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Gospodarka turystyczna w regionie

**Rynek turystyczny – współczesne trendy,
problemy i perspektywy jego rozwoju**

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Spis treści

Wstęp	9
Matylda Awedyk, Maciej Makarewicz, Justyna Weltrowska , Indywidualne <i>city break</i> jako reprezentacyjny trend turystyki europejskiej w XXI wieku.....	11
Matylda Awedyk, Sandra Starczewska, Justyna Weltrowska , Rynek prywatnych apartamentów jako uzupełnienie oferty hotelarskiej w Poznaniu.....	19
Agata Balińska , Konkurencyjność Polski Wschodniej jako destynacji turystycznej w ocenie słuchaczy Uniwersytetu Trzeciego Wieku SGGW.....	29
Katarzyna Bieluszko , Oczekiwania klientów hotelowych dotyczące cen w Internecie a działania hoteli na rynku elektronicznej dystrybucji.....	40
Krzysztof Celuch , Rola jednostek Convention Bureau w marketingu regionów turystycznych w Polsce.....	50
Ewa Dziedzic , Polityka kulturalna władz miejskich a rozwój turystyki.....	60
Piotr Gryszel , Wielokulturowość Dolnego Śląska jako produkt edukacyjnej turystyki kulturowej.....	69
Mikołaj Jalinik , Perspektywy rozwoju gospodarstw agroturystycznych na obszarze Puszczy Białowieskiej.....	78
Małgorzata Januszewska, Daria E. Jaremen, Elżbieta Nawrocka , Rola turystyki społecznej w równoważeniu konsumpcji turystycznej.....	90
Mirosław Januszewski , Zróżnicowanie aktywności turystycznej młodzieży uczącej się w powiecie wałbrzyskim.....	103
Anna Jęczmyk, Magdalena Maćkowiak , Lokalne grupy działania jako przykład współpracy sieciowej sprzyjającej tworzeniu produktu turystycznego.....	114
Zygmunt Kruczek , Znaczenie szlaków kulturowych dla rozwoju turystyki edukacyjnej.....	124
Magdalena Maćkowiak, Anna Jęczmyk , Strategia <i>hands-on activity</i> w turystyce wiejskiej i jej wykorzystanie w tworzeniu edukacyjnych produktów turystycznych.....	134
Beata Madras-Majewska, Janusz Majewski , Apiturystyka jako forma turystyki edukacyjnej.....	144
Janusz Majewski, Marcin Idzik , Regionalne zróżnicowanie aktywności turystycznej Polaków.....	153
Andrej Malachovský, Simona Murínová , Cestovný ruch na Slovensku v kontexte vývoja v Európe.....	163
Barbara Marciszewska , Turystyka edukacyjna – kontekst społeczny i ekonomiczny.....	174

