Total Quality Management in Hotel Restaurants: A Case Study in Greece

Chrysoula G. Lazari and Dimitris N. Kanellopoulos
Department of Tourism Management, Technological Educational
Institute of Patras, Greece

Abstract: This study investigates the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in the food and beverage departments of hotels in Achaia in Greece. TQM is a complex process that begins with an assessment of the degree of customer satisfaction and then, based on the assessment's conclusions, determines the products and the mode of operation so that they correspond to customers' wishes. Simultaneously, they are collated, evaluated and the results dictate the corrective measures to be taken. This study also attempts to determine whether quality service is provided and it reports on the application of total TQM and Quality Certification Systems in the food and beverage departments of hotels in the prefecture of Achaia located in Greece.

Key words: Hotel restaurant, qualitative service, TQM, quality certification system, beverage departments

INTRODUCTION

Quality constitutes a complex and multidimensional term particularly in relation to the area of service provision (Tzorakoletherakis, 1999). When quality is used in relation to a service we mean series of actions that takes place for the sake of the customer with the aim of satisfying needs and is used by the customer almost simultaneously with their production and offer (Chitiris, 1991). Quality constitutes the core of total quality management and simultaneously contributes effectively to the upgrading of the importance for enterprises.

Total Quality Management (TQM) is referred to as a way of life-an everyday way of life (James, 1998). Total quality management shoulders a difficult responsibility. Initially, it aims to satisfy the customers constantly and then to create the appropriate conditions for continuous staff training and development, while ensuring the organization's survival. Its application constitutes a very interesting topic in the case of service enterprises and especially of food and beverage enterprises.

Definition and objective of quality: While the word quality is frequently used nowadays and it is estimated that it has been used more in the last ten years than in the ten previous centuries(Gover, 1997) its meaning continues to be rather vague. There is no precise definition of quality and there will probably never be one, because the perceived meaning of quality differs from person to person. This means that what the customer considers to be quality is his own perception of the quality of a product or service. Initially, the definition of quality implied that a product or service met prescribed specifications. This definition Is inadequate, because, even when products or services correspond to pre-determined specifications, it cannot always be taken for granted that they will satisfy customer expectations and needs. However, the current conception of quality is not concerned only with satisfying customer expectations, but also aims to exceed them. The modern philosophy concerning quality sees quality not as an end in itself, but as a journey, where the destination is not fixed but is continuously changing (Edvasson *et al.*, 1994).

Moreover, quality depends on the customers evaluation of the value for money of a product or service (Velissoriou *et al.*, 2000). One definition of quality is for clients to be offered what they wish for, at a price they can afford, at a constant cost and in a constant way. We could say that it is the degree of correspondence between expectation reality (Gover, 1997). The concept of quality constitutes the core of Total Quality Management. TQM redefines the concept of quality and simultaneously upgrades its importance for the enterprise in a meaningful way.

The approch of tqm: Total Quality Management is described as a "method of administration that aims to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, flexibility and

Corresponding Author: G. Chrysoula Lazari, Department of Tourism Management, Technological Educational Institute of Patras, Greece

competitiveness of an enterprise (Gover, 1997). It constitutes an attempt to move away from the erroneous perception that inspection and control in order to detect and eradicate weaknesses can guarantee the provision of high quality. TQM is concerned with the organization and commitment of an enterprise in its entirety to the quality assurance, in all departments, in every activity, with every employee and generally on each level. Good cooperation between departments constitutes a precondition for the efficiency of an organization. A two-way chain reaction between the different departments is created which can lead either to success or to failure. The three terms that compose the TQM strategy are the following according to Teare *et al.* (1994).

Management: The way in which all human resources are involved in the operation of an enterprise;

Total: Meaning that everyone in a enterprise should be involved individually and collectively, through team work, in the result of the enterprise and try to understand and meet the needs of all customers (internal and external).

Quality: The guarantee that all customers enjoy precisely what they expect and, better still, that the service the clientele receives exceeds their expectations (Beker and Crompton, 2000).

The basic elements of TQM: A Total Quality Management program consists of several basic elements, including an orientation towards the customer, measurements, the delegation of responsibilities, an emphasis on0 procedures and continuous improvement.

