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Abstract

Greece is one of the most popular tourist destinations. As a result, tourism is one of the most important Greek businesses, employing a sizable proportion of the entire labor force. Because of this, the implementation of various quality models such as the EFQM can result in considerable improvements in the services that firms provide, to the advantage of both internal and external consumers. Taken these into consideration, this paper is the first attempt to combine two quality tools: the EFQM model and the SERVQUAL. Moreover, it looks at the employment satisfaction of persons who work in the Greek tourism business, primarily in hotel units. Based on the theory of Internal Service Quality and the EFQM model, this paper intends to assess the satisfaction of employees working in the tourism industry in hotel units. More specifically, the study intends to investigate both men and women's perceptions on the internal perceived quality of the hotel unit in which they work. To do this, a complicated study approach was designed that combines questions from the SERVQUAL scale, which analyzes the quality of services provided by an organization's independent industry, and the EFQM business excellence model, with a particular focus on the "People" criterion. Finally, the first significant finding is that there is a positive relationship between Internal Service Quality and the EFQM "People" criterion and the other significant conclusion is that organizations that adhere to quality standards have higher job satisfaction than companies that do not adhere to quality standards.

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1. Introduction

The hotel sector, and particularly the hospitality supplied by a hotel firm, takes a customer-centric strategy that relies heavily on direct contact between employees and clients (AlBattat et al., 2013). According to a 2017 study, senior management of hotels in the tourism industry must comprehensively and consistently implement and practices of Total Quality Management (TQM) to achieve improved levels of employee satisfaction and hotel performance (Bouranta et al., 2017).

According to TQM philosophy, the availability of satisfied human resources is the essential prerequisite for a company's external customer satisfaction. When a company cares about its employees and pursues their pleasure, they become more loyal and devoted to the company (Gupta et al., 2013). People who are content with their day-to-day work will not only give adequate service, but will also stay longer in the organization and treat their clients better. Essentially, client retention and satisfaction can be generated by keeping satisfied and motivated staff who delivers these services (Yavaset al., 2008). Job satisfaction is addressed in literature and related studies on the tourism industry. Employee satisfaction is very significant in the tourism business since it represents quality in performance (Peric et al., 2018).

However, most studies focus on external customer happiness, with less emphasis on internal customer and internal job satisfaction. Total Quality Management concept says that enterprises must care for their human resource satisfaction, which in turn motivates employees to provide services with a positive work attitude (Steel et al., 2019). Internal customer happiness creates and maintains external customer satisfaction, resulting in greater profitability and sales for a business (McPhail et al., 2015). Managers will be able to take a set of objective measures that boost workforce happiness by satisfying the needs of each individual employee by identifying the aspects that contribute to the job satisfaction of people working in hotels (da Borralha et al., 2016).

2. Literature review

2.1 Tourism & Total Quality Management

Tourism is a key global socioeconomic phenomenon, thus both origin and host countries are interested in monitoring and measuring it. The term "tourism" is derived from the French phrase "tour," which means "to go around." It has frequently been mistaken with touring, which is a narrower meaning than tourism, because "to tour implies to describe the region" (Laloumis, 2015). The World Tourism Organization (WTO) defines tourism as "the activities of persons travelling and staying in places outside their usual like environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, and like purposes unrelated to the pursuit of activity remunerated by the place visited" (Ana, 2008). Greece is regarded as one of Europe's most popular tourist destinations, and hence relies largely on international tourism, with Germany and the United Kingdom serving as major source markets (WTTC, 2021). According to global

rankings, Greece is already among the thirty most competitive countries in tourism, ranking 25th (WEF Report, 2019).

Tourism's spectacular rise in recent years has aided in the building of essential infrastructure (airports, ports, and highways) as well as tourist facilities. According to the Hellenic Chamber of Hotels (2022), Greece's hotel potential totals 10,087 units, 443,835 rooms, and 885,624 beds. It is critical for a hotel company to be able to perceive the areas that need improvement and to know where it stands in relation to competitors. This is important so as to have a direct insight into both the market share and whether it deviates from or matches what it had set as its primary goal to achieve (Katsoni et al., 2018). It is thought critical to provide excellent hospitality in order to retain existing customers and attract new ones in order to sustain each hotel unit's position and competitiveness (Jasinskas et al., 2016). In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Service Quality Management (SQM) arose as a unique field of research and application. Commercial demands, as well as growing competitiveness, spurred this. Visitors and tourists demand more than they receive, so it is critical to bridge the gap between their expectations and the quality of the services or products they receive. As a result, the service industry adapted Total Quality Management from the manufacturing sector to the needs of the tourism and hotel industries (Avelini et al., 1996).

