

TQM: Key to Enhancing Competitiveness and Cultural Heritage in Tourism

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the importance of Total Quality Management (TQM) in the tourism and culture industry. The study employs the Five-Gap Model of Service Quality to analyze the N. & S. Tsalapatas Rooftile and Brickworks Factory in Volos as a unique cultural and touristic destination. The goal of the study is to understand customer expectations and to demonstrate how TQM can enhance the competitiveness and quality of the tourism and culture sector. The results show that TQM can contribute to the growth of competitiveness and the emergence of cultural and touristic heritage. The implications suggest that TQM can be effectively applied in the tourism and culture industry to improve the quality of services and customer satisfaction.

KEYWORDS: Tourism, culture, museum, quality, management

Introduction

The globalization era has formed many different situations. Market in tourism and culture has to maintain a competitive level and qualitative services. Total Quality Management (TQM) is a strategy that aims to these two tasks and has been proved remarkably effective. Its importance in the touristic and cultural industry depends on the growth of competitiveness, the new touristic destinations, and the obvious change in tourists' preferences.

Moreover, as it is well known, touristic activities include many aspects of human life, such as transportation, hotels, food, finance, culture, entertainment, promotion services, etc (Nabil, 2003). Because they study the individual and his/her desires and choices, it has become a complex industry all over the world. It combines the quality of products and services with customers' choices. According to the World Touristic Organization (WTO), the GDP produced in tourism annually globally is about 10% of the total global GDP and includes over 230 million jobs internationally (Cram.com, 2021). Social, natural, and cultural heritage makes touristic and cultural industries competitive and simultaneously, the countries involved preserve their ethical obligation to protect their culture. Laws and Regulations refer to the duties for such industries, leaving them space to develop specified strategies and attractive policies to customers. Governmental initiatives are necessary, although they are symbolic and always aim to attract foreign aid.

The N. & S. Tsalapatas Rooftile and Brickworks Factory in Volos are unique of its kind. It used to be a productive factory for many years, supplying customers with various products and services

of tiles and bricks. The quality of them was very high, as they were created with attention and schedule. Nowadays, the building has been restored and a relevant Museum has been active, which includes exhibitions and models of its history and significance through years. Thus, this Museum constitutes a part of emerging the cultural and touristic heritage of Volos.

Total Quality Management

Total Quality Management (TQM) is the process through which several dysfunctions and errors of manufacturing and general management are detected and confronted, in order to protect customers' experience and vacation quality (Barone, 2021). TQM has as a precondition the training of employees, so that everyone plays a significant role in the qualitative supply of the product or service (Barone, 2021).

TQM has been created by William Deming. He was a manager who affected Japanese manufacturing. It is similar to the Six Sigma process, but it focuses on the reduction of errors by applying the internal guidelines, as Six Sigma focuses on reducing the defects (Barone, 2021). It aims to improve customers' service and the quality provided. It makes constantly new practices.

It is a part of organizational management, as it tries to improve the organization's results, as well as provide goods and services, by planning new strategies (Barone, 2021). It combines internal strategies and industrial standards, as it is related to provisions and laws about the operation of a business and the production of items.

It has some principles that apply. It aims to encourage the employees to work for a common goal and improve services and goods' quality simultaneously with the procedures demanded. An important factor is the data used to make decisions, as the performance scale is used and organizational communication is promoted (Barone, 2021). It also includes activities about the desirable results of the operation, such as quality policies and assurance, and quality control and improvement (Barone, 2021).

An example of TQM is Toyota. It uses the Kanban system, which means that this signal causes a reaction to implement the just-in-time procedure (Barone, 2021). So, Toyota kept as many machines as the orders demanded. All of them have a physical card with an inventory number. Before every part is installed in a car, the card is removed and included in a supply chain, so that immediately another same part to be ordered. So, the company is never overstocked. This had, as a result, to be produced better automobiles at an affordable price.