- With regard to the orientation towards the customers, the satisfaction of their needs should be a fundamental factor in each plan of action of an organization. Consequently, all the decisions and the activities of an organization should be based on the customers' needs (Goetsch and Davies, 1997). The customers constitute an extension of the enterprise in the sense that their observations, their requirements and generally their opinion are taken into consideration in the development of an organization (Tsiotras, 2000). The requirements of customers are the first thing that an organization should identify. Provided that the perception that a customer has of quality will change with time and because the requirements of consumers are incomplete, enterprises must fill the gaps which the model of the required quality reveals. Therefore, an organization will have to continuously re-examine consumer needs and try to satisfy them through the philosophy of continuous improvement.

Continuous improvement: since TQM is a never-ending process that characterizes the mode of operation of the whole organization. In the context of the competitive climate that characterizes our era, any organizations that do not seek continuously higher levels of quality lose ground against their competitors, since stagnation is considered a negative and inhibitive factor.

Emphasis on procedures: Since TQM shifts attention away from the behaviours that cause incorrect results and focuses its interest on the examination of activities which are responsible for causing or avoiding errors in a particular organization. In other words, it concentrates on the improvement of procedures in order to prevent the reoccurrence of problems.

Delegation of responsibilities: With the involvement of the employees in the achievement of the desired quality. Managers adore the delegation of responsibilities in theory, but the model of administration and control is what they trust and know best (Argyris, 1998). Often the erroneous perception that the responsibility of the administration is downgraded in some way prevails. On the other hand, the staff is often not sure with regard to the delegation of responsibilities (Argyris, 1998). However, with correct handling by the administration the staff will be motivated and their interest in the work increased, so they will offer goods and services that are essential for the production of even better quality.

Measurements: According to TQM measurement also determines the result. TQM is responsible for the choice of criteria critical for measurement and it contributes to their being measured in a more effective way. The result is timely and valid information, higher quality and better decisions that increase the profitability of an organization.

The above-mentioned elements are very important for the successful application of TQM in an organization, the importance of which is outlined below.

The importance of tqm in hotels: Contemporary hotel customers are very different form those of previous decades. In the past, the most important factor in the choice of products or services was the price. Today, the choice is made based on what the consumer considers to be quality. Consequently, competition between hotels is also increasing also in terms of the assurance of higher quality.

The effects of TQM on organizations can be seen on two levels: In the external but also in the internal environment. With regard to the external environment, the

provision of quality products or services strengthens consumer confidence in the enterprise, thus increasing its share of the target market and consequently its profitability and naturally strengthens the competitive position of the organization in the wider environment in which it operates. TQM also incorporates the development of Total Quality relationships between the enterprise and suppliers, in which case these relationships have a knock-on effect because of the enterprises interdependence (Tsiotras, 2000). This interdependence also results in continual qualitative changes in order to cope with the competition and, as a consequence, knock-on benefits are created on social and national levels. The consequences for the internal environment are connected with the creation of a better social environment (Tsiotras, 2000) that involves the raising of the morale of hotel employees, which results in an increase in productivity with the natural consequence of an increase in the enterprise's efficiency. The offering, in the context of the implementation of TQM, of various benefits to the employees, job security and continuous education and training creates highly effective citizens, who are satisfied with their work and their social life (Tsiotras, 2000). The minimization of errors means that energy and productive resources are not taken up again on the correction of faults. Therefore, it becomes obvious that the higher the quality the lower the cost (Gover, 1997), so the successful implementation of TQM in hotels contributes to the reduction of production costs.

TQM is important in an organization in many ways and on many levels, although the personal participation of leading management and their commitment to the continuous improvement of quality is considered to be a basic factor in the implementation of TQM (Dale and Plunket, 1990).

Total quality management in customer service: Customer service in such a sector as food enterprises offers the most immediate benefits, as it is a sector where there is direct contact with the customers and plays an important role in total customer satisfaction. Often small improvements in service strengthen considerably customers' perceptions of the quality they are offered.

The secrets of quality service : The provision of quality services is a difficult task. It presupposes the detailed examination of many factors.

Identification of customer expectations: Customer expectations are not always obvious. An organised effort is required in order to discover what quality service is for the customers of a food and beverage department. The opinion of one person is never enough to evaluate all the aspects of service. A good idea is self-assessment following the practices that the enterprise applies in order to evaluate its suppliers.

