	Reverse/Unexpected	Development of basic and additional services and design. Processes of additional services		
5	Quality of administrative and technical services department											
	F2.4.1.	Cleanliness of the lobbies and public space	8	9	7	9	II	I	II	Must-be	Development and design of basic and additional services. Guest service cycle (providing service)	
	F2.4.2.	Quality of daily room cleaning service and cleanliness of the room	10	8.5	6	9	II	I	II	Must-be	Development and design of basic and additional services. Guest service cycle (providing service)	
	F2.4.3	Quality of bed linen	9.5	9	7	9	II	I	II	Must-be	Development and design of basic and additional services. Guest service cycle (providing service)	

Appendix 1 continued

	F2.4.4	Towels and replacement of towels in bathroom	9	8	8	10	II	II	II	Must-be	Development and design of basic and additional services. Guest service cycle (providing service)
	F2.4.5	Presence of towels in the SPA centre and towels replacement possibility	9	8	8	10	II	I	II	Reverse/Unexpected	Development and design of basic and additional services. Guest service cycle (providing service)
	F2.4.6	Compliance with hygiene requirements in the SPA centre (e.g., an opportunity to rinse seats in the bath area, etc.)	10	9	9	10	II	I	II	Must-be	Development and design of basic and additional services. Guest service cycle (providing service)
6	Presence and accessibility of the SPA centre										
	F2.5.1	Availability and accessibility of medical services at the hotel	7,5	8	7,5	9	III	III	III	Must-be	Processes ensuring basic and additional services
	F 2.5.2	Existence of SPA services offer and its diversity	10	8.5	5	7	II	I	I	Quantitative/ Must-be	Processes ensuring basic and additional services
	F2.5.3	Existence of beauty treatments and its diversity	7,5	8	6	7	III	III	III	Reverse/Unexpected	Processes ensuring basic and additional services
	F2.5.4	Existence of sauna area and diversity of sauna services	9,5	8.5	4,5	6	II	I	II	Quantitative/ Must-be	Processes ensuring basic and additional services
	F 2.5.5	Existence and diversity of the pool area	9,5	8.5	5,5	7	II	I	II	Quantitative/ Must-be	Processes ensuring basic and additional services
	F2.5.6	Existence and diversity of massage services	8,5	8.5	8	9	II	II	II	Quantitative/ Reverse	Processes ensuring basic and additional services
	F2.5.8	Lounge existence	6	7.5	1	1	III	IV	III	Reverse/ Unexpected	Processes ensuring basic and additional services
	F2.5.9	Existence of fitness centre	7	7	8	10	III	III	III	Quantitative / Must-be	Processes ensuring basic and additional services
	F2.5.10	Existence of pool-bar	7	7.5	1	1	III	IV	IV	Reverse/ Unexpected	Processes ensuring basic and additional services

Appendix 1 continued

7	Quality of hotel staff work in general										
	F2.6.1.	Attentive service	9	8	7	9	II	I	II	Must-be/Reverse	Guest service cycle (providing service). Processes ensuring additional services. Personnel management
	F2.6.2	Communicability and responsiveness of the staff	9	7	6,5	9	II	I	II	Must-be	Guest service cycle (providing service). Processes ensuring additional services. Personnel management
	F2.6.3.	External appearance of the staff	9	8	6	9	II	I	II	Must-be	Guest service cycle (providing service). Processes ensuring additional services. Personnel management
8	Hotel's technical resources										
	Quality of technical appliances in the room										
	F 3.1.1.	Temperature of the room and bathroom, presence of air-conditioner	10	8	7	9	II	I	II	Quantitative / Must-be	Guest service cycle (providing service)
	F3.1.2.	Quality of sound isolation in the room	10	7.5	8,5	10	II	I	II	Quantitative / Must-be	Guest service cycle (providing service)
	F3.1.3.	Presence and proper functioning of TV in the room	9	7.5	8	10	II	I	II	Must-be/Reverse	Guest service cycle (providing service)
F3.1.4.	Presence of bathroom equipment and its usability, comfort in the bathroom (faucets, hair-dryer, lighting, etc.)	10	7.5	7	10	I	I	II	Must-be	Guest service cycle (providing service)	

Appendix 1 continued

	F3.1.5.	Presence and proper functioning of refrigerator and minibar in the room	9	7.5	5	10	II	I	II	Reverse	Guest service cycle (providing service)
	F3.1.6.	Comfortable furniture in the room	9	9	6,5	10	II	I	II	Must-be/Reverse	Guest service cycle (providing service)
9	Presence and proper functioning of electronic communication equipment										
	F3.2.1	Presence and proper functioning of communication system in the room	8	9	7	9	II	I	II	Must-be	Guest service cycle (providing service)
	F3.2.2.	Presence and quality of Wi-Fi	10	8.5	9	10	II	II	II	Reverse/Must-be	Processes ensuring additional services
	F3.2.3.	Computer access in the SPA hotel	7	7.5	2	1	IV	IV	IV	Reverse/Unexpected	Processes ensuring additional services
10	Additional services related with technical assistance										
	F3.3.1	Presence of shoe-polishing machine	6,5	8	1	1	II	IV	IV	Unexpected/Reverse	Processes ensuring additional services
	F3.3.2	Existence of laundry service in the hotel	6,5	6	1	1	IV	IV	IV	Unexpected/Reverse/	Processes ensuring additional services
11	Presence of technical appliances needed for ensuring safety and security										
	F3.4.1.	Security control equipment or video cameras in public areas	7	8	2	9	II	I	II	Unexpected	Processes ensuring additional services
	F3.4.2.	Presence of individual safe-boxes	8	8	1	9	II	I	II	Reverse/Must-be	Processes ensuring additional services
	F3.4.3.	Electronic door lock with a safety lock inside the room	9	8.5	1	10	II	I	II	Reverse	Processes ensuring additional services