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**PRODUCT'S ELEMENTS AND THE SATISFACTION
OF THE CUSTOMER'S NEEDS IN THE HOSPITALITY
SECTOR**

**ELEMENTY PRODUKTU A ZASPOKOJENIE POTRZEB
KLIENTA SEKTORA HOTELARSTWA**

Abstract: An integral part of modern marketing orientation becomes thinking about the consumer and his needs. Hospitality sector enterprises seeking to achieve long-term success in the market expansion need to continuously identify consumer's market needs and understand their essence. On the basis of these messages they should accurately adjust current product's offer to disclosed consumer's market needs and preferences as well as continuously

strive to maximize their satisfaction. The author of the article characterized hospitality sector products, explaining its essence and elements. The Author showed the impact of particular hospitality product elements on the consumer's behaviour. The author also drew attention to relations between the supply and demand sides of the hospitality market, pointing to the need to adjust hospitality sector product to the needs of the analyzed consumer's segment.

Keywords: consumer, hospitality product, need, hospitality sector, product

Streszczenie: Integralną częścią współczesnej orientacji marketingowej staje się myślenie o konsumencie oraz jego potrzebach. Przedsiębiorstwa sektora hotelarstwa, dążąc podczas swej rynkowej ekspansji do uzyskania długofalowego sukcesu rynkowego, winny nieustannie identyfikować ujawnione na rynku potrzeby konsumentów oraz zrozumieć ich istotę. Na podstawie tych wiadomości powinny trafnie dostosowywać bieżącą ofertę produktową do ujawnionych potrzeb i preferencji konsumentów na rynku, a także nieustannie dążyć do maksymalizacji ich satysfakcji. W artykule autorka scharakteryzowała produkt sektora hotelarstwa, przybliżając jego istotę oraz elementy produktu hotelarskiego. Ukazała wpływ poszczególnych składników produktu hotelarskiego na zachowanie konsumentów. Zwróciła również uwagę na relacje zachodzące między stroną podażową a popytową rynku hotelarskiego, wskazując jednocześnie na konieczność dostosowania produktu sektora hotelarstwa do oczekiwań analizowanego segmentu konsumentów.

Słowa kluczowe: produkt, produkt hotelarski, konsument, potrzeba, sektor hotelarstwa

Introduction

An integral part of modern marketing orientation becomes thinking about consumers and their needs. Hospitality sector enterprises seeking to achieve long-term success in the market expansion need to continuously identify consumer's market needs and understand their essence. On the basis of these messages they should accurately adjust current product's offer to disclosed consumer's market needs and preferences and continuously strive to maximize their satisfaction. The consumer who purchases certain product, in the analyzed case it is hospitality sector product, satisfies his needs which, very often, are not properly identified. The key role of the enterprise is to effectively identify these needs which, if are properly set will create the current product offer applicable to the needs of target consumer's market. The author of the article characterized hospitality sector products, explaining its essence and elements.

The Author showed the impact of particular hospitality product elements on consumer's behaviour which are particularly determined by their needs. The author also drew attention to relations between the supply and demand sides of the hospitality market, pointing to the need to adjust hospitality sector product to the needs of the analyzed consumer's segment.

1. The essence of the hospitality service

According to T. Levitt's concept the product structure, as a tree section, may show four layers: product's core, actual product, expanded product and potential product. The product in addition to physical things in their structure can contain any services actions, projects, people, places, and ideas¹. Another approach to defining the product, stresses that the product is a summary of expectations and benefits for its customers, and each of the purchasers sees it through the prism of profits which can be obtained after its acquisition².

With regard to Marek Turkowski's definition the product is one of the basic marketing elements³. The product constitutes all elements thanks to which it is possible to satisfy needs and desires identified on the hospitality market. Under such definition of the product, hospitality service also constitutes the product⁴. In the opinion of B. and W. Żurawik "the marketing concept product (...) may be an idea, service, product, or a combination of these three characteristics (...) "⁵.

In order to seek motives to purchase the product it is necessary to note that the customer usually purchases the product in order to possess it, excluding its physical features, emphasizing its utility. Hospitality service makes it possible and facilitates the execution of a trip just as in the case of transport measures. The essence of hospitality sector product may be identified along with the identification of several determinants.

The first determinant is to pay attention to *the product's external features*. The customer, first of all, identifies the location of the entity providing hospitality services, its type (hotel, guesthouse, and hostel), formal category and then its external and internal characteristics. External characteristics include also direct surroundings and all notes which make it possible to identify a given building, for example web page.

