

**Human Resources Involvement in Adapting Total Quality Management:  
The Case of 4 and 5 Star City Hotels in Athens**

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**Abstract**

The objective of this paper is to examine the extent and special characteristics of the involvement of human resources, working in 4 and 5 star hotels, in adapting Total Quality Management. The research, which was conducted in hotels located in the city of Athens, revealed that hotels aspire to quality and customer satisfaction; still, quality has not been universally defined and can be conceived differently. The research also revealed a limited use of Total Quality Management models. Despite the fact that city hotels are aware of the significance and role of HR for the achievement of particular quality parameters related to their services, they still do not focus sufficiently on training and motivating their staff in issues related to quality, as quality can be perceived for each individual field.

**Keywords:** Human resources, human resource management, total quality management, strategy, city hotels, Athens

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**Introduction**

One of the major hotel strategies is long-term orientation of their activities towards the creation of competitive advantages, which include utilising all available resources and hotel products to meet the needs of their guests and achieve maximum customer satisfaction (Johnson, Scholes and Whittington, 2006). The effective management of human resources (HR) can help hotels achieving those competitive advantages (Baum, 2007). The decision to apply quality either to a department or to the entire hotel is a major strategic decision for an increasing number of hotels worldwide. Quality is directly related to corporate effectiveness and productivity, thus strongly affecting the operational performance of hotels (i.e. revenues, occupancy, etc.) (Harrington and Akehurst, 2000). Total Quality Management (TQM) is a system focussing on meeting demands of hotel internal and external customers. This is a different approach that aims at i) achieving an enterprise's effective growth and ii) boosting its competitiveness (Dervitsiotis, 2005).

**Literature Review**

TQM aims on one hand at the identification and utilisation of parameters affecting the quality of the offered product and services and on the other hand at the

detection and elimination of any causes (either HR or product related) that lead to deviations from the desired goals and results (Deadrick and Gardner, 1999). The objective of TQM is maximising customer satisfaction by means of analysing the characteristics and needs of the customers and adapting the offered product to meet exactly these needs. All these procedures need to be related to one another to allow for the improvement of production operations and the increase of HR effectiveness. Furthermore, HR effectiveness requires motivation, empowerment and team work at the workplace (Meliou and Maroudas, 2011).

Several researchers proclaim that the concept of quality must be defined as a special strategic model. Still, under the scope of strategic management, TQM constitutes in itself a strategic application. Prajogo and Sohal (2006) have managed to relate TQM to corporate strategy and to analyse the concept of quality in relation to cost leadership strategy and differentiation strategy. The TQM philosophy focuses mainly on customer needs and expectations and combines the concept of quality with that of strategy (Gower, 1997). Still, there are some major differences between TQM and the other quality strategies. Such differences are related to the active participation of an entire organisation, the responsibility of senior executives to explain the concept of quality and promote the participation of HR in decision-making related to issues of strategy implementation, etc (Stavrinoudis and Fragoulakis, 2010). That's why Tsaur and Lin (2004) suggest that it is the responsibility of the managers to motivate the hotels' HR towards better satisfying the customer's needs.

The main parameters contributing to successful implementation of TQM are the following: management's and leadership's binding to quality; HRM; relation between customers and suppliers; internal organisational culture; and last but not least process management (Montes et al., 2003). Recent researches and studies regarding the application of TQM in hotels emphasise factors and variables related to the external environment (economic, legal, environmental, etc), whereas they tend to incorporate variables, such as technological developments and changes of the hotel competitive environment (Wang et al., 2012).

HR is a key-factor for the constant improvement of productivity, product quality, customer satisfaction, operation cost, profitability of a company, etc. A connection between the corporate goals and the declared or identified needs of the employees is crucial when attempting to achieve qualitative production conditions (Stavrinoudis and Floras, 2012; Dervitsiotis, 2005). However, the need to create a corporate identity and have committed and actively involved employees has created a new mentality for the hotel industry and has led to the conclusion that team work is a strategic choice and a major characteristic of TQM( Dimitriades, 2000). Furthermore, strategic HRM connects and completes all business levels, helping HR incorporation into the strategic targets of the hotels. Quality goals are among those targets (Byars and Rue, 2003).