Careful determination of suitable criteria of quality: We all speak about the provision of quality service; what is it, however, that characterizes the quality of a service? It is difficult to measure the concept of the satisfied customer. On the other hand, the concept of a customer who will recommend our services to others can be measured quantitatively and the development the relative criterion can be observed over time.

Eradication of obstacles to customer service: The adoption of an aggressive policy concerning the provision of quality services aimed to achieve customer satisfaction is good practice. It is wrong to wait for the first customer to complain or to have a negative experience of our service in order to take initiatives. Potential problems should be identified before they arise and naturally before they make a negative impression on the hotel's customers.

Recognition of the dynamic character of customer needs: Taking customer needs for granted is a mistake that is often made. Customer needs are not static and change continuously, so the provision of services will have to be adapted to the new demands. Continual measurements and continuous re-evaluation are required.

Furthermore, Total Quality means the timely prediction of tendencies and the possibility of immediate satisfaction of customer needs and not dealing with complaints in retrospect.

The characteristics of quality in food departments: What constitutes quality in food and beverage enterprises? Regardless of the type of enterprise almost everything that is related to the experience of a meal is an indicator of quality (Tzorakoletheraki, 1999).

Food and drink: The quality of a dish or cocktail is not related only to correct preparation; there are a series of factors that determine the final result. The range of products offered, serving time, the temperature of food of drink, product availability, their appearance, portion size etc.

Level of service: Often the way in which a dish or a drink is served plays a decisive role in the impression that a customer forms of the service provided. One friendly,

polite and cheerful waiter creates a very good impression on the customers, sometimes overshadowing and the quality of dish served. Also, the speed and the responsibility of staff are factors that contribute to service quality.

Restaurant atmosphere: A series of factors compose what is called the atmosphere of a food and beverage department. The decor, the lighting, the music, staff behaviour etc contribute to the formation of positive or negative opinions on the art of customers.

Cleanliness and hygiene: The hygiene of the food preparation and staff areas constitutes a critical factor in the quality provision of services in food and beverage departments. The adoption of a model of quality assurance strengthens customer confidence in the enterprise and consequently increases profitability.

Increased staff responsibilities and competences: Confirm that the staff is trained and participates in the determination of criteria that concern the quality of service, since they know better what is important for the customers. The satisfaction and service of customers depend to a greater extent on the behaviour of the employees in any enterprise, but much more so in groups that offer services. If the management of enterprises concentrate on training and satisfaction at all levels, primarily of the employees themselves, it can only bring about the desired rate of growth and in the enterprise (Duarand and Eccles, 1997).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research was conducted within the boundaries of the prefecture of Achaia in Greece. The total number of hotels of all classes in the region of Achaia (Greece) is 93, of which 9 belong to class A and 21 to class B, which constitute the sample. Hotels in classes A and B constitute 33% of the region's hotels. They were selected because the data will have greater significance if they are derived from organised hotels that offer quality services, a fact that is expected because of their category. Based on the number of the selected sample an inventory in hotels in classes A and B was carried out.

The case study was conducted on a random sample of professors from the Technological Educational Institute (TEI) of Patras (Greece) in different subjects, which concern, however, the tourist sector. The completion of the questionnaire took place in our presence. Certain questions required clarification and so they were modified. The researcher proceeded to interview managerial staff of the hotels on the premises.

The description and presentation of the results of this study is in the form of text with tables, given that theoretically none of the above techniques is better than the others (Chrisrou, 1999).

The most suitable way of presenting data depends on the particularities of research. The tables have been constructed with the help of Microsoft Excel software. The investigation was carried out based on a half-formed questionnaire, the planning of which should be carried out with great care and correspond to specific qualitative models (Chrisrou, 1999).

An attempt was made to formulate the questions and conduct the interview in a neutral fashion, so as not to influence the subjects and avoid any researcher bias. The questionnaire was separated into four parts according to the content of the questions. Initially, the perception of those responsible for the quality and the quality provision of services were investigated. Then, the subject of the questions concerned TQM and quality certification systems and finally the educational level of managerial staff in hotel food departments of the sample.