The second determinant, through which the customer determines the essence of hospitality sector product, focuses on the analysis of *basic product's utility*. Such utility, according to the definition, is provision of visitors with relaxation and meals. The customer seeks for, for example the possibility of independent or collective use of premises, the size of the room or the ease to move around the building.

The third determinant includes *the sum of utilities* which may be offered for customers. In the case of a hostel the sum of utilities may be one overnight accommodation in multi-person room and hot beverage as well as the possibility to admire moun-

¹ H. Mruk, I.P. Rutkowski, *Strategia produktu*, Polskie Wydawnictwo Ekonomiczne, Warsaw 1999, p. 37.

² R. Kłeczek, W. Kowal, P. Waniowski i J. Woźniczka, *Marketing - jak to się robi?*, Ossolineum, Wrocław 1992, p. 42; Ph Kotler, *Marketing. Analiza, planowanie, wdrażanie i kontrola*, Warsaw 1997, Gebethner & S-ka, p. 72.

³ M. Turkowski, *Marketing usług hotelarskich*, Warsaw 1997, p. 34.

⁴ D. Jaremen, A. Panasiuk, *Usługi hotelarskie jako produkt*, [In:] *Hotelarstwo*, Ed. A. Panasiuk, D. Szostak, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw 2008, p. 27.

⁵ B. Żurawik, W. Żurawik, *Zarządzanie marketingowe*, cz. II, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, Gdańsk 1994, p. 49.

tain landscape. In the case of the hotel having five-star status the sum of utilities may constitute long-lasting visit in multi-room apartment equipped with some personal utilities (for example bathrobe, slippers and cosmetics), fridge or minibar.

One the systemic concept for service quality constitutes five-gap model⁶. It is based on the fact that service quality is assessed by the customer. The model identifies five areas in service provision in which differences may occur (gaps) between the view of service provision' managers and customer's needs with regard to service quality. *Gap 1 focuses on differences between the customer's needs and the way that managers understand and define these needs.* The model pays attention to companies' strategies and knowledge with regard to the consumer's needs. The most important determinants which affect this gap include the effectiveness of conducted marketing research, bottom communication between managers and junior employees under organizational structure of the enterprise. In order to remove the gap, hospitality sector enterprise needs to know its customers and precise the operating profile; it is also important to ensure the efficiency of information flow channels between potential customers and strategies decision makers. The enterprise must have cohesive strategy which allows determination of the enterprise's customer and customer's needs. *Gap 2 includes differences between management perception and service quality.*

The gap between hospitality sector manager's perception of the customer's needs and hospitality service quality and physical characteristics. The most important factors which affect the size of this gap in hospitality sector enterprises is the execution of forecasting activities in the form of diagnosis concerning possible flaws for customers in service provision process and their elimination prior to the introduction on the market, standardization of activities at each phase of service creation, maximal identification with the customer and knowledge about his needs and expectations as well as high quality of provided services.

The probability of the occurrence of such gap is high due to the fact that while enterprise creates its hospitality service it may pay attention to short-time costs and profits excluding the quality which is difficult to measure and assess. Managers have information which is necessary to fulfil the customer's needs, but they lack effective instruments identifying the quality level of the hospitality service.

Gap 3 focuses on differences between the specific nature of the hospitality service and provided service parameters. The most important factors determining the size of this gap include the proper employees' allocation (particularly in the collective work) having needed qualifications to execute the specific tasks, the degree of the responsibility of personnel for executed tasks and the proper control over employees and assessment system as well as determination of goals' quality within the enterprise and the customer's needs as cohesive conditions ensuring the effectiveness of hospitality

⁶ T. Knowles, *Zarządzanie hotelarstwem i gastronomią*, PWE, Warsaw 2001, p. 53.

service provision. The gap between the identification of service quality has adverse impact on the customer's quality assessment. In this case, despite the fact that service quality is consistent with the customer's needs, or exceeds them, the customer receives lower quality service. The removal of the gap requires proper human resources management effectiveness within hospitality service transfer. Correction of irregularities and recovery of the customer's loyalty is possible provided that the personnel will be properly trained; thanks to proper reclamation process management even the unhappy customer may change into loyal defender who trusts in the company. *The essence of the gap 4 focuses on differences between the level of provided services and external forms of communication, including data focusing on service parameters.* It is particularly connected with variety of forms of information flow between enterprises and its external surroundings, for example advertisements. The gap between the actual service and service's information results in the customer's lower quality assessment. Since the external communication concerning the service forms the customer's expectations, the company should not provide services which exceed its possibilities. If service provision strategy assumes to exceed the customer's expectations in such case provided quality will be higher. In this case horizontal communication between particular enterprises' bodies is also important. *Gap 5 focuses on differences between the customer's needs and provided service.* In the opinion of the customer the service quality is the function of the gap size between his expectations and provided service. We may say that the customer executes complex service assessment, which means determination whether technical and functional qualities are consistent with his expectations.