Mirosław Marczak , Branding w turystyce – przykłady wykorzystania przez narodowe organizacje turystyczne w wybranych krajach	182
Izabela Michalska-Dudek , Pojęcie, rodzaje i motywy lojalności klientów przedsiębiorstw turystycznych	191
Agnieszka Niezgoda , Prosument na rynku turystycznym – próba zdefiniowania	203
Stefan Nowak , Struktura finansowania działalności lokalnych organizacji turystycznych	211
Katarzyna Orfin , Rola platform internetowych w działaniach promocyjnych jednostek terytorialnych w zakresie turystyki	220
Eugenia Panfiluk , Analiza ekonomicznych wyników działalności inwestycyjnej w sektorze turystycznym. Studium przypadku województwa podlaskiego	230
Renata Przeorek-Smyka , Determinanty prawne zrównoważonego rozwoju turystyki w Unii Europejskiej i w Polsce. Wybrane problemy	241
Sławomir Pytel, Grzegorz Jankowski , Wpływ migracji osób starszych na rynek pracy w obszarach atrakcyjnych turystycznie w Polsce.....	253
Andrzej Rapacz , Możliwości finansowania rozwoju turystyki społecznej w Polsce.....	264
Kristina Šambronská, Daniela Matušiková, Anna Šenková , Measuring service quality of hotel establishments on the base of GAP model with emphasis of dimension of service reliability	274
Renata Seweryn, Agata Niemczyk , Targi jako platforma bezpośredniej komunikacji branżowej (w świetle opinii zwiedzających Międzynarodowe Targi Gastronomiczne EuroGastro 2012).....	283
Jan Sikora, Agnieszka Wartecka-Ważyńska , Popyt na rynku turystyki wiejskiej w Polsce w świetle badań empirycznych	291
Aleksandra Sychała, Sylwia Graja-Zwolińska , Specyfika turystyki edukacyjnej na obszarach chronionych. Studium przypadku polskich parków narodowych	304
Monika Staszek, Teresa Brzezińska-Wójcik, Andrzej Świeca , Analiza ofert polskich touroperatorów na sezon 2012/2013 na podstawie turystyki wyjazdowej do Tunezji – jednego z najpopularniejszych kierunków wakacyjnych.....	314
Adam R. Szromek , Wskaźniki funkcji turystycznej i ich współzależność z innymi wskaźnikami ekonomicznymi na przykładzie polskiej gospodarki w latach 2000-2010	325
Rajmund Tomik, Andrzej Hadzik , Motywy uprawiania turystyki aktywnej przez studentów	339
Andrzej Tucki, Ewa Skowronek, Renata Krukowska , Ocena postaw społeczności lokalnej do rozwoju turystyki na przykładzie zwierzyńca	347
Piotr Zawadzki , <i>City placement</i> jako element promocji produktu turystycznego miast	358

Artur Zieliński, Krzysztof Czerwiński, Atrakcyjność turystyczna Buska-Zdroju w opinii jego mieszkańców.....	368
Artur Zieliński, Krzysztof Czerwiński, Poniemie jako przykład przestrzeni o szerokich możliwościach rozwoju turystyki edukacyjnej.....	379

Summaries

Matylda Awedyk, Maciej Makarewicz, Justyna Weltrowska, Individual city break as a representative trend in the XXIst century European tourism.	18
Matylda Awedyk, Sandra Starczewska, Justyna Weltrowska, Private apartments as a complement for hotels. Case study of Poznań accommodation market.....	28
Agata Balińska, Competitiveness of eastern Poland as a tourist destination in the opinion of students of the University of the Third Age of Warsaw University of Life Sciences	39
Katarzyna Bieluszko, Customer expectations for online hotel prices and hotels activities on the e-market.....	49
Krzysztof Celuch, The role of Convention Bureaux in tourism regions marketing in Poland.....	59
Ewa Dziezic, Cultural policy of city governments vs. tourism development	68
Piotr Gryszel, Multiculturalism of Lower Silesia as a product of educational cultural tourism	77
Mikołaj Jalinik, Functioning and development prospects of agritourism farms in Białowieża municipality.....	89
Małgorzata Januszewska, Daria E. Jaremen, Elżbieta Nawrocka, The role of social tourism in balancing tourism consumption	102
Mirosław Januszewski, Tourism activities diversification of the learning youth in Wałbrzyski district	113
Anna Jęczmyk, Magdalena Maćkowiak, Local Action Groups as an example of cooperation network favorable in creating a tourism product....	123
Zygmunt Kruczek, The importance of cultural routes for the development of educational tourism.....	133
Magdalena Maćkowiak, Anna Jęczmyk, The strategy of hands-on activity in rural tourism and its use in creating tourism educational products	143
Beata Madras-Majewska, Janusz Majewski, Apitourism as a form of educational tourism.....	152
Janusz Majewski, Marcin Idzik, Regional differentiation of tourism activity of Poles.....	162
Andrej Malachovský, Simona Murínová, Tourism in Slovakia in the context of development in Europe	173

