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# ASSESSMENT OF TRAINING QUALITY IN HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY: AN EXPLORATORY MODEL

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## ABSTRACT

Research into hospitality training field has been focused on the subjects of training need assessments, training evaluation models, training within organizational frameworks and useful training techniques. Despite the significance of the above aspects, no significant effort has been made in the field of training quality and particularly in defining those service quality related features that the training designers should bear in mind. Although SERVQUAL is a scale applicable to all services, in the case of hospitality industry that consists of complex processes and various ‘moments of truth’ through various encounters to be included in the procedure of service quality evaluation. The present paper proposes a model describing an approach on how services in the hospitality industry could be improved through enhanced targeted training of human resources.

*Keywords: hospitality industry, training, service quality, SERVQUAL, training design*

## INTRODUCTION

The unique nature by which the hospitality product is both supplied and consumed at the same time means that any generalised assertion such as ‘training can improve the quality of the hospitality product’ must be considered with care. The concept of quality has its origins in manufacturing sector back to early 80s where became a part of services literature. Since quality has its roots in tangible products, any application of quality concepts and issues to intangible services or tourist experiences in the hotel sector may be considered up to an extent as a problematic concept. In manufacture industries, employee performance failures end up when the products fail to be produced and are rejected. Customers buy only the “perfect” products while never see these failed products and rejects. However, in the hospitality industry, employee performance-related failures are obvious since most of the mistakes are immediately visible to the customer; each failure directly affects guest fulfilment.

The present paper focuses on critically examining service quality related literature in order to identify areas for improvement of hospitality employees’ training; a conceptual model is being developed and tested on a hospitality environment in Greece.

### *Service quality issues in the hospitality industry*

The service nature of the hospitality product sets down how consumption is required to take place. Services are generally described as having three unique attributes-features, specifically, ‘intangibility’, ‘inseparability’ and ‘heterogeneity’ (Lashley and Taylor, 1998; Schneider, 1994; Regan, 1963). Moreover, there is another attribute of services called ‘perishability’ referring to the fact that services cannot be stored for future

sale. Intangibility refers on how the product may only be experienced or participated in instead of owned. Inseparability is a consequence of the way that production and consumption are synchronized due to the significant interaction (points of contact) between producer and consumer. Those points of contact Czeipel, Solomon and Suprenant (1985) had described as 'service encounter', Armistead (1994) as 'service stars' and Carlzon (1987) as 'moments of truth'. Heterogeneity means that it is difficult for service organisations to standardise the many 'moments of truth' coming from a typical service encounter. Moreover Clements and Josiam (1995: p.15) note how "damaging an unsuccessful 'moment of truth' can be in the hospitality industry". More measured and less dogmatic accounts of the service encounter are regarded to recognise a number of elements that pose several issues for organisations. This is a particular issue of quality assurance where "the consumer finds it difficult to isolate service quality from the quality of the service provider" (Enderwick, 1992: p.139).

In a chronological manner, according to the dimensionality of quality, Lehtinen and Lehtinen (1982) distinguish service quality:

- ❖ in process quality, a judgment from the customers during the provision of the service, and
- ❖ in a output quality, after completing the service provision.

Moreover, the same authors made another distinction of service quality in 1991:

- ❖ physical quality that dealing with the tangibles and physical contributors of the service,
- ❖ interactive quality regarding the interactions taking place between the participants in the service process, the consumer and the service provider, and
- ❖ corporate quality that is dealing with the profile of the enterprise in the business environment.