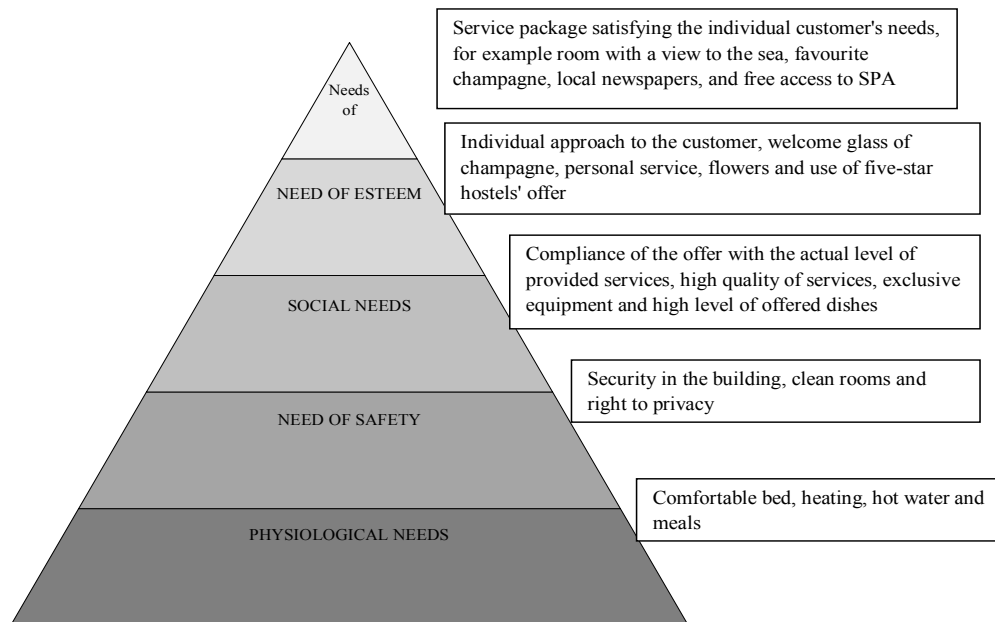
2. Customer's needs and hospitality services

The strength of market expansion of hospitality sector enterprises is determined by the degree of services adjustments to identified customer's needs and expectations, but also ensure them that enterprises satisfies their needs and that their expectations are consistent with the expectations of the enterprise.

Source literature executed diverse classification of the customer's needs. Hierarchy of needs executed by American psychologist, A.H Maslow who distinguished five basic group of needs occurring with particular frequency resulting from their important nature and level of complexity need to be highlighted. The following diagram presents the hierarchy of selected customers' needs in the hospitality sector including the above source literature (fig. 1).

Figure 1. Hierarchy of needs of hospitality sector customer

Rysunek 1. Piramida potrzeb klientów sektora hotelarstwa



Source: own study.

Human, first of all, satisfies the lowest needs and such action affects the execution of highest needs. It may be seen that the hospitality service satisfies the needs belonging to the lowest level of the hierarchy – sleep and hunger which belongs to physiological needs supplemented by the need of safety. Through the satisfaction of primary needs the hospitality service satisfies the needs belonging to higher level, for example:

- *social needs* – “me and my family make use of five-star hotel offers”
- *need of esteem* – “I approve and admire that you makes use of five-star hotels offer”
- *need of self-actualization* – “In X hotel I am provided with my favourite flowers and daily newspapers”.

The customer visits the hotel to satisfy his physiological and safety needs. The customer connects with the hotel which, apart from primary needs, satisfies also his social needs, need of esteem and needs of self-actualization. The following table presents the selected tourist destination targets, including specific nature of the hospitality sector (table 1).

