

---

## QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN THE TOURISM SECTOR IN TRANSYLVANIA

**Corina Aurora Marin (Barbu)<sup>1</sup>, Valentina Irena Tudoran (Niculiță)<sup>2</sup>  
and Elena Condrea<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1) 2)</sup> *The Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania*

<sup>3)</sup> *Ovidius University of Constanta, Romania*

E-mail: coribarbu@yahoo.com; E-mail: irena\_niculita@yahoo.com;

E-mail: elenacondrea2003@yahoo.com

**Please cite this paper as:**

**Marin (Barbu), C.A., Tudoran (Niculiță), V.I. and Condrea, E., 2020.** Quality Management in the Tourism Sector in Transylvania. In: R. Pamfilie, V. Dinu, L. Tăchiciu, D. Pleșea, C. Vasiliu eds. *6<sup>th</sup> BASIQ International Conference on New Trends in Sustainable Business and Consumption*. Messina, Italy, 4-6 June 2020. Bucharest: ASE, pp. 799-806

---

### Abstract

In the last decade, many companies have focused on total quality management as a mean of improving profits, market share and competitiveness.

The Transylvania region represents a social construction created by economy, political, cultural and administrative discourses and practices with the serious possibility of becoming a center of power in the tourism sector based on leisure, recreation and rest tourism, cultural tourism but also for business tourism and other professional reasons.

Unpredictable changes in customer preferences, the existence of new tourism destinations, market competitiveness, changes and the threat of unstable labor due to globalization, as well as changes in demographic, economic and technological developments require increasing efforts of tourism market players to attract and retain customers.

In this paper we tried to highlight the role of implementing quality management in the development of tourism in Romania, starting from a brief analysis of tourism in Transylvania. Thus, in the first part of the paper we reviewed the role and importance of quality management in the development of a company, and in the second part we focused on quality assurance in the tourism sector in Transylvania. In this regard, we analyzed the indicators referring to the tourist reception structures with tourist accommodation function in Transylvania, as well as the number of staff employed in the tourist reception structures with tourist accommodation functions in Transylvania for the period 2016-2019.

### Keywords

Total Quality Management, tourism, Transylvania, customer satisfaction.

### JEL Classification

C46, L83, Z32

### **Introduction**

The relevant contribution in the debate of quality management in the hotel industry is the quality as a numerical and quantifiable direction in measuring the evolution of the dimensions of quality management in Romania, an aspect achievable with the help of all the agents involved in the dynamism of the market environment.

The quality describes the existing feelings of the customer, indicating the actual performance of the product or service, with the help of which the customers reveal their expectations through the comparisons that they make; therefore, the principle of purchase is the personal way of the tourist to choose the one that suits him.

The European Quality Organization (EOQC) and the American Quality Society (ASQ) place quality as "the totality of properties that demonstrate the degree to which a good or service can meet a particular need" so that to meet a wide range of customer needs it is necessary to examine the way of implementing the total quality management (TQM).

Quality management in the hotel industry is a process with unique challenges when developing the quality system that continues to generate organizational processes that result in high quality products and techniques; it is the guarantor of an obligatory act of progress to maintain a high level of excellence focused on setting major achievable goals through the progressive implementation of the quality strategy and the general course of activity for continuous innovation.

The researchers found that TQM programs improve organizational performance in terms of operational as well as financial aspects; improve teamwork, morale and work of employees, but also their attitude, which increases customer satisfaction. This results in competitive advantages, challenges that encourage and stimulate the commitment of management and the proper training of employees for the implementation of TQM. (Ilies and Crisan, 2011).

The result of the success of quality management is not immediate and may require a longer period of time to achieve. Strategies (or critical success factors to be identified) need to be continually reviewed to ensure the effective operation of TQM programs, so that management commitment, involvement of all employees, adequate employee training and resource provision are vital for successful quality management implementation in tourism.

TQM points and concepts have changed over time; the main concepts were introduced and developed by quality experts such as Deming, Juran, Crosby, Fageinbaum and Ishikawa. The focus has evolved from product quality to value-added products or services (Juran and Godfrey, 1998).

Recognizing the challenges will help management with strategies to overcome potential obstacles, which also helps reduce costs, time and resources; in addition, by knowing the right strategies or critical success factors, management teams can better use their strengths, identify weak points so they can understand the process of maximizing and using resources.