When Quality Assurance (QA) was founded in the 1980s, Total Quality Management (TQM) was first used in the hotel industry (Breiter et al., 1995). America was the first to use quality assurance systems in industries such as hospitality in 1982, with the goal of achieving extraordinary results. For example, the Ritz-Carlton Hotel was the first in the world to get a quality award from the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Awards (MBNQA) in 1992 and 1999 (Al – Ababneh et al., 2018). Over the last decade, many hospitality organizations have demonstrated growing interest in concepts such as Total Quality Management (TQM) (Cannon, 2002). As a result, TQM is clearly a strategic issue for hotel operations. The strategy of a hotel should entail understanding client needs and attempting to meet them through the application of a specific quality-oriented policy. Quality planning defines in detail the elements that the company must include in the product or service to be supplied in order to meet the needs of customers/visitors, as well as the long-term impacts of implementation (Laloumis et al., 2010).

2.2 The SERVQUAL scale & the Internal Service Quality

The SERVQUAL scale or Gap Model has received the most attention among various methodologies for measuring service quality, regardless of the type of service industry in which a firm operates (Mola et al., 2011). The Gap Model has two functions (Mujinga, 2019):

1. Determine the gaps between client expectations and the actual services supplied at various levels of service delivery.
2. Bridging the identified gap to improve customer service.

The concept of internal service quality emerged in the 1980s, influenced by the Internal Marketing Theory and the Service-Profit Chain Theory. According to the Internal Marketing Theory, corporations should approach employees as internal customers and satisfy their wants as internal consumers by attracting, developing, and inspiring similar employees to achieve similar organizational goals .In contrast, the Service-Profit Chain Theory posits a "chain" reaction between internal and external quality customer pleasure, which leads to economic benefits, i.e. profit. When Internal Service is not handled properly, the entire Service Chain, including clients, is jeopardized (Wu et al., 2021). Tourism firms are customer-oriented, so maintaining a high level of Internal Service Quality (ISQ) is critical. Internal Services are services provided by personnel that operate in the same or other departments inside the same company (Järvi, 2012). As a result, the following definition is provided: Internal Service is the service provided within a similar organization, with the philosophy that supports proper treatment of employees, supervisors, and managers and the provision of appropriate services, just as appropriate services are provided to external customers (Evans, 2018).

Internal Service Quality (ISQ) is defined as the employees' perception of the perceived service quality provided by a different organizational unit or by people working in those departments, other departments, or employees within the organization. More specifically, Internal Service Quality (ISQ) is an organized group of related activities that together create an outcome that is of value to customers (Latif, 2016). Internal Service Quality is described as employees' feelings about the quality of service provided or received by partners while working within the same organization or department (Nazeer et al., 2014). According to the preceding, outstanding Internal Service is based on services provided to internal units and seeks to provide exceptional services to external clients (Nazeer et al., 2014). It is intimately tied to the Total Quality Management philosophy, where one of the most important factors of a business is employee happiness (Chang et al., 2010). Employees that receive strong internal service quality are often more satisfied and motivated, have higher work ethics, and function more effectively and efficiently, according to Eskildsen et al. (2000). Finally, in addition to acting as a driver of increased job satisfaction and productivity of a firm's human resources, this achievement can result in an increase in the level of like loyalty of external customers who like the firm, resulting in increased revenues (Sharma et al., 2016).

2.3 Perceived Service Quality in the hotel industry & job satisfaction

Perceived Quality was described as the gap or discrepancy between specific perceptions and expectations (Chiang et al., 2005). Perceived quality is defined as the consumer's judgment of the overall superiority or superiority of a product (Darsono et al., 2006). Moreover, Perceived Quality is defines as the consumer's assessment of a company's current performance, noting that such an action tends to positively influence attitudes and behavioral intentions as with respect to the supplier (Souki et al., 2008). Furthermore,

Perceived Quality can be considered as the customer's belief in the superiority of a product that is perceived and prominent among the characteristics of other products, as referenced in Dettori et al. (2020). Also, Perceived Quality is defined in the service literature as the overall judgment that the consumer makes about the excellence of a service (Assaker et al., 2020). The concept that satisfied employees are more driven, work is more ethical, and higher levels of effectiveness and efficiency in work are demonstrated is directly backed by Total Quality Management literature (Eskildsen et al., 2000). Furthermore, it is said that there is stronger staff dedication to quality and continual improvement. Based on this, it is known that employee happiness has a direct influence on quality as a process. Process-like quality impacts external customer satisfaction as well as quality-like expenses (Matzler et al., 2004).