Table 1. Trip destinations of hospitality sector services customers

Tabela 1. Cele podróży osób korzystających z usług sektora hotelarstwa

Work	conferences, meetings, trainings preparation and conclusion of transactions market research, acquisition, industry conferences, transit, transport
Science	lectures, seminars, scientific conferences, conventions, congresses, research work, professional activity beyond the place of permanent residence.
Relaxation	climate change, active tourism - active sports, festivals, cultural events, gaining knowledge on the regions, local culture, holiday beyond the place of permanent residence
Sport	participation in competitions, matches, etc. cheering
Health	treatment in health resorts, medical treatments visiting hospitals
Religious	pilgrimages to the places of religious interest participation in religious events
Personal	family events (weddings, funerals, army oaths) return to the „roots”, purchases, visiting family and friends

Source: own study.

2. Product's elements and customer's needs satisfaction

Hotel sector in Poland as a subgroup of the HoReCa sector providing services in the market of tourist services and is dependent on many factors. In respect of the Institute of Tourism in the years 2013-2016 the number of people visiting Poland is expected to grow to 14-16 million from the current 11-12 million⁷. The offer of hotel services should be tailored in particular to the requirements of the target audience – tourists both domestic and foreign, with particular emphasis on quality of

⁷ R. Szubstarski, *Rynek się rozkręca. Raport z rynku hotelarskiego w Polsce*, „Hotelarz” 2012, p. 4.

service. With regard to the opinion of A. Panasiuk and D. Szostak most important determinants affecting the development of the hospitality industry include political and economic situation of the country; geographical location, climatic conditions, the attractiveness of the region, the level of security, the development of local infrastructure and the demand revealed the business sector for hospitality services⁸.

Hospitality sector enterprises, first of all, provide the customer with the set of different services and diversity and standard of such services depend on the type and category of a given entity. While using hospitality enterprises services the customer may use full service possibilities of a given hotel, or may use only part of the available services, selected according to the needs. Different customer's needs are satisfied by different product's elements⁹. The first need on which the customer focuses during the selection of hospitality services is *accommodation need*. Accommodation in the hotel satisfies, first of all, physiological need related to sleep and relaxation. Satisfaction of this need requires protection against weather conditions - rain, cold (in particular regions against high temperatures), separation from people with whom we do not want to cooperate at a given moment. Accommodation need is satisfied by the hospitality enterprise providing guests with the facility the size and equipment of which depends on the type and category of hotel entity and service price. In dealing with the hospitality sector entities guests should also emphasize the importance of hospitality, which in the opinion of E. Nawrocka, S. Oparka stuck "in all details, small gestures, individual elements characteristic of a particular way of customer service at the hotel"¹⁰. The second important need during the selection of the hospitality service is *meal need*. Meal need is satisfied by hotel enterprise through various kinds of gastronomic facilities – restaurants, cafeterias and the possibility to bring meal to the room (*room service*). Higher standards hotels satisfy meal need to some extent, rooms are equipped with minibars. *Personal safety need* constitutes the next important need which is satisfied by hotels. This need is, in particular, related to the possibility to have safe sleep along with lack of worries about personal belongings. Hospitality sector units need to provide their guests with safety, privacy, quietness and intimacy; ensure conditions for effective leisure and work. These needs are satisfied by hotels by equipping rooms with locks and proper keys issuance system. More often hotels are equipped with cctv and buildings and customers' security is contracted to qualified companies. *Communication need* also known as the need to have contact with other people, is covered by social needs also known as the need of belonging. Hotel rooms offer telephones and telefaxes available in the front desk; and guests have constant access to the Internet. Such facilities offer also theme evenings (for

⁸ A. Panasiuk, D. Szostak, *Hotelarstwo – Usługi – Eksploatacja – Zarządzanie*, Wyd. Naukowe PWN, Warsaw 2009, p. 118-128.

⁹ M. Turkowski, *Marketing usług...*, p. 31.

¹⁰ E. Nawrocka, S. Oparka, *Hotel w XXI wieku: zarządzanie w warunkach globalizacji*, Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Zarządzania, Wrocław 2007, p. 196.