In this vein, Gronroos in 1984 (p. 38) suggested a framework "whereby two types of quality were distinguished, the technical quality and functional quality". In other words, what the consumer receives as a result of his interactions with a service firm and the way that the service is provided. In addition to the above, Gronroos in 1988 defined another five factors of service quality. Namely, professionalism and skills; reputation and credibility; behaviour and attitudes; accessibility and flexibility; and reliability and trustworthiness. The professionalism and skills identified are being familiarised more as service outcome while the other four factors as process dominated. Additionally, a distinction of four dimensions of service quality was recommend by Edvardsson, Thomasson and Ovretevit (1994), which are the technical quality, the integrative quality, the functional quality, and the outcome quality. In another work, Mels, Boshoff and Nel (1997) identified two particular determinant factors that service quality could be defined, the functional and the technical quality, in line with Gronroos' research findings. Relative to the above distinctions in service quality, the scale developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985; 1988; 1991) and called SERVQUAL consisted of five principal components of service quality; the Tangibles; Reliability; Responsiveness; Assurance; and Empathy. Due to the significance of their research, this scale has been replicated across different kind of services, with the unique nature of the hospitality industry to offer great research opportunities for various SERVQUAL tests. For example, Saleh and Ryan in 1991 examined the scale in hotels premises by following SERVQUAL rational and they identified five dimensions (conviviality, tangibles, reassurance, avoiding criticism and empathy) that did not confirm the SERVQUAL dimensions. The study of Getty and Thompson (1994), again in the hotel industry, reached the same conclusion with the Saleh and Ryan (1991) research (SERVQUAL dimensions were not fully met). Following once more the SERVQUAL rational they developed a scale called LODGSERV constituted of three dimensions (tangibility, reliability and contact).

In 1997, Ekinci and Riley (1997: p.163) compared the above scales in a resort hotel sample and their results were that "both scales fail to replicate the proposed dimensions and to provide content validity in this specific application". In 1991, Knutson, Stevens, Wullaert and Patton replicated SERVQUAL in hotels and motels and further verified LODGSERV. Moreover, Johns and Tyas (1996) replicated SERVQUAL in the fast-food sector resulting that all of the six dimensions identified by Parasuraman et al (1991) were verified in the outcome of their research. In a relevant survey Mei, Dean and White (1999) aimed at identifying the most predictive dimension of overall service quality in three to five stars hotels by using an adapted version of the SERVQUAL scale, namely the HOLSERV. According to their findings there are three significant dimensions in the hospitality industry (employees, tangibles and reliability); they also argued that "the employees' dimension emerged as the best predictor of overall service quality, hence effective training of employees is a prerequisite for sustaining high service quality.

A study by Johns and Lee-Ross (1997: p.351-352) on hotel services identified that in the service context "services differ in the proportions of tangibles they contain. It would be reasonable to hypothesise that the importance of tangible aspects is higher in customer experiences such as hotel services, which contain a high proportion of clearly differentiated tangible components". In reference with Gronroos (1988) and Parasuraman *et*

al (1991) models, the professionalism and the skill of Gronroos' (1988) service quality determinations' and the tangibles and the reliability of Parasuraman *et al* (1991) service quality determinations' items can be part of a process-development or outcome-result in the hospitality industry strongly dependant on the skills and competencies of the human resources.

According to Johnston's (1995), there are two types-classifications of attributes; the interpersonal and the noninterpersonal. As interpersonal or soft quality attributes defined the features 'between persons, social' (Oxford Dictionary for the Business World, 1993, cited in Driver and Johnston, 2001: p.131). This is the behavior of the service providers toward customers such as attractiveness, helpfulness, care, communication, courtesy, flexibility, commitment and friendliness. As a noninterpersonal quality attributes defined the attributes that are entirely physical such as access, aesthetics, cleanliness, comfort and functionality (Driver and Johnston, 2001). According to Cronin and Taylor (1994) and Parasuraman *et al* (1994) the relative significance of different features differs between the various services and people. Moreover, in different situations customers' satisfaction depends on standardisation quality and/or on customisation quality. In other words, customer satisfaction depends on the 'freedom of defect' and the 'customers' individual needs' (Anderson, Fornell, and Rust, 1997). As a result, there are some customers that consider service quality as to be more soft quality related than hard quality.

In case of any service quality measurement, research should consider apart from the primary dimensions found by the above researchers the issues of process-development of the service in addition to the result-outcome of the service delivery. Although these issues are not found in their studies, they seem to be integral part of the service quality approaches, they are related to human resources competencies and influenced by the quality of training that human resources may have – or have not - received. Blanchard and Galloway (1993) first proposed a three dimensions model based on process/outcome, subjective/objective and soft/hard for retail banking after a in depth research. In 1996, Galloway and Ho described the three dimensions' model based on operational issues particularly in training and staff skills issues that based on process/outcome, subjective/objective and soft/hard three dimensions model and gave eight service types conclude that in order the organization to get benefited from a proper match among staff skills and customer expectations should include a higher perceived quality by customers and a greater level of job satisfaction between employees.