Findings: Initially we attempted to investigate the perception that the managers have of the meaning of quality and the way they conceive the term.

- Thirty percent of those asked believe that luxury determines quality.
- Thirty four percent believe that quality is determined by a combination of factors, in particular, luxury, additional services, reliability, conformity to some standards and value for money.
- Eight percent maintain that it is defined by a) additional benefits; b) conformity to some standards; and c) value for money.
- Four percent declared that quality means reliability and that they do not know or do not wish to answer. Afterwards the opinion of the managers of food and beverage departments about quality was investigated, that is to say, what they consider to be quality provision of services in the departments for which they are responsible.
- Sixty three percent of those asked believe that quality provision in food and beverage departments is a combination of hygiene, level and time of service and atmosphere.
- Twenty nine percent believe that hygiene constitutes a factor concerning quality.
- Eight percent focus on the level of service. Service time and the atmosphere of food and beverage departments were not considered by those asked to be relevant factors in their own right concerning quality service. As shown in (Table 1).

Table 1: Quality definition

	Frequency	(%)
Luxury	7	30
Additional services	2	8
Reliability	1	4
Conformity to standards	0	0
Value for money	2	8
All the above	8	34
Additional		
Provision-Reliability	1	4
Reliability standards	2	8
Conformity value		
for money		
I do not know	1	4
Total	23	100

Table 2: TQM application

	Frequency	(%)
Yes	5	65
No	3	13
I do not know	15	22
Total	23	100

Table 3: Methods of application of TQM

	Frequency	(%)
Delegation of	1	17
responsibilities		
Continuous improvement	1	17
Both the above	3	49
Training programs	1	17
Total	6	100

Table 4: Reasons for not implementing TQM

	Frequency	(%)
Lack of training	9	53
Superfluous	3	18
Never dealt with TQM	5	29
Total	17	100

Table 5: Whether TQM guarantees quality or not

	Frequency	(%)
Yes	6	25
No	13	54
I do not know	4	21
Total	23	100

Table 6: Degree of necessity of TQM

	Frequency	(%)
Very necessary	4	17
Necessary	7	30
Neither necessary nor superfluous	10	44
Superfluous	2	9
Total	23	100

It was also investigated whether Total Quality Management is implemented in the hotels of the prefecture. Sixty five percent of those asked declared that they do not know whether Total Quality Management is implemented in the hotel where they work.Twenty two percent declared that they implement Total Quality Management and finally 13% answered negatively. For the cases of affirmative answers in Table 2, an investigation of the methods of application of TQP in the hotels of the prefecture was attempted. Forty three percent of those asked answered that they implement TQM in their hotels by seeking to ensure continuous improvement and the delegation of responsibilities among the employees. Twenty nine percent spoke of continuous improvement. Fourteen% mentioned delegation of responsibilities and the same percentage spoke of internal training programs. Shown in (Table 3). For the cases of negative answers in Table 2, an investigation of the reasons why TQM is not implemented in the food and beverage departments of hotels was attempted.Fifty% of those who declared that they do not implement TQM believe that there is a lack of trained staff to implement it in the particular hotel, whereasTwenty nine percent declared that they had never dealt with the subject and 18% consider it superfluous. Shown in (Table 4) Then it was investigated whether the implementation of a system of quality certification in the food and beverage departments of hotels can alone ensure quality.

Fifty four percent answered that the implementation of a system of quality certification cannot alone ensure quality.Twenty five percent believe that alone it is capable of assuring quality. Finally, 25% declared that they did not know. Shown in (Table 5).

The implementation of a system of quality certification in the food and beverage departments of hotels in the prefecture, as shown in Table 6, is judged by 44% of those responsible to be neither necessary nor superfluous. Thirty percent believe that it is necessary, while 17% regard it as very necessary. Nine percent consider it to be superfluous. It was also investigated whether or not some recognised system of quality certification had been adopted. According to the answers that were given to that question it transpired that only one hotel has HACCP certification, while three other hotels have initiated proceedings to obtain HACCP certification and one hotel has begun the procedure for HACCP and ISO certification. However, the majority 75% of the hotels have no certification and are not thinking of obtaining any in the near future. It is also worth noting that one of those asked was not aware of the term quality certification. The subject of the next question was the reasons why the adoption of a system of quality certification has been prevented to date. It was ascertained that the most common factors 33% behind failure to adopt a system of quality certification were bureaucratic reasons. Twenty two percent attribute it to a financial reasons and b consider it superfluous. Seventeen percent answered that they had never dealt with the