Barbara Marciszewska , Educational tourism: social and economic context	181
Mirosław Marczak , Branding in tourism: examples of its use by National Tourism Organizations (NTO) in selected states	190
Izabela Michalska-Dudek , Notion, types and motives of loyalty of tourist enterprises clients	202
Agnieszka Niezgoda , Prosumer on the tourist market – attempt to define	210
Stefan Nowak , Financial structure of Local Tourist Organizations	219
Katarzyna Orfin , Role of internet platforms in promotion activities of territorial units in the area of tourism.....	229
Eugenia Panfiluk , The analysis of economic results of investment activity in tourist sector. Case study of Podlasie Voivodeship	240
Renata Przeorek-Smyka , Law determinants of sustainable tourism development in the UE and Poland. Selected problems	252
Sławomir Pytel, Grzegorz Jankowski , Retirees and their influence on the labour market in tourists areas in Poland	263
Andrzej Rapacz , Possibilities for financing the development of social tourism in Poland.....	273
Kristína Šambronská, Daniela Matušíková, Anna Šenková , Pomiar jakości obsługi hoteli na podstawie modelu GAP z podkreśleniem wymiaru niezawodności usług.....	282
Renata Seweryn, Agata Niemczyk , Fairs as a platform of the trade direct communication (on the basis of the opinions of visitors of International Food Service Trade Fair EuroGastro 2012)	290
Jan Sikora, Agnieszka Wartecka-Ważyńska , Demand on the market of rural tourism in Poland in the light of empirical studies	302
Aleksandra Sychała, Sylwia Graja-Zwolińska , Specifics of educational tourism in protected areas. Case study of Polish national parks	313
Monika Staszek, Teresa Brzezińska-Wójcik, Andrzej Świeca , The analysis of Polish tour operators' offers for the season 2012/2013 on the basis of an outbound tourism to Tunisia – one of the most popular holiday destinations.	324
Adam R. Szromek , Indicators of tourist function and their correlation with other economic indicators on the example of Polish economy in 2000-2010..	338
Rajmund Tomik, Andrzej Hadzik , Students' motivations for participation in active sport tourism	346
Andrzej Tucki, Ewa Skowronek, Renata Krukowska , Evaluation of residents' attitudes to tourism development on the example of Zwierzyniec ..	357
Piotr Zawadzki , City placement as an element of town tourism product promotion	367
Artur Zieliński, Krzysztof Czerwiński , Tourist attractiveness of Busko-Zdrój in the opinion of its inhabitants	378
Artur Zieliński, Krzysztof Czerwiński , Poniemie as an example of the area with the wide range of development opportunities in terms of educational tourism.....	388

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MEASURING SERVICE QUALITY OF HOTEL ESTABLISHMENTS ON THE BASE OF GAP MODEL WITH EMPHASIS OF DIMENSION OF SERVICE RELIABILITY

Abstract: Tourism and its services represent a specific sphere in present society. Accommodation establishments and their services face to strong competitive environment that is a reason why they are forced to provide high quality services to distinguish from the others. To evaluate the level of quality can be used several research methods. For the purpose of this work it was exploited the GAP model which was focused on the dimension of service reliability in chosen hotel located in eastern part of Slovakia. Its services were compared in two periods in 2009 and 2012. The results of the research made by questionnaire are described in more detail in the study.

Keywords: GAP model, service quality, accommodation establishment, questionnaire, customer satisfaction.

1. Introduction to Hotel services and importance of their quality

Accommodation services are important component of tourism sphere. They are treated as the basic services together with transport and catering ones. Depending on services and quality of each hotel establishment, future clients can decide what to choose as their final destination. Quality in accommodation establishments as well as in entire tourism field is created by many components.

In parallel with the growth of the tourism and hospitality industry worldwide, consumer expectations and demands for quality are rising while consumer tastes are varying on the one hand, and competition among the firms, both nationally and internationally, is intensifying on the other [Uher, Pullmanová-Švedová 2011]. Hotel industry is experiencing increased competitive pressures as a consequence of the combined effect of the worldwide economic recession, technological advancement and globalisation [Harrington, Akehurst 2000]. The intense competitive hotel environment has modified the service delivery ethos and has promoted the importance of adopting a quality ethic [Murasiranwa, Nield, Ball 2010].