In the hotel industry, where rivalry among enterprises has increased significantly, providing quality services is regarded as a critical strategy for both success and survival to a business. The function of hotel staff is incredibly significant since they will deliver high-quality services to ensure that the hotel institution maintains a high-ranking place among diverse destinations (Gallardo et al., 2010). As a result, it is deemed vital for hotel management to understand how employees feel at work and what they are searching for, as this attitude will immediately affect their performance. Employee satisfaction is the combination of emotional reactions and various perceptions of what people want to receive compared to what they actually receive (Aydin et al., 2009). This means that it is the feelings a particular person has about his or her job and the various aspects that define job satisfaction. Employees' perceptions of service quality can be defined as the employee's judgment of how he/she handles his/her tasks and the delivery of customer service. Perceived Service Quality is the personal evaluation of the quality of service the employee provides as customers (Martinez et al., 2019).

2.4 The EFQM business excellence model in the hotel industry

In early 1992, the EFQM Excellence Model was introduced as the basis for evaluating organizations for the European Quality Awards. It is presently Europe's most utilized organizational framework, serving as the foundation for most national and regional quality awards (Santos – Vijande et al., 2007). The EFQM Model of Business Excellence takes a holistic approach to help organizations of all sizes and sectors analyze where they stand while also understanding key strengths and potential performance gaps (Steed et al., 2005). The idea behind this model is that for an organization to produce better results, it should strive to continuously engage its employees as well as enhance its procedures. At the same time, the EFQM model is non-prescriptive because it is not a standard, i.e., it does not mandate what a company should do but rather provides guidance (Mullins et al., 2015).

The Hellenic Enterprise Management Company (EEDE) was previously responsible for both the information and certification process for the first two levels of Business Excellence in Greece

(Tsarouchas et al., 2018). However, the EFQM representation in Greece has changed as of May 2, 2021. The Institute of Sustainability and Sustainable Development "INBIAN" is now the sole representative of EFQM. The Institute for Sustainability and Sustainable Development is a civil, non-profit organization dedicated to disseminating the EFQM philosophy and actively promoting, adopting, and implementing worldwide management trends by enterprises and organizations of all sizes and sectors, both private and public.

Researchers believe that organizations that can successfully apply approaches such as Business Excellence are better prepared to deal with change in an ever-changing business landscape. The presence of specific skills might lead to long-term benefits for the organization's stakeholders (Adámek, 2018). In other words, organizations must perceive excellence as the visible dedication of top management to the continuous improvement of all critical processes, creativity, and innovation, working conditions, teamwork, motivation, and overall organizational culture (Adámek et al., 2020). In a broader sense, the performance of the tourism sector, and particularly the success of hotel businesses, is determined by the level of service provided. As a result, hotel management needs to know whether performance evaluation is being done appropriately and whether the techniques they are employing are fulfilling their objectives. It is thought vital to have a measuring system or tool to establish whether the firm is pursuing acceptable techniques to attain its objectives or to monitor and analyze performance that highlights whether its objectives have truly been reached (Li et al., 2008).

European hotels are frequently evaluated using the EFQM model, which, as previously stated, serves as the foundation for the European Business Excellence Award. Hotel chains in America, on the other hand, use the Malcolm Balridge model, which is used for the American Quality Award (Alfirevic et al., 2013). However, in recent years, the business environment of enterprises in the tourism industry has undergone substantial changes. The economic crisis has resulted in intense competition among tourism destinations, as well as a predicted shift in global income and demographics (Yeoman, 2012). Future travelers would seek tailored services as well as personalized experiences in the hotel business. Furthermore, he claims that external customers/tourists will demand hotels to innovate by utilizing technology and personalizing communication methods such as the use of social media (Talwar, 2012). Hotels must build a quality of distinct ties between like and unlike consumers to preserve a long-term relationship with end customers. Long-term connections can be maintained through providing high-quality services and products. Based on this, hotel owners are increasingly realizing that hospitality is one of the most important factors in achieving this aim (Jawabreh et al., 2020).