Table 7: Reasons for the adoption of a system of certification

	Frequency	(%)
Attraction of custom	1	20
Products of consistent quality	1	20
Financial	1	20
Competition	2	40
Total	5	100

Table 8: Educational level profile

Educational level	Frequency	%
Gymnasium	0	0
Lykeio	8	35
IEK	0	0
TEI (Tourirm Management Departments)	7	30
TEI other speciality	2	9
AEI any speciality	5	22
Masters in tourism	1	4
Masters in other speciality	0	0
Total	23	100

subject and 4% invoke reasons of size of the hotel. The subsequent question attempted to investigate the reasons that led to a hotel adopting a system of quality certification.

The hotels that have some form of certification and those which are in the process of being certified answered this question. It transpired from their responses that the reasons that led to the certification of products and services were initially related to competition (40%) and then to the provision of products and services of consistent quality (20%). Next financial reasons were referred to (20%) shown in (Table 7) and the attraction of custom (also 20%). The next question focussed on the education of the managerial staff of the food and beverage departments of hotels in the sample.

Thirty three percent of those responsible for the food and beverage departments of hotels have studied Tourist Enterprises at TEI. Thirty four percent have received a Lykeio-level education, whereas Twenty one percent come from university backgrounds unrelated to tourism. Eight percent and 4% have studied other subjects at TEI and IEK, respectively. Shown in (Table 8).

RESULTS

A large proportion of those asked identifies quality with luxury and that is not necessarily true. It appears encouraging that they relate quality to a combination of factors, such as luxury, additional services, reliability, conformity to standards and value for money. Roughly two in three of those asked believe that quality provision in food and beverage departments is a combination of hygiene, level and time of service and atmosphere.

From the analysis of results of the study it can be seen that to a great extent Total Quality Management is not applied because executives have not dealt with it or consider it unnecessary. In combination with the insights derived from correlating questions in Table 2, 3, 4 and 5, it can be seen that there is a lack of information on issues regarding TQM and an unwillingness on the part of managerial staff to declare that they do not have the theoretical background that would allow them in a conscious way to apply Total Quality Management or not in their hotels. The lack of information of the managers can be justified if we examine their educational level. From the examination of this data we can ascertain that the majority related to the tourist sector. It was ascertained that they do not know the basic principles either of quality service or of the certification of quality and TQM. In A-class hotels, however, according to the analysis of results of the study most managers in food departments have received an education related to tourism and their knowledge of quality, of certification and TQM are more than satisfactory; nevertheless, they do not apply it. The proportion of those asked who apply TQM declared that with continuous improvement and the delegation of responsibilities they aim to provide quality service in their hotels. We can establish that they know the principles of TQM and try to apply them in their hotels. This sets a good example for the other hotels in the area that could apply TQM themselves. One answer which came as surprise was: "I do not know whether total quality management is applied" in the departments for which the managers are responsible. This answer comes largely from the hotel owners who, according to the results of the study, have received an education unrelated to tourism. We conclude that not only do they not apply TQM, but also that they do not even know the term. It is impossible for them not to be informed about whether TQM is applied or not, because they are responsible for establishing guidelines for Quality Management in their enterprises.

From the analysis of the data it transpired that many executives are not informed about quality certification systems. It was also observed that one executive had never heard the term HACCP. In the case of the hotel that has been HACCP certified, the head receptionist did not know what the term meant and that the hotel had been certified. In conclusion, it can be noted that ignorance and a lack of tourist education are among the most fundamental problems that we observed during this study.

The reasons for not implementing a system of quality certification that came to light from the analysis of the data are quite interesting. The majority of those asked gave reasons related to bureaucracy, while quite a large number gave financial reasons. The number of those who consider it unnecessary and have not dealt with it is also quite large. All the reasons are logical and they constitute obstacles to the growth of systems of quality certification, particularly when their importance is not completely understood. The figures also show that the majority of managers associate quality certification systems with ISO and it appears that the managers are more familiar with it than with HACCP. Managers who knew about ISO and HACCP belong mostly to A-class hotels and in particular hotels in the city of Patras and the surrounding area. It was observed that at seasonal hotels and at the hotels located in the mountainous part of the prefecture the managers do not have a good theoretical background in subjects concerning quality service.