## **HUMAN RESOURCES ISSUES THAT AFFECT QUALITY OF HOSPITALITY SERVICES**

Baum and Nickson (1998: p.75) claim that the hospitality industry is one "within which the customers are constantly beset with in hospitability in the way in which they are treated". Also, it is true that quality training of a hotel staff will improve staff possibilities for motivation and their performance and therefore lead to reduced staff turnover (Clements and Josiam, 1995). However, Keep and Mayhew (1999) have proposed that there are issues over and above the training of staff, which will continue to operate against the best interests of customers in the hospitality industry. They suggest that problems relating to employees' skills are an outcome of other, more generic problems and concerns and that skills issues is a major topic to be studied. They have proposed that the first order problem for the hospitality sector is its very structure. More precisely, a significant issue that affects the staff skills in the hospitality industry is that the majority of tourism and hospitality firms worldwide are small (Morrison and Thomas, 1999). The small size of these businesses tends to suggest that they are often family owned and run. Setting them up will not be costly and it does not require much specialised qualifications manner. The result of this is that "there are relatively few organisations that could be said to operate at the leading edge of good practice (for example, in terms of people management policies and employee training practices)" (Keep and Mayhew, 1999: p.8). According to some authors, hospitality is generally considered as an industry which has traditionally been adopting a model of competitive advantage which has been premised on a low staff skills model or 'poor' human resource management practice (Riley, 1996).

Additionally, businesses comprising the tourism and hospitality industry tend to be fragmented and weakly organised and quite often there may be facing a lack of recognition that they are part of an ordinary business sector or sub-sector. Keep and Mayhew (1999: p.13) go on to suggest that these first-order structural problems "tend to exacerbate long-standing second-order problems relating to the structure of the labour market and poor personnel management practices". These second-order problems include:

- relatively low wages;
- unsociable working hours and patterns of work;
- weak equal opportunities policies for women and ethnic minorities;
- poor or non-existent career structures;
- informal recruitment methods;

- human resource management techniques are poor; and,
- a lack of any significant trade union presence (Goldsmith, Nickson, Sloan, and Wood, 1997).

Besides, in case a hotel employee remains in the industry and eventually reaches managerial levels, he/she is expected to experience various types of difficulties such as long working hours; staffing problems; supervisory challenges; and perishable inventory (Meier, 1991). Moreover, as Baum, Amoah and Spivack (1997) mentioned, there are some additional factors that contribute to the structural problems of the sector which are the following:

- demography and the withdrawal employment pool consequential in labour and specific skills shortages;
- for many sub-sectors hospitality, and particularly in the most developed countries, the negative employment image of the industry is a major concern and obstacle to recruit and retain high quality employees (Wood, 1995); and,
- cultural and traditional perceptions may as well affect negatively the recruitment of the best able and most qualified people for work in the hospitality industry – these may often include religious barriers, and sexual discrimination.