3. Sample & methodology

3.1. Purpose of the research

Based on the theory of internal service quality and the EFQM model, this study intends to assess the satisfaction of employees working in the tourism industry in hotel units. More specifically, the study intends to investigate both men and women's perceptions on the internal perceived quality of the hotel unit in which they work. An organization must consider the aspects that influence employees' perceptions of overall service quality. Understanding the aspects that influence employee perception will assist a company in focusing on attempting to satisfy human resources (Kang et al., 2002). So, these are the research questions that arise from the objective of the study:

- H1: There is a correlation between the internal service quality factors and the EFQM human factor criterion.
- H2: Employees in organizations that use certified quality management systems are more satisfied in general terms than those in companies that do not use such systems.

3.2 Questionnaire design

The first set of questions focused on the participant's demographic characteristics. The SERVQUAL dimensions of internal service quality were discussed in the second half. A 7-point Likert scale was utilized to assess each participant's perception of each question answered. The third section dealt with specific human resource criteria, which are a stand-alone criterion in the EFQM model of excellence. Participants were asked in the final inquiry whether they were aware that their organization was certified with a standard/model/quality system. If they replied yes, a list of the most known standards/models/quality management systems was displayed for them to choose which one their firm has been certified with. It should be noted that none of the questionnaire's questions were optional.

3.3 Study sample

It was vital to select the target audience for the survey to collect the requisite quantity of data for statistical analysis and conclusions. Thus, originally and following the completion of the internet questionnaire, a list of hotel establishments from all geographical areas in Greece was established. Based on this list, an email was sent out detailing the topic of the research, the goal of the study being undertaken, and how long it would take to complete the questionnaire. Furthermore, each employee inside the organization was instructed to complete the questionnaire separately. It should be emphasized that the e-mail was addressed to hotels in Greece that have been granted the EFQM Excellence Model. Finally, the current scientific study's sample consists of people who work in a hotel unit at any one time, independent of the number of beds or the size of the crew.

7

3.4 Validity & reliability checks

Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach's reliability coefficient) was calculated for each of the various thematic items that comprised the overall questionnaire. More specifically, Cronbach's alpha reliability was calculated for the part of the questions related to SERVQUAL and was found to be equal to 0.964, therefore the specific questionnaire has high reliability. Correspondingly, for the part that referred to the human resources criterion of EFQM, the Cronbach's alpha is equal to 0.957, therefore the specific questionnaire also shows high reliability (Table 1).

Table 1: Validity & reliability check

Questionnaire	N of questions	Cronbach's alpha
SERVQUAL	22	0.964
EFQM	10	0.957

3.5 Statistical data analysis

The quantitative technique was utilized to conduct outcomes based on the objectives stated for the realization of this research. After completion, the questionnaire was sent in electronic form to Google forms, making it easier to share with the intended audience. The normalcy hypothesis was then examined for the quantitative variables because the selection of relevant statistical tests is predicated on the validity or not of that hypothesis. The normality hypothesis for the variables was checked using the Shapiro-Wilk test for samples less than 30 experimental units and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for samples greater than 30 experimental units.

Spearman's correlation coefficient (r) was employed to examine the link between two quantitative variables when the variables did not have a normal distribution. Correlation is deemed low when the correlation coefficient (r) is between 0.1 and 0.3, moderate when it is between 0.3 and 0.5, and high when it is larger than 0.5. To evaluate the equality of two samples' means, the non-parametric Mann-Whitney procedure, which does not require data normality, and the related parametric procedure for comparing the means of two independent samples, the t-test, were utilized. The statistical analysis was carried out using the statistical software IBM SPSS Statistics 25.0. Finally, the level of statistical significance was set at p = 0.05.

4. Results

4.1. Demographic characteristics analysis

The questionnaire was completed by 150 people. The number of women greatly outnumbered the number of men. Women make up 70% of the respondents in this survey, with 105 responses out of 150.Furthermore, as far as the age level, 42% of the participants were between the ages of 26 – 35 years old, while 44 people were between the ages of 36 – 45 years old. In terms of education, 46% (69 respondents) have a university diploma. Individuals who have completed post-secondary education come in second with 23% (35 responses), while those with a post-graduate degree come in third with the same number (34 responses). As far as the monthly income is concerned, it should be mentioned that 67 of 150 participants earn between €801 and €1300. Moreover, 55 people are paid up to 800€ per month, while 21 participants earn between 1301€ and 2000€ per month. Respondents are paid 2001€ or more in 5% (7 participants).