Consequently, the studies conducted in hotels that dealt with the examination of quality of the services offered (Briggs et al., 2007) have also investigated HR contribution to the production and offering of a qualitative product. A correct HR utilisation can result in increased productivity, effectiveness and improvement of the level of the services offered (Anderson et al., 1997; Stavrou et al., 2007). Despite the positive relation between HRM policies and organizational performance, several researchers believe that the direct connection of well defined HR practices and employees' performance needs further research (Gerhart, 2005). It should be noted here

that some researchers consider that the HR factor is so important that in the case of TQM the employees must be treated as internal customers that need special care (Eskildsen and Dahlgaard, 2000).

A Mei et al. (1999) study investigated the quality of services provided in hotels in Australia. The aforementioned study revealed among other things that the quality of the services provided depends on three parameters: i) employees; ii) tangibles; and iii) reliability. Among those three, the employees play the most important role. According to Hope and Muhlemann (1998) the variable relating all the efforts and models of quality management (and consequently also TQM) is the staff employed in the tourism industry. The employees, their behaviour during the production and distribution of the tourism product and the relation between said behaviour and customer expectations, determine to a great extent the opinion of the customers about the quality of the entire end product (Witt and Muhlemann, 1994). Still, as Sharpley and Forster (2003) very accurately explain, said behaviour is one of the parameters that are most difficult to control. International studies have revealed that the behaviour of hotel employees, and particularly of those directly involved with hotel guests on a daily basis, determines to a great extent the level of quality of an enterprise's entire product (Kelley and Hoffman, 1997). There is a clear relation between HRM practices and achievement of high quality standards when producing and offering a hotel product. This fact indicates that HRM practices are a crucial parameter affecting the everyday behaviour of hotel employees towards hotel customers (Tsaura and Lin, 2004)

Under this scope, a hotel that applies TQM principles must be a hotel with a mentality to achieve constant customer satisfaction through an integrated system of tools, techniques and training, which involves all of its employees. It is very important to build a spirit of cooperation that allows for the maximum utilisation of all innovative ideas. An effective HRM can help an enterprise to improve its quality and productivity (Gower, 1997). Other researchers have proven the importance of HR training as a major factor for the incorporation of basic parameters for quality achievement in hotels. Training, especially in high class hotels, should not be restricted to issues related to respect and politeness to customers, but needs to focus on meeting customer needs quickly and fully as well as on the employees' deep understanding of the concept and importance of quality (Wilkins et al., 2007). Recruiting and retaining well trained – well educated employees is crucial for the hotels in order to deliver products and services of high quality (Dewhurst et al., 2007). Along the same lines, hotel enterprises must invest in their HR, aiming not only in their short-term survival but long-term development and quality improvement (Kyriakidou and Maroudas, 2010).

Recent scientific approaches, regarding the quality of services offered in hotels, have greatly improved the knowledge and understanding of both the concept and the contents of quality. Still, said approaches highlight that quality dimensions can vary between hotels engaging in different markets (resort hotels, airport hotels, etc) (Akbaba, 2006; Juwaheer, 2004). Regardless of the above finding, however, the application of TQM in hotels and the implementation of strategic choices related to the above is not an easy thing (Varvaresos and Sotiriadis, 2003). The difficulty in this case lies in the nature of the services and products provided, since these are not standardised, and it is quite complicated to analyse and examine an immaterial service according to business terms. Usually, the criterion used to evaluate the quality of the product offered is based on the experiences gained by internal and external customers (James, 1998).

Until today, the number of researches related to the application of quality standards by Greek hotels, and especially by city hotels, is very limited and therefore i) there is a major lack of information that does not allow for an accurate depiction of the current situation (even in high class hotels); and ii) no research conclusions can be drawn and no proposals can be made on a more effective application of TQM principles. At an international level, the lack of research information on HR role and contribution to the offering of a qualitative product is even more evident in the case of high class city hotels.

### **Research Methodology**

A review of the international literature indicates a lack of primary studies on the HR role and importance for the implementation of TQM principles in city hotels and said lack has led to the formulation of the following research goals:

- (1) depicting the actual level of TQM principles adoption and implementation by 4 and 5 star city hotels;
- (2) investigating the extent and activities used by city hotels to provoke an active involvement of their HR in the application of TQM;
- (3) examining whether and to what extent the hotel class can affect the TQM incorporation and HR involvement in its successful implementation.