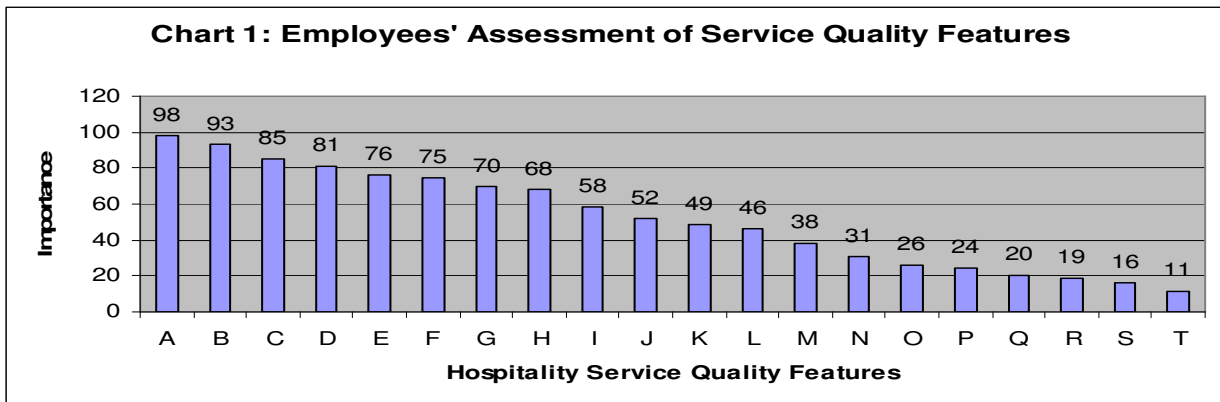
## METHODOLOGY

This research is trying to re-exam the Golloway's and Ho's (1997) study in retail banking services into the hospitality service field, and particularly in the Greek hospitality industry. Their research used survey data and in-depth interview and proposed a "model of service quality based around operational issues, directly relevant to issues of staff skills and training; and based on three dimensions of outcome/process, hard/soft and objective/subjective, giving a total of eight service types" (Golloway and Ho, 1997: p. 20). The main part of the research described bellow was conducted by the use of structured questionnaires. The questionnaires were developed after 12 in-depth interviews with 8 hospitality management academics and 4 senior employees from the hospitality industry from the broader area of Northern Greece. After the end of each in-depth interview, the most important words, phrases and concepts mentioned by the interviewees were highlighted. A subsequent content analysis resulted to consensus among interviewees for 20 specific hospitality service quality features identified as the most important in relation to service delivery. Then, these 20 features were intergraded in a questionnaire that was delivered in 248 hospitality employees from 8 hotels. The employees were asked to assess the service quality features offered by a hotel that are the most important from the guests' point of view. Out of the 248 questionnaires only 179 were usable (72.2%); this is an adequate number of responses for such kind of surveys (DeVellis, 1991). Due to the selection of a convenience sample, the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test was used to examine the personal information of the sample in order realise if the 8 hotel employee groups were significantly different from each other; results show important differences in some personal traits between the 8 groups of the hotel employees, explaining the generalization of the model proposed bellow. The frameworks suggested from Parasuraman *et al* due to their applicability and validity were used as a primary framework for data production and interpretation.

### *Data findings*

The employees under investigation were called to assess the importance weights of the service quality features that a hotel should possess and deliver that are perceived as most important by guests (Chart 1). In the case of retail banking services, emphasis was given to service provision from the staff point of view and their social skills, while in the case of hospitality industry, in reference with the findings, the hardware of the industry plays a particular equal role in the tourist satisfaction. The same features, on the one hand, they compared with SERVQUAL dimensions and, on the other hand, assessed if they correspond to issues related to process-development or result-outcome of the service (Table 1). Moreover, at the same Table, a correspondence/measurement of hospitality industry service features and subjectivity or objectivity in addition to soft or hard dimensions is presented. According to these findings, the hospitality service feature of 'Interior and exterior hotel design' (98%) was mentioned by the employees as the most important service quality feature considered by tourists with the 'Staff willingness to help' (91%) coming second. From all the services, some of them were staff related services and some other as capital related services. The feature that mentioned in the last place was the 'Correspondence between restaurant menu and actual dish delivery' (11% response). After the comparison between those 20 features and the SERVQUAL dimensions, five hospitality service dimensions were corresponded. Seven dimensions emerged for the Tangibles, five for the Reliability, two for the Responsiveness and the Assurance and one for the Empathy. Regarding the correspondence to issues related to process-development or result-outcome of the service, 12 features were related to Process of the service, 2 features related to Result of the service while six of them were related both to Process and Result of the service

in the hospitality industry. As far as the measurement for subjectivity or objectivity features of hospitality industry service are concerned, 7 features were related to Subjectivity of the service, 4 to Objectivity of the service and 9 features were related both to Subjectivity and Objectivity of the service. In the case of measurement for soft or hard features of the service in the hospitality industry, 9 features were related to Soft dimensions of the services, 7 to Hard services and 4 features were related to Soft and Hard. One the other hand, regarding the relative findings in the case of retail banking, concerning the correspondence to issues related to process-development or result-outcome of the service, 21 features were related to Process of the service, 6 of them were related both to Process and Result and 4 features related to Result of the service in the retail banking. As far as the measurement for subjectivity or objectivity features of hospitality industry service are concerned, 14 features were related both to Subjectivity and Objectivity, 12 to Objectivity of the service and 5 to Subjectivity of the service. In the case of measurement for Soft or Hard features of the service in the hospitality industry, 18 features were related to Hard dimensions of the services, 7 to Soft dimensions and 6 features were related to Soft and Hard dimensions of services.