As far as the employment relationship with the company/organization the respondents now work for, 93 of them fall into the category "Employee with an open-ended contract in the private sector", 30% of them are classified as "Employee with a fixed-term contract in the private sector," while 6% are classified as "Self-employed/self-employed". Finally, only three individuals are classed as "self-employed with one employer (quasi-employee)". Also, it should be mentioned that 139 participants work full-time, while the other 11 work part-time. In terms of job years, the majority of participants (60%) have between 0 and 5 years of experience and only 13 people have worked for more than 16 years. Moreover, as far as the demographic characteristics of the companies/ organizations are concerned, the respondents had to report on which standard/models the organization/ the company they work for is certified. So, ISO 9001 was selected by 65.3% of the respondents but HACCP collected the most answers (73.6%). EFQM received only 7 responses. However, 3 respondents consider that standards/models are not necessary for the organization/ the company they work in.

4.2 Correlation of variables

Regarding the dimensions of the SERVQUAL questionnaire, it is observed that the following dimensions: reliability, assurance and tangibles are increased in companies that adopt quality standards and models, indicating greater trust in colleagues and greater satisfaction with their work environment. Regarding the dimension of empathy, it was found to be increased in companies that do not adopt quality standards and models, indicating a higher solidarity between colleagues. Finally, the dimension of responsiveness was at the same levels in both companies, with the participants declaring that their colleagues are willing to help and respond to their needs (Table 2).

Table 2: Descriptive measures for the dimensions of the SERVQUAL questionnaire for the total sample and by business category

	Total		Adoption of quality standards and models			
			Yes		No	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Reliability	5.08	1.138	5.13	1.151	4.98	1.106
Assurance	5.20	1.238	5.27	1.142	5.23	1.221
Tangibles	5.19	1.287	5.41	1.126	4.99	1.410
Empathy	4.67	1.399	4.81	1.374	4.87	1.160
Responsiveness	4.97	1.397	5.09	1.326	5.09	1.163

The evaluation of the normality assumption of the variables was implemented by using the Kolmogorov - Smirnov test. This test is suitable for samples with a size greater than 30. On the other hand, the Shapiro-Wilk test is suitable for samples below 30 experimental units. From Table 4, it is observed that the variables do not follow the normal distribution (p-value < 0.05), as a result it is chosen a non-parametric statistical test to evaluate their correlation.

Table 3: Results for the normality test regarding the dimensions of SERVQUAL and the EFQM questionnaire

	Tests of Normality Kolmogorov-Smirnov		
	Statistic	df	p-value
Reliability	0.111	150	<0.001
Assurance	0.144	150	<0.001
Tangibles	0.110	150	<0.001
Empathy	0.096	150	0.002
Responsiveness	0.134	150	<0.001
1. Employees and their representatives participate in the development of human resources strategies.	0.158	150	<0.001
2. The personnel strategy is aligned with the organization's strategy and structure.	0.163	150	<0.001
3. Staff training and development plans are adapted to the current and future capabilities of the organization.	0.163	150	<0.001

4. Teamwork skills are developed.	0.176	150	<0.001
5. Individual and group contribution to improvement activities are encouraged.	0.168	150	<0.001
6. Participation is encouraged and also, creative and innovative behavior is fostered among the staff.	0.160	150	<0.001
7. Both vertical and horizontal communication is encouraged.	0.182	150	<0.001
8. The exchange of knowledge is promoted.	0.180	150	<0.001
9. Employee reward, compensation and termination procedures are aligned with the organization's strategy.	0.173	150	<0.001
10. Recognition is provided to employees in order to enhance their participation.	0.182	150	<0.001

Spearman correlation coefficient was used to investigate the correlation of the SERVQUAL dimensions in relation to the EFQM questions. The results are presented in Table 4 and it is observed that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between the Reliability dimension and all the questions of the EFQM human factor criterion, the Assurance dimension and all the questions of the EFQM human factor criterion, the dimension of Tangibles and all the questions of the EFQM human factors criterion, the Empathy dimension and all the questions of the EFQM human factors criterion and the Responsiveness dimension and all the questions of the EFQM human factors criterion. Therefore, the higher values they receive these specific dimensions the higher values the individual 10 questions also receive.