Through this study we tried to better understand the experience of hoteliers in Transylvania in implementing quality management in this sector of activity and, based on the results, to issue some conclusions valid for tourism in Romania.

### **Literature review**

In parallel with the rapid technological and socio-cultural changes, the ways of ensuring the quality of products and services, including tourism, have also evolved. Analyzing this evolution we can highlight four stages with specific characteristics, briefly detailed in the following lines.

*Quality assurance through control* was at the base of the management principles, as well as in the organization of activities regarding the decomposition process of the production process of a product in elementary operations, limitation of responsibilities, specialization of functional units; thus, there was a separation of those who make decisions by those who

execute them and respectively those who control their fulfillment. The quality was thus ensured by the final control of the components, with the aim of identifying and eliminating the inappropriate ones and the attention was focused on the product and less on the process, following the post-process verification of the conformity with the product specifications. By means of quality assurance, it is understood that compliance with these specifications.

*Quality assurance by motivating* the staff is appropriate to the incipient in the notion of TQM and emphasizes the motivation of the staff with which several relatively independent directions can be highlighted, by developing "zero defects" programs and setting up quality circles. These have reached a great extent in order to prevent the occurrence of defects by discovering their causes through quality circles that promote self-control and the use of material and moral incentives for quality assurance.

*Quality assurance through statistical methods* is the stage corresponding to the 1950s. The first papers on statistical quality control are published in the 1920s, when the authors propose the use of the statistical quality control sheet; at present, the use of these methods leads to the accentuation of the control over the technological flow, and the identification of the causes of the occurrence of the defects, in order to prevent their occurrence in subsequent processes.

*The integrating concepts of quality assurance* correspond to the 1980s and have found their applicability under the name of "Total Quality Control" (TQC), designating the activity of keeping under control the quality. This approach is increasingly oriented towards the activities carried out for quality assurance to customers, the implications of processes and their results on the environment through the idea of a systemic approach of customer-supplier relationships. Thus, it is being shaped the emergence of a new concept "Total Quality Management" (TQM) in which it becomes important the consistent orientation towards "process", where is being aimed the optimization of processes throughout the product trajectory, starting with market studies to identify the needs and until the phase of post-use, of the reintegration in nature of the results of this process (Murphy, 1997).

The success of applying the specific characteristics of quality in the tourism sector depends very much on the correct implementation of the system, which consists in careful planning of the stages in the diagnosis. It is very important to train an active participation of the management and all the personnel through the management for preliminary information and improvement, as well as the preparation of the human resources, which has most often been associated with the ability to properly execute the tasks received as per some unique challenges.

Under the conditions of the current market economy, the quality management in tourism depends on the improvement of the activities, the modernization of the flow, the technology, the sustainable responsibility and the definition of the organizational characteristics.

### **Research methodology**

Dynamic changes in the tourism market require a major qualitative transformation for most segments of the tourist offer of a destination; this involves the survival of tourist destinations by intensifying actions to continuously improve the quality and supply of tourist services.

Having as object of study the quality management in the tourism sector in Transylvania, we have chosen as barometer, the numerical evolution in the region of the tourist reception structures with accommodation function as the main purpose, in order to find out if the contribution of the management quality is a favorable one.

The data collection was done with the help of the statistical directories available at national level.

Transylvania is a historical and geographical region located within the Carpathian arch, one of the most important historical regions of Romania. Transylvania is given a very broad meaning, because it designates the territory west of the Eastern Carpathians and north of the Southern Carpathians, thus including the western half of Maramureş, Crişana and Banat.

On the territory of Transylvania are the counties of Alba, Bistrița-Nasaud, Brașov, Cluj, Covasna, Harghita, Hunedoara, Mureș and Sibiu, they are fully classified in this region, and there are also partially classified counties in the region, such as: Bacău (Ghimis-Fagetcommune), Caraș-Severin (Băuțar commune), Maramureș (Targul Lăpuș city with its surroundings), Neamț (Dămuc, Bicaz-Chei and Bicazu-Ardelean communes), Sălaj (east and north of the Meseș mountains), Suceava (at west of the Dorna and Bistrița Aurie rivers) and Vâlcea (a small part north of the Lotru river).

