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Implementing quality management in the hospitality industry

Current efforts and future research directions

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Introduction

In the current hospitality industry, guests are flocking to properties, management companies are becoming more stable, and owners are gathering renewed confidence in the industry. Properties enjoying profitability are those with the right mix of product, quality, price and service [1].

If the hospitality industry is to continue to meet the challenges of 1990s and beyond, quality management (QM) must become the way of life. Most customers are unwilling to pay for amenities they do not want and will avoid those properties where high rates are not clearly related to value. To improve services, hospitality organizations must focus on individual attributes and overall customer satisfaction.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the issue of implementing QM programmes in the hospitality industry. The first of its three sections reviews the literature on QM in the hospitality sector and provides a synopsis of hospitality groups'/hotels' responses to this issue. The second section presents a strategic programming model to implementing QM in the hospitality industry. The five stages in the model include: awareness and commitment; planning; programming; implementation and evaluation. In the final section, issues relating to QM in the hospitality sector which need to be addressed in the future are suggested.

Review of literature on QM in the hospitality industry

The research done in the area of QM implementation in the hospitality sector can be conveniently grouped into four research streams. Only articles that appeared in scholarly journals (both academic and practitioner) were considered for this grouping.

Research stream No. 1 deals with the definition and overview articles on QM in the hospitality sector. Several research studies provide comprehensive definitions of the term QM in hospitality sector[1-6]. The overview articles, on the other hand, include a diverse range of topics such as important elements that separate QM in the hospitality industry from QM in other industries[7-12], roadblocks to implementing QM[13-15] and comparisons of quality practices among different hotels and restaurants[16-18].

Research stream No. 2 covers the entire gamut of normative studies mainly carried out by practitioners. These deal with the importance of QM, both to the overall organization, as well as functional areas of the organization. It also provides normative suggestions for institutionalizing QM strategies in hospitality organizations. Normative suggestions for QM include: the need for a proactive, rather than a reactive approach to QM[19-25], steps for building a QM system[26,27], factors that must be considered in implementing a QM programme in the hospitality sector[28-39], and examples of how corporations have successfully institutionalized QM strategies and the benefits of implementing QM[40-52]. This stream covers a medley of studies whose main thrust is to emphasize the importance of QM. Written largely by practitioners, these studies are all conceptual in approach and without any kind of methodological rigour. However, one cannot dismiss their contributions to the field because the authors, for the most part, speak from field experience.

Research stream No. 3 is concerned with developing conceptual models for assessing and implementing QM strategies. Several researchers suggest specific models and/or steps for implementing the principles of QM[20,53-61] or for selecting an effective set of measures for organizations practising QM[3,62-64]. Even though the models/steps suggested by the above authors are detailed, the main criticism against this stream is that there has been little effort to use existing theory to develop a comprehensive model of QM in hospitality organizations.

Research stream No. 4, which can be the culmination of all research done in QM, deals with the assessment and successful implementation of current practices of QM by hospitality organizations[41,42,54,65-75]. Most of the research under this stream, done through field studies, questionnaire surveys or case studies, illustrates how QM can create a competitive advantage.

Figure 1 portrays the interrelationships among the four streams of research, while Table I provides a summary of literature on QM in hospitality organizations. Table II summarizes the different approaches to implementing QM programmes by hospitality organizations. Organizations such as Days Inn, Hampton Inn, Four Seasons, Hilton and Marriott, among others, have institutionalized QM programmes to deal with higher customer expectations. These programmes encompass the basic principles of QM, as outlined by quality gurus – Deming, Juran, Crosby and others.

Proactive approach to implementing QM: a suggested model

Figure 2 depicts the issues hospitality groups/hotels should consider when implementing a QM programme, from start to implementation.