Product as well as accommodation services include a combination of physical and intellectual components that the organization offers to the target market [Gbuřová 2011]. Historically, the development of quality is associated with the leading representatives of the hotel industry. At the beginning of the 20th century, the United States acceded to the application and the implementation of standards and the hotel companies, and began to promote the philosophy of TQM (total quality management). We must not forget that the overall quality of hotel services consist of sub-qualities – *technical* (Facilities/ hotel equipment), *personal side of the hotel* (staff and management) and last but not least, *guests* who can directly complete and influence provided services [Janičková 2006]. In any case, it is necessary to emphasize that the employees are the most important quality factor [Gúčík 2007] as they affect the quality of two-thirds. Therefore in tourism, we should pay attention to them.

Defining and realizing of requirements of established guests groups has a direct impact on the provision of services, determination of tariffs and quality control, as each group has other requirements. Management must ensure coherence between the desired qualities of guests' service quality defined by quality from management side toward employees – quality performers. There is a consensus in the literature that hotel unit managers have an important influence on the success or failure of service quality implementation [Olian, Rynes 1991; Nebel, Schaffer 1992; Harrington, Akehurst 2000]. Thus, their support as critical implementers of quality is paramount particularly in today's highly competitive hotel environment [Clark et al. 1994, in: Murasiranwa, Nield, Ball 2010]. Up to Uher and Pullmanová-Švedová [2011] the main antecedents and consequences of customer satisfaction and retention in the hotel industry are customer satisfaction, ambience, hospitality and retention.

While dealing and evaluating quality of tourism services, several research methods can be used even it is different and more difficult when comparing with other spheres. Among the most important ones we can include for instance Mystery shopping which can represent „effort to help the company's management to focus on the improvement of services provided to customers by giving them the information on how and what quality of the services is currently provided“ [Burda, Stuchlíková, Vavrečková, Dluhořová 2011, p. 13]. Other can be for instance GAP model.

2. GAP model and its exploitation

In this part of the study we would like to present GAP model as a method, which can be used for tourism research purposes, because on the base that it was founded on. Doing a research in tourism sphere usually brings complications that's why proper and valuable methods are more than needed.

The authors of GAP model developed a method for measuring the five dimensions of service quality called SERVQUAL (service quality). It concerns a questionnaire, which is divided into two parts:

1. Expectations of customer service to a particular area.
2. Indeed service perceived by customer in a specific service establishment.

Each part contains of 22 statements that relate to aspects of the five dimensions of service quality [Buttle 1994]. Historically, the questionnaire was revised and amended in its fields and in its claims, which have a direct impact on the quality dimensions.

Đad'o, Mateides [2002] point to the fact that SERVQUAL method uses a dual range – ideal and reality:

a) *expectation scale* – captures the ideal conditions and produces a business profile,

b) *perception scale* – captures the real conditions and real business profile.

In a study created to determine the quality of hotel services in selected hotel located in eastern part of Slovakia we used SERVQUAL questionnaire. That means that we retained both scales, and in each were assigned seven scores/valuations. Extreme 1 meant "I completely reject" (according to the customer opinion, the feature or attribute is not essential for the hotel) extreme and 7 meant "I strongly agree" (customer perceives a given feature as a necessity for the hotel). The values 2-6 make no verbal description [Parasuraman, Zeithaml, Berry 1988]. Bearden and Netemeyer [1999] add that the value difference between the testimonies is within the interval $\langle -6, 6 \rangle$. A positive score means that the actual condition exceeds guest expectations. Negative values submit important information for hotel management to which dimensions of provided services at hotels it is necessary to focus [Schneider, White 2004].

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I strongly agree						I completely reject

Scale 1. SERVQUAL questionnaire

Source: own processing up to [Parasuraman, Zeithaml, Berry 1988].