In order for TQM to be effective, attention has to be given to good leadership, quality, the priority of customers, elimination of errors, employees' training, and improvement of the processes (Barone, 2021). For example, customer focus means that quality is determined by the customer (DeFeo, 2019). Every measure taken is thought successful if there is customer feedback (DeFeo, 2019). Employees are responsible for the quality of services and goods too. When they receive their own decisions, they make suitable working environment and contribute to the qualitative procedure.

Moreover, TQM focuses on processes. The control of every step of the procedure is very useful, as it assesses, maintains, and improves quality (DeFeo, 2019). An integrated system is necessary,

as it promotes effective quality management too. The planning of a strategic plan with aims and goals, as well as the available facts on which serious decisions are taken constitute substantial elements of business performance (DeFeo, 2019). Also, communication beyond employees is desirable.

By using the principles and practices mentioned above, an organization can obtain continuous improvement and become more competitive. The quality department is not the only responsible department, as overall customer service must be provided. An effective TQM encourages the organization to develop and improve all products, services, and processes. It also reduces risk, resolves problems before they happen or during their existence, improves performance, controls processes, increases productivity, and reduces the total cost of quality of products (DeFeo, 2019). So, TQM is an important element of measuring the quality of business function and services improvement to customers.

Implementation in the Tourism and Cultural Industry

TQM is a key factor of industrial development and qualitative service. It concerns the manufacturing service. It focuses on systematic changes with a long-lasting. These characteristics make TQM adjusting practice to any kind of industry, including tourism and cultural ones, by being used in manufacturing, finance, and medicine (Avelini Holjevac, 1996).

This practice can be applied both to old and new industries. The employees work together by interacting and aiming for the same goals. So, every part of the organization can be improved. These parts concern the administration and the marketing of the business. It constitutes a fundamental characteristic for markets and their competitiveness and profitability (Chen, 2011). This means that quality is a tool used for industrial development and is constantly improving itself (Chen, 2011). It is related to the customer, as it starts from him or her and also ends up to him or her. So, the main qualitative activities are planning, realizing, evaluating, achieving, and improving (Chen, 2011).

Using TQM in the tourism and culture industry results in many advantages. They are mainly economic and social. The state's economy can be significantly developed by improving poor business productivity and quality in products and services. It is necessary to be learned the way that the TQM process functions, as it has coherence to the global market (Kasongo & Moono, 2010). Quality is the result of TQM systems applied to tourism and culture, including activities and tasks (Kasongo & Moono, 2010).

The planning of TQM is a part of management. It is based on practical experience, named quality realization, and knowledge produced by research and education (Kasongo & Moono, 2010). As TQM is constantly enhanced, these acts are repeated. Every effort to control touristic industries is replaced by employees' training and education (Kasongo & Moono, 2010). So, managers have to be trained and educated. Managers in tourism and culture have to apply their plan of quality, by using the quality principles. They also need to promote quality in every part or touristic activity, so that customers feel well taken care of. Thus, their role has been proved to be very important.

Quality in tourism and culture has many aspects. It includes products, work, service, information, process, human resources, employees, systems, enterprises, objectives, etc (Avelini Holjevac, 1996). These elements demand their combination and flexibility (Avelini Holjevac, 1996). The protection of such quality spreads to the chapters of marketing, purchasing, production, development, finance, and employees (Avelini Holjevac, 1996). The kind of concept quality has to do with prevention. It focuses on planning and not on controlling. So, everyone feels responsible for his work and all the employees aim to a common objective qualitative (Chen, 2011). The responsibility of a possible mistake is not connected to the quality controller, as he has not caused it nor can fix it. He has to detect the mistake and confirm it.

Quality has costs. They can be internal or external. Internal costs include the market, planning, production, design, materials, services, and improvement (Chen, 2011). External costs include product replacement, expiration due to bad quality, etc. Every kind of cost can be counted by the industry and confronted. The most difficult cost to be restituted is the loss of reputation or customers' trust, the reduction of competitiveness, low income, and the loss of tourists and guests (Avelini Holjevac, 1996).

