

## ASPECTS REGARDING THE QUALITY OF SERVICES IN A 5 STAR HOTEL

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### Abstract

*Obtaining quality is a difficult issue, especially in the field of services where, besides other factors, the consumer's behavior also intervenes. Providing a good quality service implies both the ability to have control of the activity at any time and the ability to solve the special problems that may arise.*

*It is not enough for a company to declare its attachment to the provision of a quality service, to recognize the importance of quality in front of consumers. The quality of services must be outlined, expressed, defined. Hotel Ioana is the first boutique hotel in Sinaia and on the Prahova Valley, which has been classified in the 5 star category.*

**Key words:** service quality, hotel, costumers, tourists, competition

**JEL Classification:** L 21, L 22, L 26, L 83, M 31

### I. INTRODUCTION. THE CONCEPT OF SERVICE QUALITY

On the services market, quality implies a certain level of customer satisfaction and usually involves a comparison between the service provided and the one expected by costumers. Given this comparison, Nightingale (1987) proposed for measuring the quality of services and referred to “manufacturer’s service standards” (Ionciã Maria, 1997, p. 35).

The American marketing specialists (Bucur-Sabo M, 2006, p.54) propose the following five defining elements for the quality of services, elements which, in essence, contain the same basic conditions that a service company must meet:

1. the credibility, expressed by the most correct provision of the service, by honoring the promise and executing it in the best conditions;
2. the tangibility, represented by the visible parts (tangible elements) of the service, which must be as attractive as possible (comfortable waiting rooms, modern equipment, well-dressed staff etc.);
3. the maximum responsibility on the part of the providers, expressed by the receptivity and the desire to respond to the costumers’ requests;
4. kindness, characterized by politeness, respect, consideration and friendship;
5. understanding the constumer’s specific needs, which involves both personalization of needs and personalization of relationships.

Finally, it should not be forgotten that the main means of knowing the costumers’ reaction to the company’s services is communication. Through regular communication, many problems can be avoided and customer satisfaction will be greater. First, the costumer must have access to services, to know whom and how to contact in case of need. Secondly, the

communication between the client and the company must be initiated by both the client and the company. Costumers value relationships with the company more when the latter makes effort to maintain permanent contact. Third, meeting costumer expectations opens the way to exceeding them.

### II. THE POSITIONING ON THE MARKET OF THE TOURIST UNIT

Hotel Ioana is the first boutique hotel in Sinaia and on the Prahova Valley, which has been classified as a 5 star category hotel.

The hotel unit is located in an exceptional natural setting, in a quiet area, near the forest, at about 500 m from the starting point of the Telegondola, having access to the most important tourist routes, but also to Peleş Castle – one of the most important tourist attractions in Romania, located only 800 m away. Hotel Ioana is located between Cota and Telegondola roads, offering easy access to both the cable transport means and to the road that leads to Poiana Stâniî and Cota 1400; it also presents a modern architecture that fits very well in the landscape of the area.

The hotel unit was put into operation on December 30, 2010. The architectural concept is specific to the years 2000 – 2010 and seeks to combine the characteristics of modern architecture with the traditional lines of the area, fitting, without exception, in the design of the neighboring buildings. The construction is characterized by functionality, the access to the hotel for both tourists and cars being relatively easy.

The services offered by “Ioana Hotels” are diverse, customers being able to opt for accommodation and/or food services, depending on the needs of those who appeal to them. At the same time, it

offers the possibility of organizing meetings, seminars, symposiums.

The complex comprises a hotel and a restaurant. On the ground floor there is the reception hall, which includes the reception; the restaurant is located at the mezzanine, and on the other 3 levels there are accommodation spaces. At the basement of the building there are the warehouses, the thermal power plant and the maintenance workshops. The hotel also has a conference room (35 seats), its own laundry, children's playground, SPA center, ski room, with separate access from outside, outdoor, panoramic elevator.

### III. ELEMENTS OF INDIVIDUALIZATION OF THE HOTEL UNIT

The hotel unit classified according to the regulations in force in the category of five stars, has a capacity of 53 places in 18 double rooms, one single room, 5 apartments (of which three have their own spa area). In the spirit of this concept, the services are mostly individualized, for each client, keeping in mind even the customization of the minibar structure. The apartments, which are arranged on two or three levels, are named according to ski areas or mountain resorts. Among them there are: Cortina D'ampezzo, St. Moritz, Tyrol, St. Lake and Aspende, all being comfortable, coquettish, furnished in a modern style, equipped with everything one needs for a pleasant stay, such as: color TVs, minibars, telephones and so on.

For the interior design the products were chosen in favor of the best products, both for the special image they confer, and for the quality that is preserved over time. There was ordered solid wood furniture, light in color, which, due to the different shapes and surfaces of the rooms, was made almost unique for each space.