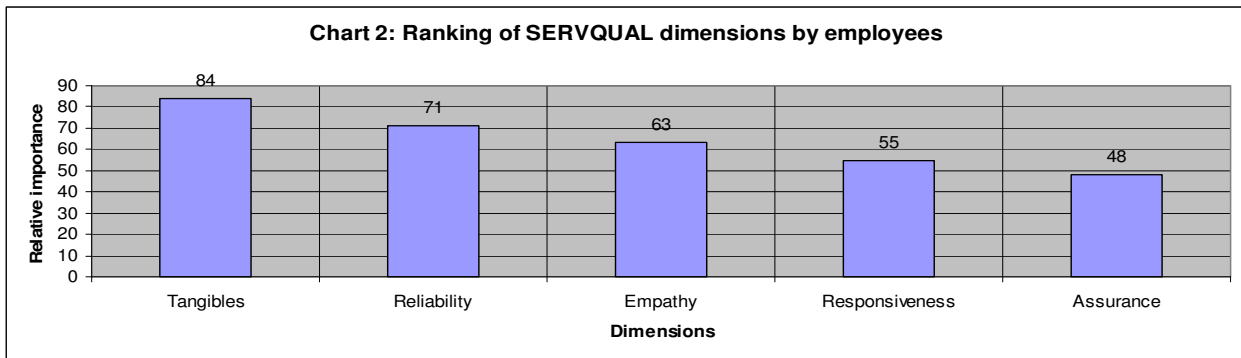
Despite the fact that the correspondences (Table 1) where emerged according to the understanding of the existing literature and the subjective perceptions of the researchers, it is proposed that the correspondence is subjective in the vast majority of circumstances. Research findings reveal that the Parasuraman *et al* dimensions are not unique, particularly from the hospitality industry employees' point of view. Also, it is important to examine further if a particular feature that matched with a particular SERVQUAL dimension could be correspond with other dimensions of SERVQUAL as well, despite the fact that employees matched the hospitality features with those of dimensions Parasuraman *et al*. rather easily. Moreover, the importance match between the SERVQUAL dimensions and the employees' respond shows that employees working in the hospitality industry believe that guests emphasise more to the process/development features of the service within the hotel instead of the results, like in the case of retail banking. This finding has considerable effects in the process of service design of hospitality firms.

Another interesting finding is that the most important dimension of the SERVQUAL in the case of the hospitality industry is the Tangibles, which in reference to the fundamental customer oriented concerns it is found to include some features of 'soft skills' behaviour as well as 'hard skills' related features (Chart 2). In the case of retail banking the rates were high to the dimensions of Responsiveness (100%) and Assurance (70%) whereby in the hospitality industry the highest score was in Tangibles (84%) and Reliability (71%). A worth mentioned finding was the last place that the dimension of Assurance (48%) in the hospitality industry, a dimension that in the retail banking was second (70%) and the dimension of Reliability that it was last (44%) in the retail banking.

The great importance of Tangibles presents a different approach in focusing on particular attributes that the service provider is asked to consider. The above finding comes to confirm Losekoot's, Wezel's and Wood's (2001) findings that one of the three guest complaints were in relation to the tangible concept of the hotel product and leads them to argue that in their aim to satisfy customers, the priorities should be re-examined. "There is little point using additional resources on improving on the 'soft' customer interaction part of the service offer, if an important underlying cause of customer dissatisfaction is attributable to the facilities on offer" (Losekoot *et al.*, 2001: p.303).

Table 1: Correspondence between hospitality service features and SERVQUAL dimensions/Service features and dimension