TQM in tourism and culture can have advantages. For example, it increases the quality of products and services, as well as the client's satisfaction (Avelini Holjevac, 1996). It makes the industry more competitive and strong and reduces costs. It strengthens social responsibility and organizes activities for customers and the whole society. So, it produces culture and forms the future (Avelini Holjevac, 1996).

In tourism and culture, TQM has some special characteristics. For example, it is intangible, simultaneous, and different in every case (Avelini Holjevac, 1996). Tourism includes hotels, restaurants, shops, institutions, etc. Moreover, it is defined by the local population and economy. It has to interpret all different kinds of tourists and this makes quality management in tourism a complicated duty. As tourists' expectations are constantly increasing, TQM has to limit the distance appeared between the services demanded and the services provided (Pratt, 2019).

As TQM applied to manufacturing, the same practices it also uses in tourism and culture. So, productivity, quality, and profit are a team that contributes to the success and development. Quality is important for a company to be characterized as competitive. It also satisfies customers, who demand quality for the money (Kasongo & Moono, 2010). TQM was firstly implemented in the U.S.A. and the results conducted were encouraging. Its implementation was mainly by large touristic chains and cultural industries, rather than smaller ones. It has been useful to create a quality tourism product.

TQM to be effective has to follow some steps. For example, it has to define the touristic services in areas with specific characteristics, depending on customers' choices and habits. For every one of these areas, a quality system has to be formed, consisting of the following principles: safety, protection, privacy, freedom, sociability, trust, entertainment, reliability, communication, information (Kasongo & Moono, 2010). Research-based on the implementation of such principles has been proved especially useful for improving a quality management system in tourism or culture.

Furthermore, hotel services are a part of mass services (Kachwala, et al., 2017). They concentrate all the general characteristics of services and additionally, they have more characteristics, such as:

- a. Quality working intensity.
- b. High-level interaction with the customer.
- c. Variety of services for customers' choices.
- d. Catering products.
- e. Interdependence of service.
- f. Facing customers' heterogeneous.

These additional characteristics make the quality of services provided high. Working standards are more demanding and include prescribed elements of quality, such as knowledge, skills, experience, appearance, and behavior (Kachwala, et al., 2017). Every procedure is evaluated through some standards. The employee has to know everything about the services provided, as he/she is responsible for the task received. Guest's satisfaction is the priority, although it is not always easily conceivable, as it is constantly increasing. So, the employees' duty becomes more difficult and uncertain to secure the objectives of customers' satisfaction and pleasure (Pratt, 2019).

In order to approach quality services, some questions have to be answered. For example, who is the customer, what does he/she think of the touristic or cultural services provided, how can services become better, what measures have to be taken for such an aim, etc (Kachwala, et al., 2017). The preconditions for such an approach are relative to the introduction of marketing, development of quality, logistics, organization of the operation, computers, etc. A characteristic paradigm of qualitative methods is the Contact Point Analysis (CPA) system, which collects customers' opinions to define strengths and weaknesses (Kachwala, et al., 2017). It records the first movements of customers from the beginning till the end of their visit. Its objective is to prevent mistakes and provide total quality. It is not widely used in the Greek hotel industry yet, but it is used in isolated cases where international hotel chains exist. This method, at first, monitors the customer (telephone, check-in, breakfast, evening meal, several services, check-out) (Kachwala, et al., 2017). Then, it plans the best schedule for satisfying him/her, including no delays or mistakes, minimum use of written communication, no inter-personal relationships, team-work, and spirit, etc (Pratt, 2019).

However, by having all employees focus on quality management and improvement, industries can have cultural values for long-term success. TQM identifies skills and deficiencies in the employees, trains them, provides them sufficient education and mentors them to address possible deficiencies (Pratt, 2019). Teamwork helps to perform many services and share knowledge. Moreover, the communication between working teams supplies the company with flexibility and efficiency in personnel (Pratt, 2019).