The main objective of the study was to assess the quality of the provided service of selected accommodation establishment- hotel, through managerial GAP model. Sub-objectives of the study are focused on full filling the main objective. They are more focused level of services characters, services dimensions and total customer attitude.

The questionnaire contained 22 statements to which respondents answered by choosing the point value from the range (fig. 1). Arguments in a standardized questionnaire could be divided among the five dimensions of hotel services quality as follows [Mateides, Đad'o 2002]:

1. Environment influence on the client
2. Service reliability
3. Sensitivity in customer approach
4. Qualification of staff
5. Empathy to the individual wishes of the customer.

In the scientific literature there exist several approaches to the evaluation of the SERVQUAL questionnaire. Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons calculated the service quality score by summing the differences that were attributable to a pair of arguments "expectation" and "perception" (1998).

We point out that mentioned authors were also using claims "expected" and "perceived service". In the study we work with the concepts of "expected" and "real" service. Mateides and Ďaďo [2002] specify that value of the (perceived) fair quality of service consists of the degree and direction of the gap between expectation and reality (see article Šambronská), which can be mathematically expressed by the formula:

$$\text{Overall approach} = \sum_{i=1}^n (r_i - o_i)$$

r_i – perceived (real) power of the i -th element,

o_i – expected performance of the i -th element.

According to the authors Mateides and Ďaďo, we need to calculate the average of all the characters that create a dimension as first, and then calculate the mean/average value of summary dimensions. Customer appreciates the service more, depending on the height of the value of the summary dimension (2004).

3. Methods and Methodology

The study was developed in collaboration with students of the Department of Management with a focus on tourism. Initial results were published and presented in the thesis. Later on the next verification/check of the level of provided service quality was done entirely by the members of the Department of tourism and hotel management.

To meet the main goal of the study, several hypotheses were identified. In the reported studies, we would like to focus and present to the one of the examined areas, concretely reliability of provided service, which in the SERVQUAL questionnaire advises to the other questions. We assumed that it will be the weak link in the analysis of provided – actual and expected hotel services. For the evaluation of the questionnaire, we used descriptive statistics.

Average SERVQUAL score for dimension of reliability of services (labelled S₂₀₀₉) was calculated on based on the arithmetic average of the difference paired

statements values that were attributed to the real and expected service. The average Serqual score was calculated by the arithmetic mean/average of the individual dimensions. This dimension is further specified in article of Šambrónská: GAP model as one possibility of evaluation quality hotel service.

Initial results of a study for dimension of the service reliability show that in no of the characters the hotel reached negative average. This is a satisfactory result. The measured values obtained on the other hand, show a relatively low level.

Table 1. Summary of the results of the real quality of the service in 2009

Statement	Multiplicity $R > O$		Multiplicity $R = O$		Multiplicity $R < O$	
	absolute	relative	absolute	relative	absolute	relative
S5 ₂₀₀₉	18	23,68%	40	52,63%	18	23,68%
S6 ₂₀₀₉	19	25%	38	50%	19	25%
S7 ₂₀₀₉	23	30,26%	37	48,68%	16	21,05%
S8 ₂₀₀₉	19	25%	37	48,68%	20	26,32%
S9 ₂₀₀₉	27	35,53%	33	43,42%	16	21,05%

S5 to S9 – rated features, of service quality, O – expected service, R – real service.

Source: [Šambrónská, Drábíková 2010].

From above mentioned results we can indicate that compliance of the deadline by providing the promised services fulfilled or exceeded expectations of 76.32% respondents. Almost a quarter of respondents saw real service quality of service as not entirely satisfactory in this area. Half of the respondents perceived interest of the hotel to resolve the problem at the level they expected ($R = O$). Positive contrast ($R > O$) showed a quarter of respondents. The first given service was perceived as the best stand out. There were more positively (30.26%) than negatively (21.05%) surprised guest by the quality of services in this area. As the most often it was recorded neutral stance of guest (48.68% of cases). Second time provided services showed that most respondents (48.68%) got the exact fulfilment of their expectations, but nothing more. Perhaps unhappy guests decide to use the services of another hotel because the studied hotel failed and it is not able to keep them by a certain extra amount that would, on the basis of customer satisfaction begin building his loyalty to the company. Finally, we focused on providing impeccable information. On the positive side, the hotel was able to exceed expectations to more than a third of respondents (35.53%) and has fulfilled the expectations to 43.42% of respondents. About a fifth of respondents (21.05%) said the quality of additional information was unsatisfactory.