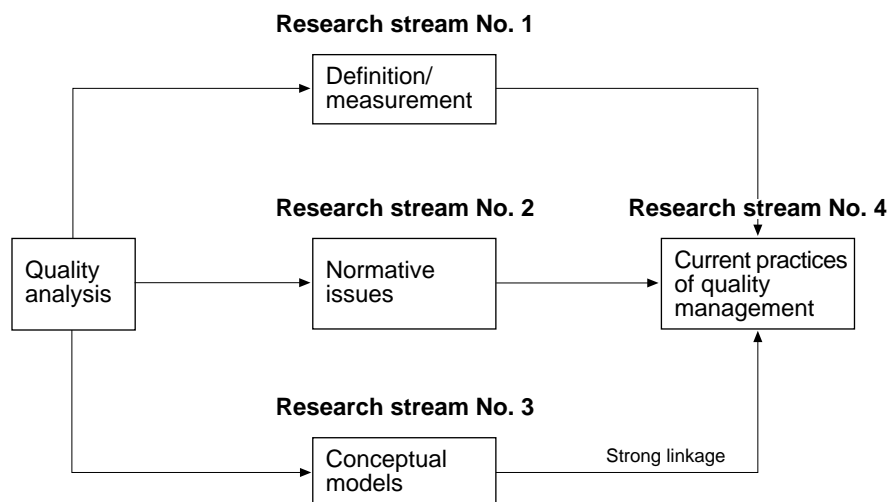


Figure 1.
Theoretical model of
research streams

Author	Article intent	Methodology	Findings
<i>Research stream No. 1</i>			
Mill[7]	Theory building	Discussion	Discusses the basic ways to manage the service encounters in hotels and restaurants
Cadotte and Turgeon[13]	Theory building	Discussion	Lists the complaints and key factors in guest encounters
Comen[2]	Theory building	Discussion	Describes the key elements in a successful quality assurance programme
Dev and Hubbard[8]	Theory building	Discussion	Analyses the success factors in the hotel industry
Kimes and Mutkoski[11]	Theory building	Discussion	Illustrates how restaurants and the customer can benefit when credit card procedure can be improved
Heymann[14]	Theory building	Discussion	Discusses the role of scheduling as a key component of the quality assurance process
Salomon[16]	Theory building	Discussion	Identifies the major quality problems battling the hospitality industry
Lenckus[10]	Theory building	Discussion	Defines quality and provides a basic quality solution to improving service quality
Wagner[17]	Theory building	Discussion	Discusses how express check-in services are easy to implement and can result in improved customer satisfaction
Murphy and Taylor[4]	Theory building	Discussion	Provides definitions and measurements of quality for retail, hospitality and utility industries
Reeves and Bednar[5]	Theory building	Discussion	Provides a universal definition of quality for the hospitality industry

Table I.
Summary of literature
on QM in the hospitality
sector

(Continued)

Author	Article intent	Methodology	Findings
Sheridan[1]	Theory building	Discussion	Explains the new developments in the hospitality industry
Walkup[12]	Theory building	Discussion	Shows how restaurateurs are confronting customer complaints that service chronically lags behind food quality, value and ambience
<i>Research stream No. 2</i>			
Brennan[43]	Prescription	Discussion	Develops a plan that ensures enough quality personnel to meet the human resources requirements
Hart[44]	Prescription	Discussion	Satisfaction guarantee helps to create high employee involvement and pride
Kirwin[45]	Prescription	Discussion	Mission statement and service pledge reflects a company's commitment to providing quality
Troy[36]	Prescription	Discussion	Key to providing excellent service is carefully to balance between paying people and treating them the same
Wagner[51]	Prescription	Discussion	Discusses how the target selection process helped to build the quality vision
Koss[47]	Prescription	Discussion	Discusses how Days Inn is institutionalizing quality assurance inspection processes in its operations
Callan[20]	Prescription	Discussion	In order to guarantee the quality of provision and to offer a bridge from quality assurance to the concept of TQM, quality assurance schemes are essential for the hospitality industry
Koss-Fedder[30]	Prescription	Discussion	Discusses how Howard Johnson is improving its quality assurance efforts
Salomon[25]	Prescription	Discussion	Discusses the criticality of quality for success or failure in the hospitality business
Wagner[52]	Prescription	Discussion	Illustrates how different hotel companies have embraced the satisfaction guarantee concept
Selwitz[34]	Prescription	Discussion	Discusses how hotels can make room service operations a winner
Bernstein[19]	Prescription	Discussion	Illustrates several examples of declining quality in hotels and airlines
<i>Research stream No. 3</i>			
Martin[3]	Theory building	Discussion	Identifies the various elements and the key indicators for each element for defining quality service
Lewis and Nightingale [58]	Theory building	Discussion	Develops a five-step strategy for hotels
Records and Glennie[59]	Theory building	Discussion	Illustrates how service-management systems can help deliver quality assurance results

(Continued)

Table 1.