	Hospitality Service Features	SERVQUAL	Process/Result	Subjective/Objective	Soft/Hard
A	Interior and exterior hotel design	Tangible	Result	S/O	H
B	Staff willingness to help	Responsiveness	Process	S	S
C	Clean and comfortable rooms	Tangible	Process/Result	O	H
D	Delivery of services at the prompt time	Reliability	Process/Result	S/O	S/H
E	Clean and hygienic bathrooms and toilets	Tangible	Process/Result	O	H
F	Friendly and worm employees	Assurance	Process	S	S
G	Employees able to solve a tourist problem	Empathy	Process	S	S
H	Modern and comfortable equipment	Tangible	Process/Result	S/O	H
I	Timeless check-in and check-out process	Responsiveness	Process/Result	S/O	H
J	Confidence between employees and guests	Assurance	Process	S	S
K	Serious consideration of tourist complaints	Empathy	Process	S	S
L	Clean and frequent changed towels	Tangible	Process/Result	O	H
M	Employee's pay personal attention to the guest	Empathy	Process	S	S
N	Real information regarding hotel services publication though marketing activities	Reliability	Process	S/O	S/H
O	Well educated and experienced employees	Reliability	Process	S/O	S
P	Personal relationship between employees and tourists	Empathy	Process	S	S
Q	Fair economic dealings and transactions	Reliability	Process	S/O	S
R	Good-looking and healthy appearance of the employees	Tangible	Process	S/O	S/H
S	Availability of entertainment facilities	Tangible	Result	O	H
T	Correspondence between restaurant menu and actual dish delivery	Reliability	Process	S/O	S/H

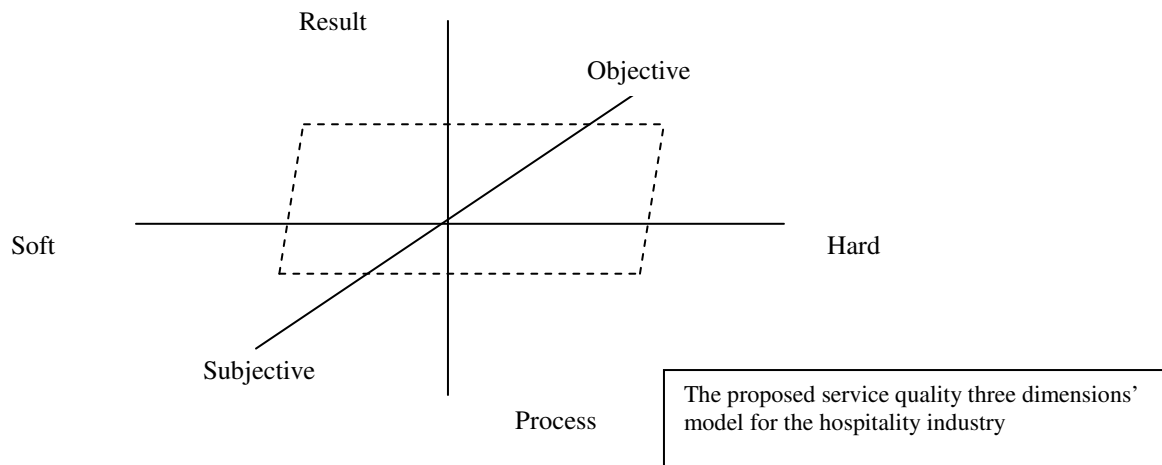


### A SERVICE QUALITY THREE DIMENSIONS' MODEL FOR THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

A strong basis for this study asked a taxonomy of service quality in order to avoid uncertainty in case of reliance on authentically orthogonal principal components, and consent to vary between different services to be represented by assessment of the significance of a specific dimension. The issue for a dimension such as the distinction between the process/development and the result/outcome has been discussed and has been argued as a basic concern in service design; this dimension indicates the extent to which guests are buying a result, an 'outcome'. However, it is more logical to consider this as a dimension or as a principal component rather than a distinction. Hence, there appears to exist an overlap between process and result essential to facilitate classifications of the hospitality service quality.

Moreover, there are two additional potential principal components that may be the basis for service design in the hospitality industry. The first is the distinction between subjectivity and objectivity of the service provision. This dimension identifies the extent to which any measure of hospitality service quality can be anticipated as objective and can be generated frequently. The subjective services in the hospitality industry are difficult to be predicted as the guest perceptions regarding the service quality vary from time to time, from guest to guest and from service provider to service provider.

The second component distinguishes between hard and soft that it defines the extent to which interpersonal or facility features are prevalent in quality perception. The interaction between the guest-tourist and the service provider is a soft oriented service than actually making use of hotel's facilities. In other words, the hard issue is the physical assets of the hospitality premises (equipment, building etc) while the soft issue is the interaction (employee attitude) between the employee who offer the service and the guest. Each of the above dimensions is a homogenous concept where different services in the hospitality industry may be allocated at various degrees.