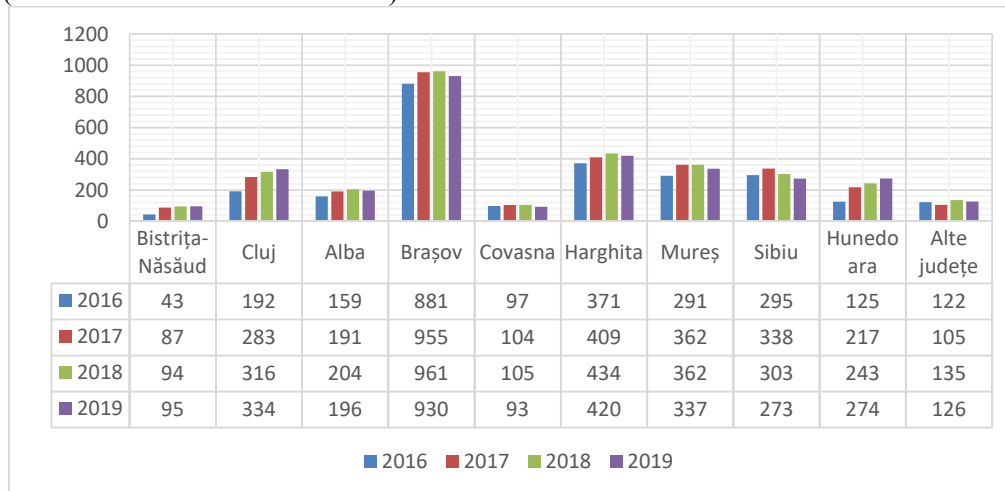
New areas of dialogue are emerging in the new economic, social and cultural frameworks of the tourism sector, as is the case for certain areas in Transylvania, which bring a competitive advantage to a tourist destination; for example, the village of Viscri and the surroundings with the Saxon villages have known a special recognition among tourists in recent years, with the visits of Prince Charles to the house in Viscri.

The indicators chosen to analyze the quality management in the tourism sector in Transylvania are *the tourist reception structures with tourist accommodation function and the number of the staff employed in the tourist reception structures with tourist accommodation functions*; data collection was available with the help of official data provided by the National Institute of Statistics in Romania.

### Results

It is known that, due to the high degree of tertiary, direct and indirect tourism determines the positive development of the tertiary sector, in particular trade, food industry, hospitality management, trade in services and transport to and from a certain tourist destination. Tourism is a process that is rapidly transforming into the spheres of supply and demand, which considerably influences the intensity and quality of tourism development in many tourist destinations. The term "tourist destination" implies a combined and optimally adjusted market environment which, by developing important and dominant quality management skills, allows it to achieve outstanding long-term results compared to its competition. (Coros and Negrusa, 2014)

The tourist reception structures with the function of tourist accommodation (fig. no. 1) have as a priority the protection of tourists and are classified quality-price ratio according to the constructive characteristics, endowments and the quality of the services offered for the tourists (accommodation services and food).



**Fig. no. 1 Evolution of the number of tourist reception structures with tourist accommodation function in Transylvania**

Source: done by the authors based on the data from the statistical directories

Transylvania has a unique character and a valuable cultural endowment; the socio-economic evolution of each country brings differences in the development stage by the importance of the tourist activities in the sustainable development of a tourist area with the help of a specific form of tourism based on the cultural and historical assets. Thus, we appreciate the figures presented in the previous graph as the engine of a market that produces favorable images of Romania.

Predominant from the analysis of the graph we can notice the upward trend in each county during the analyzed period of time, from which the favorable effects of the management in the hotel industry in Romania result, effects which have generated an impact in the positioning of cultural tourism in the list of travel reasons for tourists, both domestic and international.

Thanks to the successive visits in the Viscri area of some prominent personalities from the European royal world and the interest they showed for the Saxon area, Brasov County together with the Transylvania area experienced a constant increase in the flow of tourists, which has led to an increase in the number of accommodation units of this kind; thus a new destination trend has emerged among tourists.

The year 2016 represented the year of the ascension of the area regarding the alert growth rate of the accommodation units; the total number of reception units increased in 2019 compared to 2016 with 19.49% fact which validates the positive assessment of the quality management in the development of tourism in Transylvania.