Finally, TQM benefits the touristic and cultural industry. It creates products with fewer defects, as it fixes them. It also makes customers satisfied, as high-quality products relative to customers' needs provide more satisfaction (Pratt, 2019). Furthermore, it leads to lower costs, as money is saved by fewer customer supports, product replacements, or fixes. It also develops well-defined cultural values and quality management (Pratt, 2019). So, TQM has been proved to be a useful

and significant tool of qualitative provided services to tourists and customers in the touristic and cultural industry.

Case study “The N. & S. Tsalapatas Rooftile and Brickworks Factory in Volos”

The N. & S. Tsalapatas Rooftile and Brickworks Factory was founded in 1926. It shut down in 1978. It was producing several products which were distributed all around the world. In 1944 fires went cold, as well as in 1954-1956 in Volos (Ministry of Culture and Sports, 2012). In 1995, the Municipality of Volos decided to restore destroyed buildings and during 1998-2001 applied the URBAN program for Urban Studies- Construction and Development (DEMEKAV), so that multiple cultural purposes to be fulfilled (Ministry of Culture and Sports, 2012). Finally, in 2004, the Piraeus Bank Group Cultural Foundation started restoring the Rooftile and Brickworks Museum, which was established in 2007 (Ministry of Culture and Sports, 2012). So, in the building of N. & S. Tsalapatas Rooftile and Brickworks Factory that multiple productions took place for many years, an exhibition of its history with scale models and audiovisual material is active, while several educational programs and events are also organized (Ministry of Culture and Sports, 2012).

Specifically, the Museum is placed in the old Factory Rooftile and Brickworks of N. & S. Tsalapatas in Volos. It presents everyday life in the factory, as well as all the steps of production of different types of bricks and rooftile (Cultural Institution of Piraeus Association, 2016). It has as an aim to emerge the historical identity of Volos and contribute to the protection and promotion of its industrial heritage (Cultural Institution of Piraeus Association, 2016).

This Factory used to be one of the biggest of its kind. Industries and labs have been restored and constitute a rare sample of industrial material that exists today in Greece (Cultural Institution of Piraeus Association, 2016). In its place, the productive procedure has been organized step by step: wagons, tanks, senders, presses, incisors, the Hoffmann kiln, as well as final products of various types. So, the Tsalapatas Factory “works” again and makes alive all the productive steps of rooftile and bricks, and everyday life of workers who used to work in the Factory (Cultural Institution of Piraeus Association, 2016). There are also available models and material of supervisor, so that visitors can more easily learn about its history. Moreover, children can watch moving and stable models and enter the Hoffmann kiln, which is an impressive oven of 24-hour combustion for bricks and tiles’ burning, unique of its kind in Greece (Cultural Institution of Piraeus Association, 2016). It has educational programs with games and activities for schools and team visits, such as program “Building bricks and roof tiles”, where children play with miniatures of factory machines (Cultural Institution of Piraeus Association, 2016).

The quality models provided by this Museum are interesting. They help to understand the complexity of the service supplied. For example, the Perceived Service Quality Model of Gronroos (1982), becoming from Sweden, presents that service quality and everything relative to such qualitative models is based on the realization of quality by customers (Gronroos, 1991). Thus, it is an expansion of marketing, as it focuses on the customer. So, customers’ opinion is important and not designers or operations schedule.

If we could express some research questions of this study, we could record two:

- a. Is there an important relationship between the feelings that visitors have about their visit and their interactions with the human resource of the Museum?
- b. Is there an important relationship between the realization of visitors about the Factory and their behavioral intentions to visit it again and recommend it to other people?

The behavior of customers has affected many service quality models. Usually, customers ask for products or services that have pre-purchase as an expectation, in the context of service quality (Gronroos, 1991). The confirmation of this concept constitutes the basis of such model and has created the Gap Analysis and SERVQUAL models by Zeithaml, et al. (1988). The concept of quality by customers becomes from the comparison between their expectations and real life. When customers live more than they expect, then total perceived quality is positive (Gronroos, 1991). Total quality depends on the performance or experience that customers have.