Author	Article intent	Methodology	Findings
Saleh and Ryan[64]	Theory building	Discussion	Designs a five-dimension service model for hotels to follow
Barsky <i>et al.</i> [62]	Theory building	Discussion	A customer-satisfaction survey reflecting previous research and practice of US lodging industry is designed and developed
Heymann[56]	Theory building	Discussion	Presents a ten-point QM for hospitality enterprises
Bitner <i>et al.</i> [53]	Theory building	Discussion	Analyses and compares previous research study insights on the role, script and attribution theory on customer satisfaction
Dube <i>et al.</i> [63]	Theory building	Discussion	Discusses how managing for optimal customer satisfaction requires that customer satisfaction data are used
LaFleur and Hyten[57]	Theory building	Discussion	Discusses how to improve the quality of hotel banquets' staff performance
Yavas <i>et al.</i> [61]	Theory building	Discussion	Suggests a conceptual framework for front- and back-stage deliveries in the hospitality industry
Hartline and Jones[55]	Theory building	Discussion	Investigates the employee performance cue within a hotel service environment and its effect on perceived quality
<i>Research stream No. 4</i>			
Allin and Gibson[65]	Theory testing	Case study of Waldorf-Astoria	Discusses a quality-focused, problem-solving team process initiated at the hotel. The benefits obtained from the process initiations are also identified
Callan[66]	Theory testing	Survey of four hotels	The most important service quality criteria include: responsiveness, courtesy, reliability and understanding the customer
Obero and Hales[71]	Theory testing	Customer surveys	Functional attributes are major contributors to the overall quality as perceived by consumers
Sharp[74]	Theory testing	Case study of Four-Seasons	Discusses the seven basic principles to achieving quality
Clark[67]	Theory testing	Case study of Opryland	Describes the employee-training programme that helps the hotel ensure a positive guest appearance
Galagan[68]	Theory testing	Case study of Ritz-Carlton	Explains how training is the key aspect of the company's total quality strategy of linking employee motivation and service excellence
Partlow[72]	Theory testing	Case study of Ritz-Carlton	Demonstrates how the company was the first hotel company to win the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award and also discusses how the company implemented its TQM programme
Rees[73]	Theory testing	Case study of two service sector organizations	There has been a move towards more quantifiable measurement of outcomes and tighter management control when viewing the operations of QM strategies
Sowder[75]	Theory testing	Case study of Hampton Inn	Discusses how Hampton Inn defines and measures its quality and customer satisfaction

Table I.

		QM in the hospitality industry
Organization	QM programme	
ANA Hotel San Francisco	Implemented a quality improvement training programme that carefully balances the customer's point of view with the hotel's strategic planning needs	9
Avant Hotel (UK)	Was the first hotel recipient of the British Quality Standard 5750. In order to receive this certification, the management established quality specification for each product, determined assignable causes of error and identified ways of improving product performance	
Choice Hotels	Introduced a satisfaction guarantee programme at all its Sleep Inn brand properties. Field education, with a special emphasis on empowerment, has been the programmes cornerstone	
Country Lodging by Carlson	The company has bolstered its Absolute Guest Satisfaction programme with an "I Promise" campaign which will further empower employees to offer quality service	
Day's Inn Sunburst	To help innkeepers and owners keep up with Sunburst requirements, Days has instituted a QA certificate programme and published a training manual and management guide	
English Lakes Hotels	Based on a four-day training experience in the Disney University at Orlando, the directors developed their own expectation policy and mechanism for communicating a quality service philosophy for their staff	
Four Seasons	At this organization, the approach to achieving quality is based on seven basic principles, called the seven Cs: comprehension, corporate culture, compromise, credibility, control of quality standards, creativity and continuity	
Hampton Inn	In 1989, Hampton Inn launched its 100 Per cent Satisfaction Guarantee programme, promising high-quality accommodations, friendly and efficient service and clean, comfortable surroundings. Other quality efforts include: guest satisfaction rating system, guest assistance and quality index. The personal commitment of top management to ensure understanding of its guarantee at the property sets it apart	
Hilton Hotels Corp.	To improve its quality of service, Hilton upgraded its reservation systems and implemented an express check-in service system. The company offers a Zip In Check in to all credit-card-paying guests when they book a hotel reservation	
Howard Johnson	In the area of quality, the chain began providing consumers with internal quality assurance ratings of its properties since autumn 1994	
Marriott-Copley Plaza, Boston	To boost the quality of their service, delivery efficiency, and guest satisfaction, the hotel has assigned one individual the task of setting the room table, thus eliminating second trips to correct mistakes on initial deliveries	
Novotel Group	In order to provide a zero-defect service for guests, Novotel Group has designed a five-part guest satisfaction programme	
Opryland	Relies heavily on its employee-training programme to ensure a positive guest experience. All new hotel employees are required to attend a 15.5-hour orientation programme, which focuses on guest-relations standards	
(Continued)		Table II. Summary of hospitality organizations which have implemented QM