In order to investigate the above research goals we created a structured questionnaire consisting of 35 closed-type questions, divided into 7 thematic fields. The sampling method applied was "systematic sampling" based on the criterion of hotel location and class (Kyriazi, 1999). The research was conducted in Athens among 4 and 5 star hotels. Athens was selected for the conduction of the primary research because of the following reasons: i) it is the capital of Greece; ii) the majority of city hotels are located there; and iii) the financial crisis and the challenges faced by Greece, the city of Athens and its hotels strengthen the need to adopt strategies emphasising the qualitative parameters of the hotel product and boosting customer satisfaction. When the research was conducted, i.e. June – July 2011, in the city of Athens there were 14 five-star hotels and 39 four-star hotels (source: Hellenic Chamber of Hotels). We chose high class hotels mainly due to the fact that the international experience has shown that such hotel classes knowingly apply strategies focusing on quality improvement, a fact that is directly related to the profile of their clientele, the requirements of said clientele and of course the product offered.

Prior to the main research we conducted a pilot study to check the questionnaire, which revealed a limited number of clarifications that had to be made and proposals that were incorporated in the final questionnaire to improve its efficiency (Javeau, 2000). The questionnaire was filled in by hotel senior executives themselves (either directors or managers). We gathered 39 questionnaires (24 from 4-star hotels and 15 from 5-star hotels). All of them were filled in correctly and fully. The number of the questionnaires was deemed satisfactory and sufficient for the drawing of safe and accurate conclusions (Kyriazi, 1999). The codification, processing and analysis of the questionnaires were made by means of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

## Research Findings

### *Incorporation and Implementation of TQM Principles*

The hotels that participated in the research stated that meeting their clients' needs was their primary strategic goal (34.7%). This strategic goal is directly related to the next one on the ranking list, i.e. providing services of higher quality (18.8%). The achievement of both of the above goals depends to a great extent on the implementation of particular quality standards. Consequently, quality improvement constitutes a clear strategic decision of hotels, since it is considered a major parameter for customer satisfaction. Other strategic choices, such as increase of productivity (16.8%) and reduction of cost (15.8%), were considered less important.

The investigation of the existence or non-existence of a specific and clearly defined quality framework revealed that to their vast majority (53.8%) hotels in Athens apply quality frameworks that correspond to international standards, but this does not necessarily mean that they are certified for the use of said standards. It should be noted that a limited –but not negligible- number of hotels either does not apply any quality framework (7.7%) or it incorporates in its business plan (5.1%) and production process (12.8%) non-standardised quality parameters.

Following that, we examined to what extent said TQM programmes are actually implemented. Although most of the hotels desired to provide quality to their customers, the vast majority (61.5%) does not use a TQM programme to determine the concept of quality, a fact that leads to justified scepticism as regards both the kind and the extent of the implementation of quality programmes by the hotels in Athens.

Despite the above, we received a positive feedback from the majority (92.9%) of the hotels that use a TQM programme, for they have been convinced since years (more than 4 years) of its necessity; a large percentage (50%) has already been applying the TQM policies for the past 8 to 11 years. This forms a small -but strong- group of Athens hotels, which consciously invest in quality issues related to the product they offer.

**Table 1:** Number of years of TQM programme implementation

Number of years	Frequency	Percent
0-3	1	7.1
4-7	5	35.7
8-11	7	50.0
12+...	1	7.1
Total	14	100.0

Given the strategic decision of the hotels that participated in the research to investigate in customer satisfaction, a follow-up of customer satisfaction is essential, since this indicates how successful a quality programme is. To their vast majority (84.6%) the executives participating in the research stated that they analyse and follow up customer satisfaction by means of an ongoing gathering and processing of information provided by the customers themselves. Only a small percentage (7.7%) of hotels do not analyse their customers' satisfaction.