example in connection with Italian cuisine, Pirates of Caribbean, Eastern infatuation, Fluo Night, James Bond) which are in favour of social integration and facilitate creation of relationships. *Need of work*, proper conditions for its execution, is satisfied, first of all, by primary hospitality services. Performance of particular works (driver, salesman) requires accommodation, meals and satisfaction of other primary needs beyond the place of permanent residence. Based on the customer position there may be needed secretary and translation services as well as place adjusted to execution of commercial interviews (for example small conference room). *Need of recreation* is the next need which identifies the type of selected services by hospitality sector customers. To satisfy the need of recreation there are used different devices such as saunas, sunbeds, massage rooms, gym, fitness room, indoor and outdoor hotel pools, tennis courts, golf courses and ski lifts. While taking decision on equipping hotel with such devices it is necessary to assess the real demand for such service, or generate such demand. *Need of entertainment* is satisfied by the hospitality entity including identified customer's needs. Entertainment within the hotel satisfies social needs. Different guests have different interests. Organization of high quality entertainment (participation of famous stars, etc.) is economically efficient in the case of large events, for example New Year's Eve ball or other events. To some extent, hotels are equipped with chess, computer games, billiard; it is also possible to provide movies which exceed the standard offer of cable television. Important aspect of operation of common hospitality sector enterprises is the inclusion of the offer for *disabled persons*. The issues concerning needs of disabled persons are studied from the recent times. For this reason, not only in Poland, the removal of architectonic barriers hampering the movement around older hospitality facilities requires decreased costs, or complex organizational solutions, for example:

- designation and marking of parking places with proper width enabling placement of a wheelchair to the vehicles,
- placement of handrails on the stairs, corridors as well as removal of door-steps and stairs,
- use of optical and acoustic signalization (activation of light signal by the use of external button rather than knocking on the door),
- installation of optical and acoustic signalization, inscriptions and signs having the proper size and height.

Higher level needs include needs from higher levels of Maslow's hierarchy which include the need of esteem as well as the need of self-actualization which are not indicated by the hotel's guests. However, its identification and satisfaction may have strategic opinion-making importance. The very nature of higher level needs shows that its satisfaction is related to selected and important guests (for example VIP). The important condition to satisfy these needs is, first of all, flawless service. The satisfaction may take various forms, for example:

- no refusal in connection with hotel reservation

- accommodation in the favourite room
- placement of welcome flowers, fruits, local newspapers, discounts.

In accordance with marketing theory, the product constitutes almost all which may be offered on the market, including the primary goal which is satisfaction of the needs or wishes of target customers¹¹. The customers purchase hospitality product and expect, first of all, amount of benefits out of this product, benefits which satisfy their identified needs. The more needs the product is able to satisfy the more attractive it becomes; and raises interests. It is necessary to point that not each hospitality sector offer presented to the customer is accepted by these customers. Enterprises need to remember that the customer's actions on hospitality product market are very diverse with regard to hierarchy of needs and requirements which are set for hospitality sector products. The task of enterprises is to diverse products to cover their specific features and adjust to identified and diverse needs of different customers. It is important to note that relations between hospitality product and customer's needs may be subject to constant changes. Such changes may not only occur with regard to supply offer, meaning product changes and its different features, but also including demand side in which changes of customers' needs are of primary importance. Enterprises need to bear in mind the necessity of current analysis of relations between hospitality product features and consumer's needs which determine the actual possibilities of its sale.

Conclusion

In consideration of the above it is necessary to note that contemporary hospitality sector enterprise operating under changing conditions and growing competition should focus on the satisfaction of identified customer's needs with the use of supply offer. Market success of the enterprise depends on the level of the customer's satisfaction. If the product fulfills the customer's needs and expectations it is purchased; which in the future may result in long-term loyal cooperation. If the satisfaction on the purchased product is minimal the customer chooses the competition which offers better product which satisfies his needs and expectations in a better way. High level of dissatisfaction is not in favour of developing strong customer - enterprise relations which in the future may result in total loss of relations. Hospitality sector enterprises need to identify customer's expectations on a current basis and seek sources of dissatisfaction concerning the product.

¹¹ Ph. Kotler, *Marketing. Analiza...*, p. 7.

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Nota o Autorze:

Agnieszka Górka-Chowaniec – doktor nauk ekonomicznych w dyscyplinie nauki o zarządzaniu, absolwentka Politechniki Częstochowskiej. Pracuje jako adiunkt w Katedrze Zarządzania Kulturą Fizyczną i Turystyką Akademii Wychowania Fizycznego w Katowicach oraz w Katedrze Ekonomii i Zarządzania Wyższej Szkoły Humanitas. Jest również wykładowcą w Śląskiej Wyższej Szkole Medycznej w Katowicach. Jej zainteresowania badawcze i naukowe skupiają na problemach zarządzania podmiotem gospodarczym (organizacją), w tym na zarządzaniu zasobami ludzkimi, metodach zarządzania, motywowaniu w organizacji. W ostatnim czasie obiektem jej zainteresowań badawczych jest zarządzanie przedsiębiorstwem sektora turystyki w warunkach klastra. Autorka licznych publikacji z tego zakresu.

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