Organization	QM programme
Ramada Franchise Systems	The company announced a tightening of quality assurance standards, raising the level of acceptance scores for all its 800-plus properties from 370 to 400 (out of 500 possible points)
Red Lion Hotels & Inns, Vancouver	Provided a four-step hospitality checklist to all its employees as a way to remember the company's customer-service goals
Ritz-Carlton	The gold quality standards at Ritz-Carlton include a credo, motto, three steps of service, and 20 Ritz-Carlton Basics. The basics are an integral part of the company's daily quality improvement communication to employees To improve its customer satisfaction programme, the hotel is focusing on four key areas: hiring the right people, orientation, teaching necessary skills and inculcating appropriate behaviour
Scott's Hotels Ltd	As part of their quality system implementation, the company invested between 40 to 60 hours per employee in training. An important aim was to ensure that every staff member understood the following total quality principles: all staff have a role to play, listening to the customer is vital, and changes were needed in the way in which the total quality was practised in order to sustain continuous improvements
Sofitel	Introduced the Golden Key Quality Challenge, which pits its seven US hotels against each other, employees at the winning property each win a colour television set. Awards are based on cumulative positive notations on guest-comment cards, guest surveys and internal quality-check audits
Travel Lodge	Enhanced advertising programme to reflect Travel Lodge's system-wide commitment to guest satisfaction. Its new slogan, "Stay satisfied, stay with Travel Lodge" reflects the organization's approach towards quality. Also, quantified its quality assurance standards for all its properties
Waldorf-Astoria	Initiated a quality-focused, problem-solving team process called TIGRE (Teams Improving Guest-Related Experience)

Table II.

Source: [26,30,31,33,34,37,52,65,72,74-77]

The inputs for this model were generated from the review of literature. The proposed model comprises of five stages. The five stages of the model include:

- (1) awareness and commitment;
- (2) planning;
- (3) programming;
- (4) implementing; and
- (5) evaluation.

In the first phase of the model, the top management must develop a complete understanding of what is QM and how they plan to achieve it.

Once the understanding and commitment is made, in the second phase of the model, the management should do the following: perform an internal quality

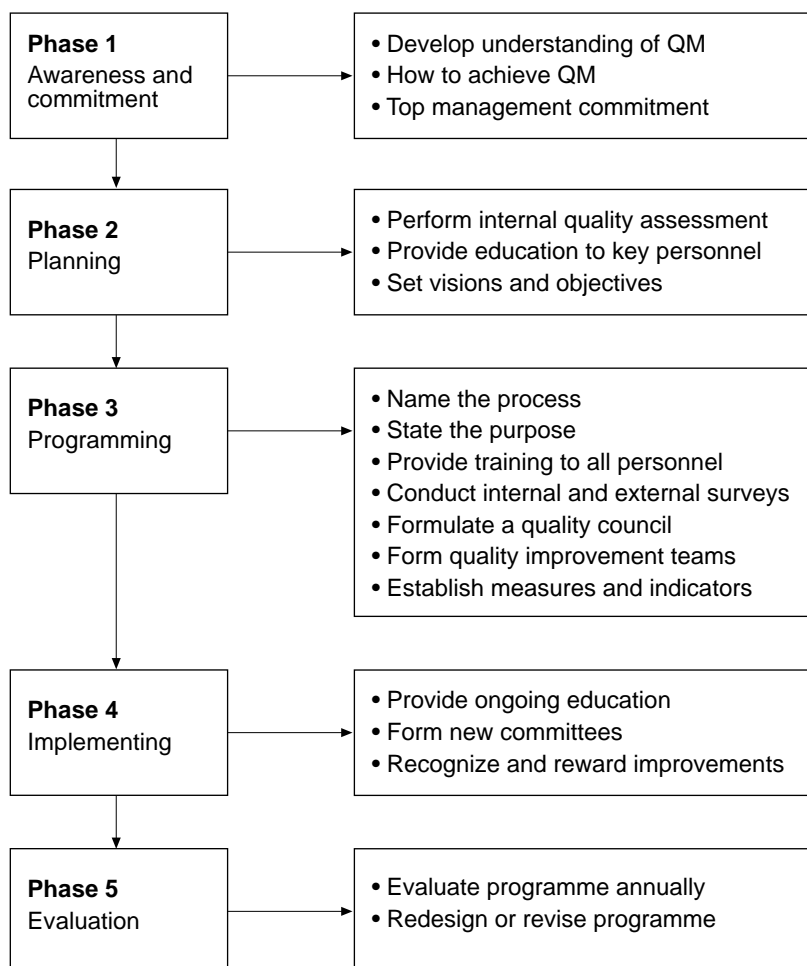


Figure 2.
A proactive approach to
implementing QM in the
hospitality industry

assessment of the organization to identify strengths and weaknesses, provide education to key personnel (including physicians), set visions and objectives in writing, and design a new system. Hospitality managers should take care to ensure that the organization's culture is suitable to foster QM. Its culture has to agree with basic QM values and visions.