Another quality model is the Five-Gap Model of Service Quality (Kotler, et al., 1996, pp. 357-361). This model promotes the knowledge of customers' expectations. Thus, marketing has to be implemented by knowing what customers expect, so that they provide services that customers think as excellent (McNeill, 2000). In this way, the marketing learns through questioning the customers' needs and desires and delivers services that solve the possible problem (McNeill, 2000). Often there is a lack of understanding of what customers expect. This is Gap 1. In order to avoid such a gap, companies usually conduct surveys on the subject. These surveys are constantly repeated, as customers' expectations are constantly changing. The quality service or product has to be flexible and adaptable. So, research turns out to be valuable, either formal or informal, as it constitutes a source of information (McNeill, 2000).

Another Gap that may be created is Gap 2. This happens when managers know what customers expect, but they cannot or are unwilling to develop services to deliver it (McNeill, 2000). Gap 2 can be caused due to inadequate commitment to service quality, lack of perception of customer expectation, inadequate tasks, or absence of goals in management and employees' satisfaction (McNeill, 2000). Moreover, this Gap happens due to short-term profits and unwillingness to invest in human resources.

Furthermore, Gap 3 happens when the managers know what customers expect and develop services to deliver it, but employees are unable or unwilling to deliver (McNeill, 2000). It is caused due to the lack of suitable tools and working conditions, false training or motivation, and incorrect guide (McNeill, 2000).

Gap 4 happens when the managers present more than they can support and communicate. This Gap includes mostly external communication, namely advertising, public relations, messages, and personal selling (McNeill, 2000). So, the marketers must ensure that operations can deliver what marketing promises (McNeill, 2000) by comprehending the procedure demanded.

Finally, Gap 5 happens when there is confusion between expected and perceived services. Expected services are what customers expect to receive from the company, while perceived services are what customers believe that receive from the company (McNeill, 2000). This Gap affects customers' satisfaction and quality.

An important factor of receiving qualitative services in such museums as N. & S. Tsalapatas Rooftile & Brickworks Factory is the study of customer's profiles. The tourist takes the responsibility for the final product by expressing his/her desires and experiences (Andersson,

2007). The tourist is active and shows skills, creativity, and knowledge (Andersson, 2007). Tourists are more likely in shopping as a random decision making and wasting money, although holiday planning is also a form of tourism shopping (Andersson, 2007). Companies invest in buying inputs and using labor and creativity, in order to combine inputs to output (Andersson, 2007). The same behaviors have tourists, as they use the same tools to produce experience. So, there are few differences between the processes taking place in companies and tourists.

Holiday planning is an economic activity. Tourists usually count the experience by comparing it to the price of the good or service provided (Andersson, 2007). The value of the services provided is different from one customer to another in a short time, a long time, or for a lifetime (Andersson, 2007). It is both an economic activity and enjoyment relative to the imagination of the holiday. It combines discovery and consumption projects, as well as pleasure through enjoyment and stimulation. It also saves costs by improving knowledge in prices and quality (Bianchi, 1998).

Moreover, we can discuss three categories of quality services:

- a. Basic needs have to be satisfied. Food, warmth, health, safety, and sex availability by protecting privacy are basic needs.
- b. Social needs are also important. Love and care from family and friends, as well as the feeling of belonging to a group, are need to be satisfied. So, the value of experiences can be affected by social norms (Andersson, 2007).
- c. Intellectual needs are also significant. Psychological elements, such as excitement and challenges affect the tourists' expectations and quality services.

As Berlyne (1971) has marked, novelty and excitement are two different kinds of quality that affect the fulfillment of basic and social needs. Also, fiction, imagination, and intellectual activity may play the same role when implemented in tourism or culture, art, literature, theater, and music (Andersson, 2007). Also, the goods, services, time, and skills provided are significant. Thus, it has to be discussed the relationship between these four variables, as the degree of their coherence forms finally the quality provided in services.