*Role and Extent of HR Involvement in TQM Programmes Implementation*

Further, we examined the actions of Athens hotels that aim at a constant improvement of customer satisfaction. The answers provided indicate that constant improvement of customer satisfaction can be achieved mainly through HR training (51.3%). Still, the fact that 20.5% of the hotels that participated in the research do not take any action – measures for the constant improvement of customer satisfaction offers food for thought. It is a major contradiction to have hotels claiming that they analyse the extent of their customers’ satisfaction but take no organised action to improve it!

The examination of the ways used by the hotels in Athens to strengthen the effectiveness and productivity of their employees revealed a clear trend to promote a spirit of true HR involvement in issues related to effectiveness and productivity improvement as well as an attempt to establish a fair cooperation (59%). In the same direction, 20.5% of the participants stated that they actively encourage their staff to take initiatives in order to face arising problems. This indicates a high degree of trust to HR and HR ability to contribute to the improvement of the production process.

Still, upon investigating the ways used by hotels for the internal communication of messages related to the implementation of quality frameworks, we ascertained a lack of organised actions-strategies. Suggestive of the above is that only 28.2% of the hotels have special handbooks on quality issues, which constitutes the HR guidance and information basis for issues related to the implementation of quality frameworks. The rest of the hotels are either based on informal –and often non-measurable processes– such as HR commitment and cooperation among the various departments, 51.3%, or communicate the message for the implementation of quality frameworks during seminars (20.5%).

Following that, we investigated to what extent HR had been trained on issues related to quality improvement of the products and services offered. A small (28.2%) – but not negligible percentage of the hotels- offers a specialised training on TQM issues. Athens hotels are mainly interested in the training of their HR on issues directly related to the subject of their work; this fact, however, is indirectly related to the improvement of quality both when producing and when offering a product. Still, this does not mean that they incorporate any particular organised actions for a thorough training on issues related to quality improvement. Furthermore, 17.9% of the hotels do not offer any kind of training on quality issues at all.

**Table 2:** HR training on quality improvement issues

HR training	Frequency	Percent
No training provided	7	17.9
HR training on a daily basis	4	10.3
Training on issues related to the scope of HR work	17	43.6
HR training on TQM principles	11	28.2
Total	39	100.0

The participants in the research believe that providing training on quality issues is part of the general training mentality of a corporation, a belief that was made obvious by the answers provided with respect to the percentage of their HR that have been

trained on quality issues over the years. An interesting finding is that 31.6% of the hotels stated that 76-100% of their HR have been trained on quality issues, whereas 28.9% answered that 51-75% of their HR had participated in trainings that also included some quality issues. The aforementioned percentages are quite high and indicate on one hand that the belief that training on quality issues cannot necessarily be restricted-integrated in highly specialised and topic-oriented trainings, whereas on the other hand they can be interpreted in various ways, as to what quality and of course training on quality issues actually means.

An effective HR motivation that urges taking initiatives and using quality standards when exercising their duties is a crucial parameter for a successful implementation of TQM programmes. The results from the answers to the above question were encouraging, since they reveal that the majority (59%) of the hotels has incorporated motives for the promotion of joint actions within the framework of integrated evaluation systems that encourage employees to apply quality principles and rules. At the same time, 20.5% of the participants mentioned that they use customised reward systems adapted to the special conditions and performance of each employee. Still, a non-negligible percentage of hotels (17.9%) do not motivate their employees to take action and initiatives for the improvement of the product and services offered.

Concerning the implementation of qualitative production methods, there is a lack of organised and systematic actions to ensure the quality of the work provided. Only 25.6% of the hotels in Athens use a system, even an informal one, to collect data related to the implementation of quality parameters in the production process. The majority of the hotels restrict their actions to non-systematic ones, which aim at encouraging (33.3%) and supporting their employees towards quality (38.5%).

#### *Correlation of Hotel Class to TQM Incorporation and to HR Involvement*

The research focused on the examination of whether and to what extent the hotel class affects the existence and characteristics of an implemented quality framework. In the case of both aforementioned hotel classes, a clear orientation towards international quality standards was noted; still, 4-star hotels presented a relevant differentiation.

A chi-square test revealed that 80% of the table cells have an expected frequency  $>5$ . For this reason we also used a nonparametric monte carlo test that analyses the following hypotheses:

H0: hotel class (stars) *does not affect* the quality framework implemented;

H1: hotel class (stars) *does affect* the quality framework implemented.