Villery & Boch ceramics, the Pure Stone range, unique in Germany, also helped to raise the quality of the bathrooms, along with the latest generation of Grohe (Ondus) sink fittings.

The comfort in the rooms was brought to a higher standard, importing from America the mattresses and bedding, from the world's largest producer in the field; there were also used cotton linen of the highest quality, and anti-allergic goose feather pillows from Austria.

The terraces of laminated wood, the interior doors, the exterior cladding with natural stone and wood, the good quality electronics, the French fireplaces in the lobby and in the special rooms have perfected a location of good taste, which all customers appreciate permanently.

As for the hotel management system, Ioana Hotels opted for Medallion PMS. The Medallion PMS

system offers a software solution for the complete and easy management of all the operations of the hotel, being flexibly, intuitively and simply to install and configure. Its main feature is the reservation function, which uses a graphical representation of the property, detailed according to the rooms' plan, their type and the booking screens. This solution is ideal for hotels that prefer an innovative system, which graphically reproduces the features of the hotel.

It should be mentioned that, within the hotel, maintenance and reconditioning works are being carried out permanently, in order to maintain the technical-material basis of this unit.

All the above were completed by the creation of a restaurant with a unique concept, in the middle of a small forest left untouched (trees cleaned), in the vicinity of the hotel, restaurant in which both nature, and the airy separations, in which the customers are received, give positive energy to all those who spend time in this unit. The restaurant is located at the base of the hotel, in an exceptional natural setting.

The restaurant is classified in the category of three stars for the high quality of the dishes, according to the norms and conditions stipulated by the quality standards.

The reception structure with food function offers costumers a rich and varied assortment of preparations and drinks, the service being done by the staff of the unit, which is characterized by high qualification and professional training.

The construction and installations are made of strong, high quality materials, imported from Germany and Austria. The hotel offers access for cars, garage/covered parking.

The interior fittings and the equipment are as follows:

- The floor is made of solid, layered wood;
- The walls are made of specially designed structures, of superior quality, to highlight the landscape and the specificity of the place;
- The interior decoration is adapted to the natural setting in which the hotel is located; the furniture is unitary in style, made of solid wood, of high quality, being imported from Germany, which allowed the possibility of creating an intimate atmosphere (separations) and an environmental framework, through individual lighting at tables and floral decorations;
- The small tables, consoles, presentation trolleys, loverators, sofas are quantitatively and qualitatively appropriate; the tableware is made of porcelain, with the emblem of the hotel; the plates made of porcelain are also matched with the rest of the dishes; silver stainless steel cutlery corresponds to the type and number of the structure of the preparations that can be served; the hotel is also equipped with complete sets of high quality glass glasses;

• Lingerie (table cloths, runners, napkins) is made of high quality textile materials, with the printed emblem of the hotel;

• Separate list (book du jour) for breakfast, lunch and dinner, comprising dishes and drinks, printed in Romanian and at least in one foreign language; for festive meals, banquets, various events, the menus are printed on special forms, with appropriate graphics.

*The salon offers a special note to the environment in which the dishes and drinks of the hotel are served. The distribution of the space is made in such a way as to ensure the intimacy and leave the impression of each client that occupies the best meal, that the service performed in the salon does not disturb at all. The location gives the possibility to highlight the surrounding landscape, and in some areas, its lack is compensated by light, sound and decoration effects. In relation to the annexed spaces (offices, sections), the position of the salon has been designed so that it is protected from noise, smells and other unpleasant aspects, which could be inconvenient for the customer.*

*There is also a room for guests to organize conferences, receptions or banquets, which is also located at the mezzanine.*

The movement of the staff and tourists in the hotel is ensured by means of two customer lifts, two service lifts and through fire stairs (in case of emergency).

To complete the accommodation and food offer, the complex welcomes its guests with a whole range of additional services, with or without payment, thus covering a large part of its clients' needs.

**Table 1. List of additional services offered to customers by Ioana Hotels**

Crt. No.	Payable	Free of charge
1	fun game rentals	customers' luggage transport
2	exchange	luggage storage for hotel guests
3	interurban and international telephone service	providing information
4	fax service	sorting and distribution of passenger correspondence
5	copy service	offering local newspapers
6	the merchandise marketing service at the hotel reception	sending messages
7		reservation of accommodation in other hotels on the Prahova Valley
8		keeping valuables in safes or in the reception safe
9		courier services

10		telephone service inside the hotel and in the locality
11		wake up service at the requested time
12		parking
13		footwear cleaning and polishing
14		keeping objects forgotten by customers in their rooms

The managerial policy regarding the tariffs is a non-aggressive one, which comes to meet the clients' needs, referring, of course, to the demand of the profile market. There have been situations in which important discounts have been granted, including the occasion of organizing scientific and cultural-sporting events. Currently, the tariffs applied are differentiated by:

- the seasonal character of the tourist movement;
- structure of tourists (Romanians/foreigners);
- the structure of the rooms;
- the discount system ("at sight" or organized tourism).