Despite the fact that retail banking services constituted of different service dimensions and features, the above construct of eight different types of service provision in the hospitality sector were developed is relevance to that of Golloway's and Ho's (1997) model or service quality of training in retail banking services (Figure 1). These eight different types deal with the relevance of contacting employees' competences and abilities, especially the degree of contact, the extent of interaction between the guest and the employee or the hotel facilities and the predictability of the guest perception. In reference with the former distinctions:

- ❖ hard services involve little contact between guest and employee;
- ❖ soft services involve high employee participation-contact;
- ❖ results of subjective services are less predicable than those of objective services;
- ❖ in process/development services involve high level of guest interaction; and
- ❖ in soft outcome based services the guest is a passive addressee.

Figure 1: Characteristics of 8 different types of service provision

<i>Subjective</i>	<i>Objective</i>	
Unpredictable Little employee interaction High guest interaction	Predictable Little employee interaction High guest interaction	<b>Hard</b>
Unpredictable High employee interaction High guest interaction	Predictable High employee interaction High guest interaction	<b>Process</b>
Unpredictable Little employee interaction Some guest interaction	Predictable Little employee interaction Some guest interaction	<b>Soft</b>
Unpredictable High employee interaction Little guest interaction	Predictable High employee interaction Little guest interaction	<b>Hard</b>
		<b>Result</b>
		<b>Soft</b>

***How the hospitality service quality three dimensions model affects employees' training***

By mentioning objective hospitality service features, on the one hand, we are emphasizing or expressing things as perceived without distortion of personal feelings, insertion of fictional matter, or interpretation, just an 'objective art'. On the other hand, by saying subjective hospitality service features we refer to proceeding from or taking place in a person's mind rather than the external world. It is a subjective decision, particular to a given person, a subjective experience that existing only within the experiencer's mind. In the case of softer services where employees are dispoable to interact with guest ambiguity, the principal component for employee training is the degree of subjectivity and predictability with the service delivery. Also, the objective and predictable service follow a defined route and the results are clearly determined. This type of service is delivered by book and this is because the guest is aware of the very nature of the service provided. As a result,



the objective, soft service, asks employees to be able to learn and choose the most appropriate scenario that poses in each particular manner. A concern regarding the former issue is that the service delivery becomes evidently too predictable. For example, although the “good afternoon sir” or “may I help you madam” is perceived as warm, most of the times it is said in an automatic and unconscious manner, and without second thought; this can have the opposite of the expected outcomes. As a result, in the hospitality industry the role of training is primarily to ensure that scenarios or scripts are understood and memorised effectively and expressed clearly and at the right time in the right situation.

On the contrary, the soft, subjective service delivery is more demanding than the objective one. Apart from the product or process oriented, the employee should poses interpersonal and communication skills and competences well known in the literature as ‘soft’ skills (Baum, 1990; Burns, 1997; Christou, 2002). This is obvious in the case of the receptionist, who should be able to listen, negotiate, navigate, and deal with guests’ complaints; moreover, in this specific post, the professional skills are also important for the tasks performance. Additionally, apart from the technical skills and competences the interpersonal skills are of great importance also in the food and beverage department of hospitality establishments. As a result, training comes to update the technical and professional skills and to further develop and enhance the soft skills (Christou & Eaton, 2000). Efforts should be made to the avoidance of any replication of the same service delivery scenario, particularly in the case where due to lack of time the service encounter engage one or more service types.

There are two approaches that this model can be applied in order to identify hospitality employees’ training needs. Firstly, in the case that employees are helpful, kind and willing to help it is difficult to overlap any possible malfunction of a hotel facility. So, employee related issues are of less importance of that of the hardware of the hotel. Secondly, in the case that employees are regarded as the most important aspect of the service delivery, a critical question emerges: should the hotel employees be trained to enhance their soft skills like the receptionist example or be able just to act and respond promptly and correctly to the guest requirements, as in a housekeeper case? Taken into account that hospitality service usually engages different types and numbers of encounters or ‘moments of truth’ between the guest and the hospitality product, it is preferable to use the model to each ‘moment of truth’ individually. As a result, although satellite services might exist, hard hospitality services ask little from the front line employees, due to the fact that the relationship with the guests is not personal. In a hotel premise one employee is responsible for the facilities, another is charged with cleaning the rooms and another to serve the dishes. As independent from the equipment, hard services are met greater with better maintenance or greater investments on equipments or facilities. But, when each hospitality service encounter is individually regarded, it is obviously that some of them are soft, some hard and some something between the two approaches. Although the process between soft to hard always is applied, in the case of front line employees the contact is most of the times a soft one.