Suggestions for future research: The study was carried out in A and B-class hotels in the prefecture of Achaia. These hotels constitute a third of the total number of hotels in the prefecture. The remaining two thirds belong to classes C, D and E. The researcher believes that research into the knowledge of managers in the other hotels about quality service and TQM would yield interesting results.

The study could also investigate the adoption of a system of quality certification in those hotels, the importance that is given to a system of quality certification and the future intentions of managers. It would also be interesting to conduct research in other prefectures. Thus, we could have comparative data concerning the differentiation of quality service and the degree of application of total quality management in different regions and gather information about the conditions that prevail throughout Greece. Research conducted in (Partlow, 1993; Deadrick and Gradner, 1999; Dooley and Flor, 1998) focusing on TQM in hotels is useful.

CONCLUSION

Total Quality Management has applications in food and beverage departments since all the customers expect and deserve higher quality services and goods. Quality is not just the destination, but a philosophy, a way of life. The adoption of a total quality program in an enterprise does not mean simply the application of a model of quality

certification. Quality Certification Systems function and reinforce TQM and they are essential in order to ensure that a product or a service will conform to certain specifications. When speaking of certification in Total Quality Management, we mean mainly the assurance that the enterprise functions according to certain specifications, in order that the product produced or the service provided is of the required quality. The results of the research did not present encouraging results with regard to quality service. It was established that the majority of the managers among whom the research was conducted, do not know the basic principles either of quality or of TQM and the certification systems.

One encouraging sign is that the executives in the tourist study recognize the importance of systems of quality certification and the role that they can play in the future, in spite of the fact that they do not implement them in their enterprises. The problem stems from a lack of sufficient education. Consequently, with better and continuous education, we can hope for the qualitative upgrading of goods and services in hotel restaurants in Achaia (Greece).

REFERENCES

Argyris, C., 1998. Harvard Business Review, Human Resource Management, Emperors New Cloths Athens: Kleidarythmos.

Baker, D.A. and J.L. Crompton, 2000. Quality, Satisfaction and Behavioral Intentions, Ann. Tou. Res., 27: 785-804.

Chitiris, L., 1991. Hotel management, Athens: Interbooks.

Christou, E. 1999. Research in Tourist market, Athens: Interbooks.

Dale, B.G. and J.J. Plunket, 1990. Managing Quality, Phill Allan.

Deadrick, D. and G. Gardner, 1999. Performance Distributions: Measuring Employee Performance Using Total Quality Management Principles, J. Quality Manag., 14: 225-241.

Dooley, J.K. and F.R. Flor, 1998. Perceptions of success and failure in TQM initiatives, J. Quality Manag., 13: 157-174.

Duarand, P. and G. Eccles, 1997. Measuring Customer Satisfaction and Employee Attitude at Forte Hotels, Managing Service Quality, 7: 290-291.

Edvarson, B., B. Thomasson and J. Ovretveit, 1994. Quality of service making it really work, Berkshire, Barrie Dale, pp: 21.

Goetsch, D. and S. Davis, 1997. Introduction to Total Quality, Quality Management for Production, Processing and Services, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Gover, 1997. Total Quality Management, Athens: Interbooks.

James, P., 1998. Total Quality Management, Athens: Hexant.

Partlow, G., 1993. How Ritz-Carlton applies TQM, The Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly, 34 : 16-24.

Teare, R., J. Mazanec, S. Crawford-Welch and S. Calver, 1994. Marketing in Hospitality and Tourism: A Consumer Focus, London: Cassell, pp: 81-95.

Tsiotras, G., 2002. Quality Improvement, Athens: E. Benou.

Tzorakoletherakis, Z., 1999. Food and Beverage Management Mass Food Production, Athens: Interbooks.

Velissariou, E., D. Karahontzidis and M. Komninakis, 2000. Introduction to Tourism Management and Tourist Services Management, Patras: EAP.