In assessing the dimensions as a whole, we found that the frequency of a neutral stance on dimension decreased. Overall dimension "service reliability" compared with other dimensions in 2009 and the outstanding shares of respondents in these, the worst result achieved when only 42.41% of respondents said they hotel service reliability to be unsatisfactory.

Respondents (41) divided 100 points among all five studied dimensions (within the GAP model) around to the 20. Dimension services reliability gained 1,590 points, while the average points per dimension were 20.96 (fig. 1).

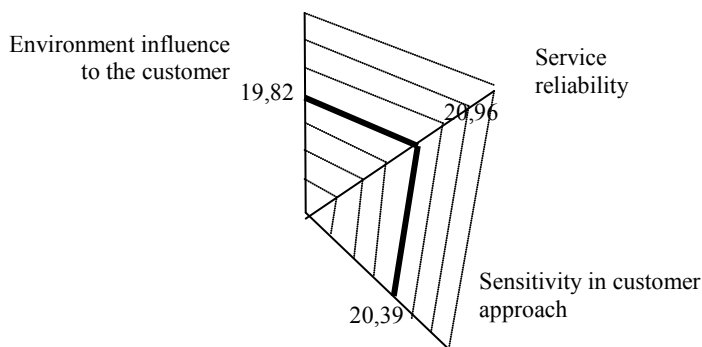


Fig. 1. Outline dimensions of service quality in terms of importance, with a focus on customer service reliability (2009)

Source: Šambronská-Drábikova, 2010.

Conclusion for 2009 in the dimension of provided service reliability:

- The promise of employee/hotel manager to the guest that the service will be done at particular time is very important. Guest can plan other activities. It may concern little things like clothes cleaning in fixed time, providing transport to the airport at the exact hour, message transferring and so on. Delay can mean, for example missed appointments, failure of the message or post-delivery to the company that sent the customer on a business trip and so on., which disturbs the guest stay and changes its relationship with the hotel.
- It is important to keep records of hotel guest’s requirements and deadlines for their completion.
- Finally, it is important to realize that the guest's faith in solving the problem is faith in the quality of the hotel.

Table 2. Summary of the results of the real quality of the service in 2009

Statement	Multiplicity R > O		Multiplicity R = O		Multiplicity R < O	
	absolute	relative	absolute	relative	absolute	relative
S5 ₂₀₁₂	31	40,79%	38	50%	12	9,21 %
S6 ₂₀₁₂	20	26,32%	31	40,79	24	32,89%
S7 ₂₀₁₂	40	52,63%	24	31,58%	12	15,79%
S8 ₂₀₁₂	19	25%	27	34,21%	31	40,79
S9 ₂₀₁₂	39	51,32%	20	26,32%	17	22,37%

S5 to S9 – rated features, of service quality, O – expected service, R – real service.

Source: own processing.

In 2012 we carried out re-investigation in the same hotel for the purpose of comparing the results of a determination of the movement (positive or negative) in the area of service quality. Again, we state the overall study results on the dimension of reliable service (labelled S12012).