In the third phase, the management should name the process; state purpose through a new quality framework; provide training to all levels of personnel; conduct internal and external customer surveys to evaluate the current process and make necessary adjustments; formulate a quality council to oversee and regulate the QM process; perform competitive benchmarking to compare its performance to other organizations; form quality improvement teams; and establish measures and quality indicators which truly measure the objectives and goals of the organization. When naming the process, every effort should be

made to disassociate QM in the hospitality industry with QM in other industries, since medical employees view themselves as different from manufacturing employees.

The fourth phase, referred to as “implementation” should involve providing ongoing education and training; forming new committees, new teams, new departments or hiring new specialists to help the process as and when required; and recognizing and rewarding quality improvements. Recognition can be a valuable tool in improving employee morale, self-interest, and interest in QM. The reward system, however, must be managed carefully.

The final phase of the model should involve evaluating success or failure of the QM programme. This should be conducted annually. For example, if the programme is not achieving its goals, it should be redesigned.

Future directions for research

There are issues relating to QM in the hospitality sector which need to be addressed in the future. Identifying issues for future research can be of immense value to both managers and academic researchers. Managers can use this information to identify those areas where improvements should be made and resources be allocated. For example, managers need to know the status of the organizational controllables (in this case, the levers of QM) that they can manipulate to make organization-wide improvements in quality performance. Also, comparisons of different organizations or divisions can be made to help prioritize QM efforts. Researchers, on the other hand, can use this information to build theories and models that relate these issues to the organization's performance and environment. These concerns can be categorized according to the four research streams discussed earlier.

Recommendations for research stream No. 1 deal with a definition and overview of QM and how it relates to the hospitality sector. First, more research needs to be done to determine whether implementation of QM is viewed as the responsibility of the owner, board of directors, franchisor or franchisee. The primary users of QM should be the ones who direct implementation throughout the organization.

A second concern relating to research stream No. 1 pertains to identification and elimination of the regulations, attitudes, policies, and practices which may be an impediment to continuous improvement.

Research stream No. 2 pertains to normative studies conducted by experts in the field. Several issues relating to this area deserve consideration in the future. First, studies needed to be undertaken to examine if a dramatic time lag between the directive, training, and implementation will impede the effectiveness of QM. Changes in the ownership or key management personnel may detract from the continuity of any programmes under implementation by a previous management. Future research should seek to determine the effect of time lag between the onset of the programme and the final results, and senior personnel turnover.

Another critical issue practitioners should address is the variance among QM implementation and standards of quality within and among different hospitality chains (hotels). Attempts to standardize performance and quality have been less than fully successful in the past. As a result, quality standards, standard operating procedures, inspections and audits are not uniform among the various hospitality chains. Determination of benchmarking procedures and their usage would be helpful.

There is a great potential for future study regarding research stream No. 3; for, to this date, very few models linking QM and the hospitality industry have been developed. A primary issue of concern is the need for the "hospitality organization" to work perfectly on demand. Yet, sometimes there are operational breakdowns. Models should be developed to determine where operating system breakdowns occur, why they occur and how they can be prevented.

Second, a model for implementation of QM in the hospitality industry is a necessity. At present, methods of implementation appear not to follow any specific guidelines except those in the directives. This may also be a causal factor in the variance among standards mentioned earlier. The proposed model should address the role of management, administrative staff, their subordinate teams and workers, and the impact of other suppliers and providers on QM programmes in hospitality operations. Furthermore, the issue of measurements for processes should be addressed.

There is ample opportunity and necessity for future studies in research stream No. 4. More comprehensive and comparative case studies of successful implementation would be helpful to those who are still struggling with this stage. Also, elaborate studies, which detail the steps in building a successful QM system in the hospitality industry and which outline specific performance measures in evaluating systems, are necessary. Data for such studies should be obtained from on-site observation, questioning and performance of data analysis which will lead to hypotheses to be measured by questionnaires sent to hotel managers who have been successful in implementing QM.

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