Nowadays, the pandemic of covid-19 has formed a different touristic reality for every visitor. As tourist is the third-largest export category of global trade, the effects of covid-19 on it have to be scholastically studied. As research has shown, export revenues from tourism fell by 910 billion dollars to 1.2 trillion dollars in 2020 globally (UNWTO, 2021). The implemented restrictive meters for confronting the pandemy have reduced visitors to touristic places. Million of tourism jobs have been at risk, as well as accommodation and food services industries, which lost a large part of their income. Especially small businesses (which cover approximately 80% of global tourism) are particularly vulnerable (UNWTO, 2021). Destinations most reliant on tourism for jobs were more hit (UNWTO, 2021).

Covid-19 has created the necessity to make more digital touristic services. Tourists use technology to serve their needs and desires. So, if a touristic industry wants to attract visitors, it has to make a website, in which it presents all the facilities and services provided. Moreover, it has to make available to visitors cyber services of booking, informing, seeing the rooms and the building, presenting the area, etc, so that tourists will choose the specific shelter to pass their holidays (Laberge, et al., 2020). These digital services undoubtedly increase the quality of touristic and cultural services provided and enact a new era in tourism.

Digital services lead to the modernization of tourism (Laberge, et al., 2020). They open new horizon for the services provided and cover more and more categories of visitors needs. For example, the tour of visitors can happen on internet, by applying a 3D program. So, visitors avoid the crowd and at the same time, enjoy a delightful tour of the place they want to visit (Laberge, et al., 2020). Moreover, they can have access to products available on internet, so that they can order them without having a present connection due to the prohibitive meters for covid-19.

However, the “covid-19 era” has gradually turned massive tourism into alternative tourism. Mass tourism as a form of large numbers of people who visit the same place at any time has been abandoned (FTJ/YTF, 2022). As a result, a lot of income has been lost too. This kind of tourism, which provided various facilities, products, communication, and resorts in the same way to many people constitutes the past, as covid-19 has applied new data in every human activity, including tourism. Alternative tourism, by aiming to have a neutral and positive impact on its destinations, is today the most selected way of vacations. So, kinds of sustainable or responsible tourism, solidarity or fair tourism, social tourism, participative tourism, slow travel, rural tourism, or ecotourism are modern ways of entertainment and visitors’ choices (FTJ/YTF, 2022).

Thus, the two basic research questions of the present study are answered. The feelings developed to visitors about their visit play a significant role in the image formed about the place visited and its characteristics. Equally important is the interaction created between the personnel and visitors, as the more qualitative services are provided the better impression is formed about the place. So, the first experience that visitors have of their visit both due to the place and its history and the staff working there, define their opinion for revisiting it and suggesting it to other people as a valuable destination.

However, the N. & S. Tsalapatas Rooftile and Brickworks Factory is one of the most historically productive factories in Greece with a rich experience in production and industrial development. It is very useful in local tourism and emerges the cultural heritage of Volos. Its Museum is unique of its kind. Thus, every tourist in the area should visit it.

Conclusion

In conclusion, TQM is a strategic policy used in industry to measure the quality of the producing goods and services. Its utility is great, as it uses several models and tools to measure customers’ expectations, experiences, and satisfaction. So, by using TQM, companies can improve their marketing and approach customers in a better way, increasing simultaneously their production and profit.

In tourism and culture, TQM constitutes an important technique, as these two sectors are immediately connected with the human being and his/her expectations and experiences. This technique leads companies to improve their skills and services and therefore, acquire a positive rumor in their activity. Moreover, tourists receive better facilities (basic, social, intellectual) and live a unique experience on holidays. However, the touristic and cultural industry tries to combine two kinds of results by using TQM, the customers’ satisfaction and the local emergence of cultural heritage and history.

The N. & S. Tsalapatas Rooftile and Brickworks Factory is a characteristic paradigm of such industry, as it has been perhaps the most significant industry in Volos for many decades. It was implementing this technique to its processes and procedures, without having named it. Nowadays, its Museum is one of a kind, including models of its history and the productive process. Thus, the N. & S. Tsalapatas Rooftile and Brickworks Factory is a basic monument of the touristic and cultural heritage in Volos.

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