Given that sig (lower bound) =0.068 and sig (upper bound) =0.078 (that is  $<0.05$ ) we accept the hypothesis H0. Consequently, the hotel class *does not affect* the quality framework implemented.

**Table 3:** Hotel class – Implemented quality framework

	Value	Monte Carlo Sig. (2-sided)		
		Sig.	95% Confidence interval	
			Lower bound	Upper bound
Fisher’s Exact Test	7.500	.073	.068	.078
No of Valid Cases	39			

Following that we investigated the actions taken by hotels in order to achieve a constant improvement of customer satisfaction, in an attempt to determine whether the hotel class affects said actions. The results of the research indicate a clear trend of 5-star hotels towards HR training. This trend is also obvious in four-star hotels, but to a lesser degree, since this class has the highest percentage of hotels that take no action at all.

A chi-square test revealed that 75% of the table cells have an expected frequency >5. For this reason we also used a nonparametric monte carlo test that analyses the following hypotheses:

H0: hotel class *does not affect* the hotel actions aiming at the constant improvement of customer satisfaction;

H1: hotel class *does affect* the hotel actions aiming at the constant improvement of customer satisfaction.

Given that sig (lower bound) =0.028 and sig (upper bound) =0.035 (that is <0.05) we accept the hypothesis H1. Consequently, the hotel class *does affect* the actions aiming at the constant improvement of customer satisfaction.

**Table 4:** Hotel class - Actions for the constant improvement of customer satisfaction

	Value	Monte Carlo Sig. (2-sided)		
		Sig.	95% Confidence interval	
			Lower bound	Upper bound
Fisher’s Exact Test	8.226	.032	.028	.035
No of Valid Cases	39			

The study of actions-measures of Athens hotels, which aim at increasing the effectiveness of their employees, leads to the conclusion that both hotel classes pay special attention to the promotion of cooperation and active involvement of their employees to inter-corporate procedures. Especially four-star hotels, as opposed to five-star hotels, focus on the encouragement of the employees to take problem-solving initiatives.

A chi-square test revealed that 75% of the table cells have an expected frequency >5. For this reason we also used a nonparametric monte carlo test that analyses the following hypotheses:



H0: hotel class *does not affect* the hotel actions aiming to the promotion of HR effectiveness and productivity

H1: hotel class *does affect* the hotel actions aiming to the promotion of HR effectiveness and productivity

Given that sig (lower bound) =0.029 and sig (upper bound) =0.036 (that is <0.05) we accept the hypothesis H1. Consequently, the hotel class *does affect* the actions taken by a hotel in order to promote its HR effectiveness and productivity.

**Table 5:** Hotel class - Actions strengthening HR effectiveness and productivity

	Value	Monte Carlo Sig. (2-sided)		
		Sig.	95% Confidence interval	
			Lower bound	Upper bound
Fisher's Exact Test	7.863	.033	.029	.036
No of Valid Cases	39			

Especially interesting is the investigation of the extent and kind of training on quality issues that is provided by hotels to their HR. The main differences between the two hotel classes are on one hand the greater attention that five-star hotels pay to HR education and training on TQM issues and on the other hand the great number of four-star hotels that provide no training on quality issues at all.

**Table 6:** Hotel class - HR training on quality improvement issues

Hotel Class		Education				Total
		No training provided	HR training on a daily basis	Training on issues related to the scope of HR work	HR training on TQM principles	
4*	Count	7	2	11	4	24
	Expected count	4.3	2.5	10.5	6.8	24.0
5*	Count	0	2	6	7	15
	Expected count	2.7	1.5	6.5	4.2	15.0
Total	Count	7	4	17	11	39
	Expected count	7.0	4.0	17.0	11.0	39.0

A chi-square test revealed that 62.5% of the table cells have an expected frequency >5. For this reason we also used a nonparametric monte carlo test that analyses the following hypotheses:

H0: hotel class *does not affect* hotel decisions concerning their HR training on issues related to quality improvement;

H1: hotel class *does affect* hotel decisions concerning their HR training on issues related to quality improvement;

Given that sig (lower bound) =0.038 and sig (upper bound) =0.046 (that is <0.05) we accept the hypothesis H1. Consequently, the hotel class *does affect* hotel decisions concerning HR training on issues related to quality improvement.