#### IV. SPECIFIC INSTRUMENTS FOR SERVICE QUALITY CONTROL

As a proof of concerns for the quality of the services provided at Ioana complex, the managerial tool called suggestive check-list, specific to hotel management, is used and it represents the list that includes all the control objectives. Each managerial level and each compartment must draw up its own list for the control activity to be as precise as possible.

As the first impression of the tourists arriving at the hotel is received through the FRONT OFFICE compartment, we considered it appropriate to present the check-list document for it.

The control objectives for the FRONT OFFICE compartment are:

##### 1. Exterior spaces:

- clean parking;
- well maintained green spaces;
- the clean porch;
- operation of all night lighting systems;

##### 2. Indoor - public spaces:

a) The general appearance of the reception hall and the waiting hall:

- clean windows, curtains and drapes;
- cleaned tables and ashtrays;
- clean outdoor ashtrays;
- vacuumed carpet;
- washed and cleaned marble;

- well-maintained floral decorations and dusted plants;
  - operation of all lighting sources;
  - shoe polishing machine in working order;
  - clean telephone booths;
  - well-maintained furniture;
  - the city plan available to the client;
  - train timetable available to customers;
- b) Toilet:
- clean sinks, toilets, urinals and mirrors;
  - clean walls, floors, doors and ceilings.
3. The counter:
- desk with ashtrays and vases with the inscription “Ioana Hotels”;
  - currency exchange panel;
  - panel with the telephone numbers of the General Manager of the company, the Consumer Protection Agency and the Ministry of Tourism;
  - panel with the tariffs applied for both foreigners and Romanians;
  - panel with additional payment and non-payment services provided by the hotel;
  - panel with the order of classification of the hotel and the operating authorization;
  - panel with the firemen’s telephone number.
4. Staff:
- all personnel in uniform, with badge;
  - body and clothing cleaning (nails, shoes, lack of odors);
  - the front office staff must know all the accommodation, rates, taxes and facilities of the hotel.

## V. IOANA HOTELS’ CUSTOMERS

Under the conditions of a strong competition in the hotel market, the “Ioana Hotels” complex has registered, for a good period of time, great success, the weekends being full, and the customers delighted, even if the price of a room exceeds by far the average level practiced in the area (double room rates start from 100 euros, on the weekend, for two persons), due in particular to the support of a large number of employees, absolutely necessary to provide quality services and products.

Only in this way, Ioana Hotels manages to be attentive, present, but at the same time discreet, to all the clients’ wishes, looking for solutions for any request, no matter how extravagant or daring it would be (ride with a Hummer or helicopter, visits to a real fold from the mountains, guided tourist routes, sophisticated menus, surprise parties etc.).

*Most of the tourist groups that the hotel hosts are made up of Romanian tourists - 80% of them practicing rest tourism; the 20% difference is represented by foreign tourists: Americans, Greeks,*

*Israelis, Turks, Germans, Poles, Belgians, French, and Japanese.*

*The analysis of the specific activity carried out in the hotel was based on the data collected within it. The analysis is presented in its dynamics for the period 2015 - 2018, which allowed the assessment of its evolution, with its strengths or weaknesses, by calculating certain specific indicators.*

Table 2 shows, synthetically, the accommodation situation from 2015 to 2018 (the data correspond to the end of each year).

**Table 2 The accommodation in “Ioana Hotels” from 2015 to 2018**

Year	CUC [%]	No. of accommodate tourists		
		Total, out	Romaniana	Foreigners
(1)				
2015	69,07	14.623	12.098	2.525
2016	70,06	14.948	11.959	2.989
2017	74,97	15.873	13.016	2.857
2018	77,81	16.474	12.685	3.789

Source: “Ioana Hotels” archive data

Analyzing table 1, it can be seen that in 2015 and 2016 the number of tourists was constant, the tendency to increase the number of tourists being at the level of 2017, and then it noticed a slight increase. The situation is largely due to the fact that in 2017 there was a winter rich in snow, which resulted in a substantial increase in the number of tourists between December 2017 and February 2018.

The detailed analysis of the accommodation services performed is presented through the indicators: number of tourists, number of tourist days and average number of days performed annually, in the period 2015 - 2018.