When considering the same field of study, we re-emerged the following results. Compliance of the promised deadline while services providing, fulfilled or exceeded expectations by 90.79% of respondents. One fifth of respondents saw real service quality as not entirely satisfactory. A third of respondents perceived interest of the hotel to resolve the problem at the level they expected ($R = O$). Positive contrast ($R > O$) showed a quarter of respondents. First time provided service was again perceived as the best one. There was more positively surprised guest (52.63%) than negative (15.79%) on the quality of services in this area. As the most often was recorded neutral guest stance (31.58% of cases). Providing services in the second period proved to change. Most of the respondents (40.79%) were not satisfied with the provided service. Perhaps it has to do with the fact that guests expect a higher level of repeated services than if should be for the first time. There is a presumption that these guests will not reflect positively on the company when consulting with their relatives, friends and so on. The last area was focused on providing impeccable information. On the positive side, the hotel was able to exceed expectations by more than a third of respondents (51.32%) and has fulfilled the expectations to 26.32% of respondents. About a fifth of respondents (22.37%) said that the quality of additional information was unsatisfactory.

Respondents (55) didn't distribute 100 points among all five studied dimensions (within the GAP model) in the same proportion as in 2009 year. Dimension

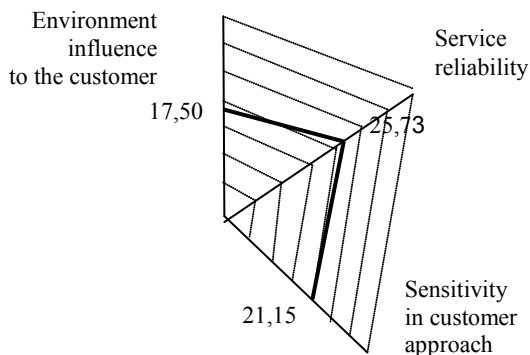


Fig. 2. Outline dimensions of service quality in terms of importance, with a focus on customer service reliability (2012)

Source: own processing.

services reliability gained 1,725 points, while the average points per dimension were 25.73 (fig. 2).

Conclusion for 2012 in the dimension of provided service reliability:

- It is appropriate that the hotel management, in case of longer period of solving the problem, informed the guest about the fulfilment of its requirements.
- When dealing with more complicated tasks to involve more hotel employees (managers). Responsible person is the one who took request/complaint from the guest.
- Find out whether the requirement was fulfilled up to the guest request, respectively, deal the complaint immediately and make a record about it.
- Hotel management should establish a responsibilities procedure and competencies of "compensation" of the guests on individual levels. Perform the control of competences.
- Train staff in the sphere of service quality providing, while it is extremely important to provide a high quality service for the first time.

4. Conclusion

Comparing the years 2009 and 2012 in the observed hotels in dimension of service reliability, we can conclude that the dimension of quality has improved. Improving the quality and therefore the service level proportionally affects the perception of the reliability of the guest. We would like to appreciate especially the positive movement in the current period of crisis. But we would like to highlight to the new point that emerged from the findings of the study in 2012. It is necessary and important that management delegates certain responsibilities to employees in the field of requirement dealing/guest complaints and that it implements the guest compensation levels as it is usual abroad.

We can see an important movement to a positive guest perception of the provided service especially in the provision of services for the first time and improving the provision of information.

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POMIAR JAKOŚCI OBSŁUGI HOTELI NA PODSTAWIE MODELU GAP Z PODKREŚLENIEM WYMIARU NIEZAWODNOŚCI USŁUG

Streszczenie: Turystyka i związane z nią usługi zajmują specyficzny obszar we współczesnym społeczeństwie. Obiekty noclegowe i związane z nimi usługi podlegają coraz silniejszej konkurencji, a więc ich jakość musi być coraz wyższa, by dzięki temu móc odróżniać się od innych. Do określenia poziomu jakości można zastosować kilka metod badawczych. W pracy omówiono model GAP, który wykorzystano do pomiaru niezawodności usług w wybranym hotelu we wschodniej części Słowacji. Oferowane przez niego usługi zostały porównane w dwóch latach: 2009 i 2012. Rezultaty przeprowadzonego badania ankietowego zostały szczegółowo zaprezentowane w artykule.

Słowa kluczowe: model GAP, jakość usług, obiekty noclegowe, ankietę, satysfakcja klientów.