**Table 7:** Hotel class - HR training on quality improvement issues

	Value	Monte Carlo Sig. (2-sided)		
		Sig.	95% Confidence interval	
			Lower bound	Upper bound
Fisher's Exact Test	7.776	.042	.038	.046
No of Valid Cases	39			

The examination of HR percentage trained on quality issues indicates clearly that said percentage is higher in five-star hotels. Hotels of higher class pay greater attention to the training of their HR than four-star hotels.

**Table 8:** Hotel class - HR percentage that has attended trainings on quality issues

Hotel Class	HR Percentage					Total
	0%	1-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%	
Count	4	5	3	6	5	23
<b>4*</b> Expected count	2,4	3,6	3,0	6,7	7,3	23,0
Count	0	1	2	5	7	15
<b>5*</b> Expected count	1,6	2,4	2,0	4,3	4,7	15,0
Total Count	4	6	5	11	12	38
Expected count	4,0	6,0	5,0	11,0	12,0	38,0

A chi-square test revealed that 80% of the table cells have an expected frequency >5. For this reason we also used a nonparametric monte carlo test that analyses the following hypotheses:

H0: hotel class *does not affect* the percentage of HR that have been trained on quality issues;

H1: hotel class *does affect* the percentage of HR that have been trained on quality issues.

Given that sig (lower bound) =0.236 and sig (upper bound) =0.253 (that is <0.05) we accept the hypothesis H0. Consequently, hotel class *does not affect* the percentage of HR that have been trained on quality issues.

**Table 9:** Hotel class - HR percentage that has attended trainings on quality issues

	Value	Monte Carlo Sig. (2-sided)		
		Sig.	95% Confidence interval	
			Lower bound	Upper bound
Fisher's Exact Test	5.458	.244	.236	.253
No of Valid Cases	38			

As regards the ways used by hotels to encourage-motivate their HR to participate actively in quality issues, it is clearly shown that the main practice applied for both hotel classes is providing motives based on integrated evaluation systems. The percentage of four-star hotels stating that they do not encourage their employees to participate actively in issues related to the quality of the services and products provided is larger than the corresponding percentage of five-star hotels.

A chi-square test revealed that 75% of the table cells have an expected frequency >5. For this reason we also used a nonparametric monte carlo test that analyses the following hypotheses:

H0: hotel class *does not affect* the way a hotel encourages HR involvement in quality issues;

H1: hotel class *does affect* the way a hotel encourages HR involvement in quality issues.

Given that sig (lower bound) =0.182 and sig (upper bound) =0.197 (that is <0.05) we accept the hypothesis H0. Consequently, hotel class *does not affect* the way a hotel encourages HR involvement in quality issues.

**Table 10:** Hotel class - Ways to motivate HR active involvement in quality issues

	Value	Monte Carlo Sig. (2-sided)		
		Sig.	95% Confidence interval	
			Lower bound	Upper bound
Fisher's Exact Test	4.417	.189	.182	.197
No of Valid Cases	39			

An examination of whether or not the hotels participating in the research use a TQM programme revealed that in the case of five-star hotels, the percentage of hotels that have incorporated and apply a TQM programme exceeds by far the corresponding percentage of four-star hotels.

When we examined the hotel class with the use by hotels of TQM programme, we found that sig is <0.05, which means that the hotel class *does affect* the use or no use of a TQM programme.

## Discussion and Conclusions

### *Incorporation and Implementation of TQM Principles*

City hotels located in Athens present a strategic orientation towards meeting the needs of their customers by means of providing qualitative services. This strategic orientation is attributed to the fact that said hotels are aware of the importance and value of quality for their future survival and growth. Quality is approached, and to some extent even incorporated, either formally or informally, through the efforts to implement some international quality standards. Our research revealed a clear hotel focus on the degree of customer satisfaction, which is evaluated based on feedback from the customers themselves, mainly by means of questionnaires. Still, an important number of hotels apply a rather empirical, and most of the times not organized, approach to quality. Suggestive of this is the fact that the majority of the hotels constituting our sample do not apply any clearly defined TQM programme. Even so, the hotels that have incorporated integrated TQM programmes have adequate experience as regards their implementation.