Figure 2: Training and skills requirement

	Subjective	Objective
<b>Process</b>	High level of training Humanistic Interpersonal skill focus Field training essential	Modest level of training Mechanistic Performance focus Field training desirable
<b>Result</b>	High level of training Humanistic Technical skill focus Field training desirable	Modest level of training Mechanistic Technical and performance Skill focus

Moreover, as far as the application of the model on the training of front line employees is concerned, in subjective services a high standard of training with interpersonal skills orientation is necessary because employees’ role in the service delivery is of great importance, since guests require a more personal and individual interaction with the hotel employees. In objective services, there is little demand in soft skills since the service is based on standard actions from the employees’ side. In case guest expectations are conventional like the previous type of service, the employee training may be focused in mechanistic and script concepts. All the former situations are presented on the figure (Figure 2) of training and skills needs.

## CONCLUSIONS

To provide high quality service to guests it is crucial for all hospitality organizations to utilize their employees with success since they are the central elements in the service encounter. As a result, some researchers indicated that human resource department has a very important role to play in the provision of high

quality services (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2000). Given that hospitality industry is labour intensive and capital intensive (Baum, *et al.*, 1997; Goldsmith, *et al.*, 1997) with the highest levels of skill shortages (Jameson, 2000) it is fundamental to train its employees to deliver service quality with the purpose to build up and retain human resources that are customer oriented (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2000).

The implications of the present research findings for the hospitality sector are obvious; the hospitality service quality three dimensions' model offers the ground for the quality service that a hospitality organisation should offer to guests based on employees' responses. The model provides the way that recruitment, selection and employee training should be carried out in order to eventually improve quality of service delivery. Although the figure with the eight different forms does not present the issue that various services include different 'moments of truth' in different ways, it still offers a taxonomy that can assess the importance of training regarding the hospitality service quality improvements and how training criteria could be designed. According to this statement, further research and study is justificatory. Moreover, from the time the guest is part of the hospitality service quality 'moment of truth' and his/her perceptions of the service quality are related to the service quality performance, the guest expectations form an additional issue to be studied in the future.

It is a fact that SERVQUAL is difficult to be applied in all the service sectors since it was built up through four studies of standardized commercial services, while the hospitality service consists of complex processes and various 'moments of truth'. Also, due to the fact that hospitality services may potentially involve complex processes, a guest come through a number of tangible assets such as the hotel, design, rooms, etc at the same time of enjoying different types of services such as cleaning, reception, foods and beverages service etc. As a result, all these various encounters are essentially to be included in the procedure of service quality evaluation. Moreover, the fact that SERVQUAL fail to prove useful on how a service should be improved, led to researchers to develop this model which offers a new approach on how services in the hospitality sector could be improved through better design of staff training.

However, the extent that training can improve hospitality industry's service quality goals is under discussion since the industry can never be in the privileged situation of manufacturing, where failures stay at the manufacturing premises. Consequently, to remain the industry competitive, hospitality service providers must keep on meeting customer expectations. It is argued that given the importance of the guest/employee interaction to the service encounter, human resource management has a key responsibility in securing high levels of service quality. So, a conceptual model of understanding of human resources management (HRM) policies and practices appropriate to a high quality strategy will lead to a better understanding of the linkages between HRM and service quality. There is clearly a need for better training to be provided throughout the hospitality sector, since training can improve the quality of the product and service. Because of the very nature of the hospitality industry, improving quality by better training on an individual business basis cannot be the key to ensuring that the quality throughout the industry is improved. Businesses in the tourism and hospitality industry do not exist in isolation. If all tourism and hospitality businesses were to provide better training for their staff then the quality of the product would undoubtedly be improved. However, this is difficult to happen because of the structure backwards of the industry in total, which must be primarily modified. For example, overall perceptions about how personnel are treated must be changed. Consequently, taking to account that training can affect the service quality of the industry, issues relating to the structure and general human resource management must be considered with care in future research.

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