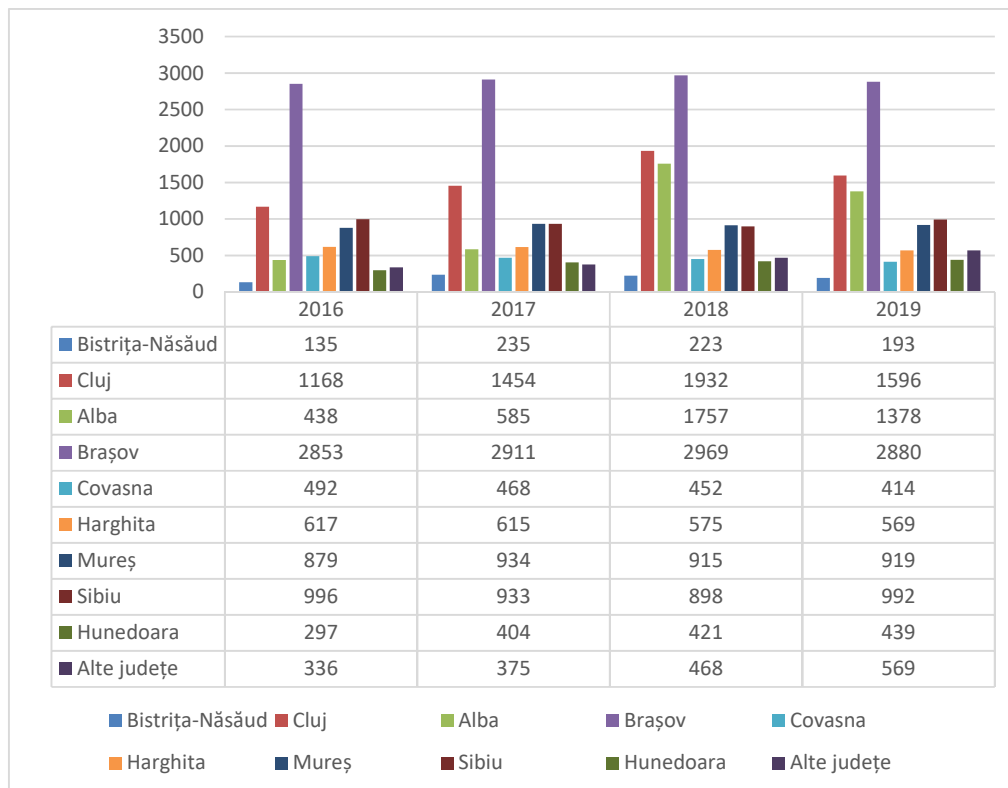
The increase in the number of reception units is supported by a variety of factors, namely: improving the legislative conditions for building a housing unit, supporting the government through programs that provide benefits, transferring important cultural events, the possibility of practicing sport activities specific to the area only, existence of culturally diverse and attractive cultural heritage, strengthening the infrastructure and the means of communication, revitalizing cultural objectives and integrating them into tourist circuits.

One of the support pillars of the quality management is the *number of staff occupied by the tourist reception structures with tourist accommodation functions* (fig. no.2) as a social result; thus the region of Transylvania, according to the research results, becomes an actor of construction that can become a center of power with the help of the norms and principles.

We conclude with the help of figure no.2 that the number of personnel employed in the tourist reception structures with the function of tourist accommodation had a positive evolution during the analyzed period of time; so that the year 2018 registered a total number of 10610 employees in the tourism industry in Transylvania, with 29% more compared to 2016. A decrease of 6% was installed in 2019 compared to the previous year, but maintaining the increasing trend of the period analyzed. (INS, 2020)

The implementation of quality management in tourism has implications in the development of this sector through a series of consequences on the use of human resources in the sense of creating new jobs, determining a relatively high level of training of professional structures, which is why we chose to highlight this indicator.

The quality management in tourism has implications in the development of tourism through a series of consequences on the use of human resources in the sense of creating new jobs, determining a relatively high level of training of professional structures, which is why we chose to highlight this indicator.



**Fig. no. 2 Number of personnel employed in the tourist reception structures with tourist accommodation functions**

*Source: done by the authors based on the data from the statistical directories*

Human resources in tourism have an important role in stimulating demand due to the specifics of tourism, the complexity given by the multitude and variety of components that make their mark on staffing and structure, training on the efficiency of use of labor through training and qualification, training courses professional training with a generating role in formulating the purchase decision, its formation and maintenance.

### Proposals and recommendation

Tourism is a complex activity that has to do with various sectors of the society and economy. Due to this fact, the concept of quality management is important, especially for maintaining an appropriate level of satisfaction of the needs of tourists, but also for avoiding the production of unwanted impacts; tourism is, both for the villages in Transylvania and for many other areas of Romania, a new type of activity.