### *Role and Extent of HR Involvement in TQM Programmes Implementation*

Focusing on HR training was deemed by the research participants the best possible choice for the promotion of customer satisfaction. Still, the kind and contents of the training provided is only to a limited extent relevant to TQM issues and in most cases it covers issues related to providing conventional training related to the scope of work of the employees. This leads to serious doubts as regards senior executives' degree of objective determination and understanding of the concept of and contents of quality and consequently also of the kind of training that could be called "training on quality issues". The research indicates to some extent the lack of a clearly defined approach to the concept of quality and to the achievement of quality in hotels.

Undoubtedly, even hotel senior executives that do not apply a TQM programme admit that HR effectiveness and productivity need to be improved. Said HR effectiveness and productivity is strengthened through HR active involvement and promotion of a team spirit. Still, such an attempt only rarely takes place in an organised way or focuses on particular quality issues. Characteristic of this is the limited percentage of hotels using a special handbook on quality implementation. Said percentage is even less than the percentage of hotels that actually use a TQM programme. Although the HR variable is considered important for ensuring quality and adding value to a hotel product, in fact the research revealed a lack of corporate policies aimed at the utilisation of the above finding.

The investigation of the ways used to motivate the employees to contribute to the improvement of quality of the product offered indicates the use of some classical and general methods of motivation, such as customised programmes and systems for the evaluation and fair reward. Hotels pay special attention to team spirit building and existence of widely accepted goals. Despite the clear determination of the HR role and importance for the achievement of quality parameters related to the production of the hotel product and given the insufficient knowledge of the contents of quality, we ascertained that HR motivation and training on quality issues lacked a clear focus. A great percentage of the city hotels in Athens regard quality as a new trend or tendency and therefore they try to improve their quality through the available means, often without any systematic or sufficient HR involvement.

*Correlation of Hotel Class to TQM Incorporation and to HR Involvement*

The study of the relation between hotel class and extent/particularities of the incorporation of quality standards by city hotels in Athens revealed that the hotel class, i.e. five or four stars, does not affect the implemented quality framework and/or the hotel orientation towards international quality standards. On the contrary, hotel class determines and differentiates the actions incorporated to improve customer satisfaction with five-star hotels paying definitely more attention to HR training. The research revealed that there is a relation between hotel class and type of actions developed to improve HR productivity and effectiveness with four-star hotels motivating their employees more to take initiatives and five-star hotels aiming more at the promotion of a team spirit and HR involvement in organised actions for quality improvement.

Five-star hotels have a different attitude as regards their choices concerning HR training on quality issues as it is a higher priority for them to provide trainings on TQM issues; four-star hotels focus more on trainings on the scope of work. A comparison of the above correlations reveals that the hotel class does not affect the choices of its senior executives as regards the ways to motivate HR active involvement in quality issues. On the contrary, the hotel class defines the degree and extent of the implementation of TQM programmes, since this is much higher in five-star rather than four-star city hotels in Athens.

The research findings may have certain implications for hotel managers. In particular, given the highly competitive external environment of city hotels, it is deemed necessary to use differentiation strategies, which to a great extent can be implemented by focusing on quality. For this to be achieved it is important to apply particular quality frameworks that on the one hand lead to the certification of the hotels implementing them and on the other hand they ensure that customer needs are met in a qualitative way. At this level HR involvement is deemed vital; still, said HR involvement presupposes that organised communication methods are applied to all messages affecting the quality outcome. In terms of the above ascertainment, it is essential that all HRM operations focus on and adapt to the qualitative goals that hotel employees must achieve. For example, HR training on issues related to the scope of work is deemed insufficient, since organised educational processes are required, which would constitute a systematic preparation of the employees to achieve qualitative goals.

**Further Research**

This research is a first attempt to examine the extent of HR utilisation for the implementation of TQM in city hotels in Athens. The conclusions of the research conducted cannot be de facto considered typical for all city hotels in Greece and abroad. Even so, it is a foundation for further research that could focus on the intensification of the role of individual HRM operations for the achievement of qualitative parameters in the production of the hotel product. At the same time, carrying out a similar research at seaside resorts - hotels of similar classes could deliver interesting results and would allow making comparisons and reaching conclusions.

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