**Table 3 Evolution of tourist number at “Ioana Hotels”, 2015 – 2018**

Year	No. of tourists		
	On their own	By agencies/contracts	TOTAL
2015	11.991	2.632	14.623
2016	12.108	2.840	14.948
2017	11.747	4.126	15.873
2018	11.532	4.942	16.474

Source: “Ioana Hotels” archive data

**Table 4 Evolution of the number days-tourist at “Ioana Hotels”, 2015 – 2018**

Year	Nr. zile-turist		
	On their own	By agencies/contracts	TOTAL
2015	23.982	7.896	31.878
2016	24.211	5.683	29.894
2017	23.498	8.674	32.172
2018	26.363	9.882	36.245

Source: “Ioana Hotels” archive data

**Table 5 Evolution of the average duration of the stay of tourists who came by means of agencied or on their own at “Ioana Hotels”, 2015 – 2018**

Year	Average duration of the stay		
	On their own	By agencies/contracts	TOTAL
2015	1,33	2,92	1,65
2016	1,31	2,88	1,85
2017	1,33	2,53	1,85
2018	1,39	2,40	1,90

Source: “Ioana Hotels” archive data

The data presented above show the following:

- in the last years, tourism has a pronounced tendency of organization (explained by the lower tariffs applied in the case of organized tourism), the tourist becoming more cautious regarding the reservation of his place in the hotel, calling more and more often to the intermediaries from tourism for the security of obtaining services. Thus, it can be seen from table 3 that the number of tourists, coming from organized tourism, has increased surprisingly since 2017, at the expense of tourism on its own (which was preferred in the period 2015 - 2016);

- the same evolution has the indicator number of tourist days, during the analyzed period (table 4). However, this indicator has higher values in the case of organized tourism than on their own, in the period 2017 - 2018, so tourists who want a longer stay in Sinaia, for certain interests, are cautious and resort to tourism intermediaries for booking places;

- the evolution of the average duration of the stay, during the analyzed period, had a slightly increasing evolution, from the value 1.65 in 2014 to 1.90 in 2017 (table 5). It can be seen that the values of this indicator are significantly higher than the total, in the case of organized tourism, but the values decreased from 2.92 in 2014, to 2.40 in 2017. The tourists arrived on their own determined a value of the average number of days of 1.33, so a short stay in the “Ioana Hotels” complex;

- it is useful to appreciate the way the tourism organized in the case of the “Ioana Hotels” hotel is realized. Thus, the unit has collaboration contracts, which provide advantageous, constant rates, for a long time, both with travel agents, as well as with economic agents or organizations from Sinaia, who wish to accommodate their guests here. In table 6 are presented companies and organizations with which the hotel has collaboration contracts.

**Table 6 Companies that work with “Ioana Hotels” – organized tourism**

Tourist agencies		Other organizations
POST Agency	SIMPASPORT	University G. Barițiu BV
EWTR	ONT EXTRA	University Transilvania BV
PART Group	ARCADIA Agency	S.C. AURORA S.A.
HORA Agency	CRISTIANUL Agency	RANK XEROX
TPA	LITORAL Agency	ITC Brașov
ONT SEZON	DIMM Travel	S.C. CONDOR S.A
RUSTIC Agency	CONTI Cluj Agency	S.C. BRAFOR S.A
SIMPATURISM	ONT Agency	MEDIAROM
DANUBIUS Agency	JINFO Agency	ROMGAZ
New WELLC	Odeon Agency	ACR
Real Travel Agency	NoVA Agency	County Board of education
Magellan Agency	INTERTOURS Agency	
CARPATTOUR	PARALELA 45	

Source: “Ioana Hotels” archive data

It can be noticed that there are a large number of travel agencies that have contracts with “Ioana Hotels”, to the detriment of other organizations (companies, foundations, associations or individuals). This also proves the quantitative increase of the tourism organized in 2016 and 2017, in the total activity, as well as the high value of the average number of days in the case of this form of tourism. The situation is due to the fact that during the analyzed period the management of the hotel was permanently concerned about perfecting this form of tourist attraction.

## VI. CONCLUSION

“Ioana Hotels” has not enjoyed a large influx of customers from the beginning, especially since the opening took place when the economic crisis had already begun, and the prices of “Ioana Hotels” are above the normal market level. At present, however, “Ioana Hotels” is constantly growing, both in terms of occupancy rate, income, and services, according to the clients’ opinions. Positive reviews from Tripadvisor.com, Booking.com and other booking sites make owners and employees become more ambitious, and negative ones help them to remedy any mistakes or shortcomings found.

The efficient results that “Ioana Hotels” enjoys are largely due to a good organizational structure.

The “Ioana Hotels” strategy is based on criteria of efficiency and profitability. Human capital has a defining role in the implementation of this strategy, as the primary source of comfort and quality offered by this unit. The training, the promotion, the education of

the employed people created a new team, which is confused with the quality of the hotel itself, all ultimately leading to the recognition that “Ioana Hotels” is in the top of the best hotels in Romania. The mission of human resources management is to provide

the properly trained and motivated personnel organization, which will contribute to achieving the specific objectives of “Ioana Hotels”, in order to achieve the success of the services offered to clients and to consolidate its position on the market.

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