More and more knowledge is needed on assessing the economic impact of implementing quality management in the field of tourism; being difficult to measure directly, it is essential to monitor the effects of the application of procedures and rules specific to quality management.

The selected indicators are numerical dynamizing elements that are the object of analysis at national level and follow the accuracy of the information simultaneously with the manifestation of the conclusions that appear as a result of the application of quality management in the tourism sector in Transylvania.

From the point of view of the tourist resources and of the types of tourism practiced, the region of Transylvania is characterized by variety and heterogeneity determined, mainly, by the distribution in the territory of the relief forms. We find this situation in other regions of Romania, which is why we can make recommendations for the development of tourist services throughout the country. Thus, one of the proposals refers to conducting research studies to find solutions for the development of tourism services in less accessible areas; some resources, areas can be capitalized through various national and international education projects.

It is recommended, due to the contemporary period we are in and the amazing technological progress we are witnessing, enriching the content of the tourist service with new types of activities, mediating special activities, the presence of a wide typology of accommodation units to recreate the natural environment of the tourist.

At the same time, an overview of the development strategy is needed that is tangent to the following strategic objectives: protecting the environment and natural resources, improving the economy, improving connectivity, providing public services and promoting efficiency, accessibility and sustainability, consistent with quality management and in line with technological progress.

Also, the success of the implementation of quality management in the tourism services sector, both in Transylvania and throughout the country can be given by building collaborative partnerships between researchers, local authorities, tourism shareholders and residents. Emphasis should be placed on monitoring project implementation; forming a common vision for development by consulting the agencies involved and residents; attention paid to the balanced distribution of the positive effects due to the development of tourism; the need for a complex policy to coordinate tourism activities and services.

### **Conclusions**

Despite the lack of a unique recipe for implementing a plan for the quality improvement in tourism in the Transylvania region, it is necessary to apply a planning process based on the inclusion between the locals, authorities and business environment aimed at cultivating the tourist's interest but also maintaining the relationship with it.

Success by establishing a strong, well-structured management that has sufficient financial and human resources necessary for the action implies autonomy, responsibility and a mix generated by the relationship between public authorities, the private sector and the local population.

This study produced findings that are applicable to improving quality practices in the hotel industry in Transylvania, but also in Romania, and is based on official data provided by the National Institute of Statistics in Romania, as well as studies and research published in related journals. addressing quality and management in the tourism sector.

Tourism can serve as a factor for the development of the economic sector, which is why I put forward the following proposals: creating a strategy by analyzing the types of products and services characteristic of a certain area or region; defining the ways of action, as well as identifying the responsible actors; creating learning opportunities from specialists; creating institutions that come with optimal options for building new accommodation units, in accordance with quality and environmental standards.

### **Acknowledgement**

„This paper was co-financed by The Bucharest University of Economic Studies during the PhD program”.

**References**

- American Quality Society (ASQ), 2020. *Quality 4.0*, [online] Available at: <<https://asq.org/quality-resources/quality-4-0>> [Accessed 21 March 2020].
- Coroș, M.M. and Negrușă, A.L., 2014. Analiza evoluției și a performanțelor ofertei turistice din România și din Transilvania. *Amfiteatru Economic*, 16(Special issue 8), pp.1089-1103.
- European Communities, 2003. *A Manual for Evaluating the Quality Performance of Tourist Destinations and Services Enterprise*, DG Publication, [online] Available at: <<https://www.yachtcheck.com/Files/QualityTourism.html>> [Accessed 11 March 2020].
- Ilies, L. and Crisan, E., 2011. *Managementul calitatii totale*. Cluj-Napoca: Editura Risoprint.
- Institutul National de Statistica, n.d. *Baze de date statistice*, [online] Available at: <<http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#!/pages/tables/insse-table>> [Accessed 25 March 2020].
- Juran, J.M. and Godfrey, A.B. eds., 1999. *Juran's quality handbook*. 5th ed ed. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Murphy, P.E. ed., 1997. *Quality management in urban tourism*. International western geographical series. Chichester; New York: Wiley.
- The European Quality Organization (EOQC), [online] Available at: <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European\\_Organization\\_for\\_Quality](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Organization_for_Quality)> [Accessed 21 March 2020].
- World Travel & Tourism Council, *Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2019 World*, United Kingdom, 2019. [pdf] Available at: <<https://www.slovenia.info/uploads/dokumenti/raziskave/raziskave/world2019.pdf>> [Accessed 9 March 2029].