Table 4: Spearman correlation coefficient for the dimensions of the SERVQUAL questionnaire in relation to the EFQM questions

	Reliability	Assurance	Tangibles	Empathy	Responsiveness
1. Employees and their representatives participate in the development of human resources strategies.	0.540[**]	0.504[**]	0.522[**]	0.532[**]	0.524[**]
2. The personnel strategy is aligned with the organization's strategy and structure.	0.379[**]	0.362[**]	0.492[**]	0.480[**]	0.494[**]

3. Staff training and development plans are adapted to the current and future capabilities of the organization.	0.437[**]	0.349[**]	0.549[**]	0.473[**]	0.478[**]
4. Teamwork skills are developed.	0.523[**]	0.559[**]	0.569[**]	0.625[**]	0.603[**]
5. Individual and group contribution to improvement activities are encouraged.	0.515[**]	0.450[**]	0.607[**]	0.634[**]	0.610[**]
6. Participation is encouraged and also, creative and innovative behavior is fostered among the staff.	0.536[**]	0.526[**]	0.623[**]	0.682[**]	0.641[**]
7. Both vertical and horizontal communication is encouraged.	0.489[**]	0.484[**]	0.572[**]	0.639[**]	0.624[**]
8. The exchange of knowledge is promoted.	0.585[**]	0.536[**]	0.567[**]	0.642[**]	0.583[**]
9. Employee reward, compensation and termination procedures are aligned with the organization's strategy.	0.388[**]	0.343[**]	0.521[**]	0.507[**]	0.480[**]
10. Recognition is provided to employees in order to enhance their participation.	0.444[**]	0.426[**]	0.581[**]	0.624[**]	0.569[**]

**p-value < 0.001

Then, it was checked whether the job satisfaction in the specific organization/ company meets the assumption of normality, in order to give an answer for the second hypothesis. The evaluation of the hypothesis of normality of the variables was done using the Kolmogorov – Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk

12

tests. From Table 5, it is observed that the normal distribution is not followed (p-value < 0.05) and as a result, we have to carry out non-parametric statistical tests to evaluate their correlation.

Table 5: Job satisfaction in the given organization/ company does not meet the assumption of normality

		Tests of Normality		
		Kolmogorov-Smirnov& Shapiro-Wilk		
	Adoption of quality standards and models	Statistic	df	p-value
I am generally satisfied with my work in this organization/ company.	Yes	0.230	72	<0.001
	No	0.923	27	0.047

Table 6 presents the results of the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test, in order to evaluate whether there are differences in the satisfaction they feel from their work in the specific organization/ company in relation to whether it follows quality standards and models. More specifically, statistically significant differences were observed (Mann-Whitney U = 707.50, p-value = 0.034), with participants whose company/ organizationadopts quality standards and models reporting more job satisfaction than participants who work in a company/ an organization that do not adopt such standards.

Table 6: Job satisfaction in the given organization/ companyin companies/ organizations that adopt quality standards and models

	Adoption of quality standards and models	N	Median	Mann- Whitney U	p-value
I am generally satisfied with my work in this organization/ company.	Yes	72	6.00	707.500	0.034
	No	27	5.00		

5. Discussion & conclusions

The initial research hypothesis was that there was a relationship between the Internal Service Quality scale and the EFQM business excellence model's human factor criterion. The statistical analysis using the Spearman correlation coefficient revealed statistically significant positive associations between the five SERVQUAL characteristics (Tangibles, Reliability, Assurance, Empathy, Responsiveness) and the

EFQM "People" criterion. Young et al. (1997) research to evaluate internal service quality using the SERVQUAL measurement scale revealed that employing it is certainly a good way for gathering feedback from the company's internal customers (i.e. workers). However, research has demonstrated that the EFQM business excellence model is directly related to employee job satisfaction.

Tutuncu et al. (2009) found a strong correlation between the EFQM business excellence model and job satisfaction in their study, as EFQM has previously been shown to improve employee performance and the human factor is one of its main dimensions. More recently, Khodaparasti et al. (2017) explored the association between EFQM criteria and job satisfaction, as well as the relationship between EFQM and organizational loyalty. The findings revealed that EFQM criteria had a substantial association with both job satisfaction and organizational loyalty. The Internal Service Quality scale was linked to the EFQM human factor criterion as a quality criterion in this study. So far, few similar studies have been conducted to link these two technologies to obtain some outcomes. The linking of Internal Service Quality (adaptation of the SERVQUAL tool to the employee) with the EFQM model's human factor criterion is a new investigation in the scientific community because it demonstrates the potential of two frameworks in expressing all the elements that are important in supporting human resources.

The internal service quality tool, which now refers to the internal customer, i.e. the employee, and the focus on the conditions for excellence relating to the EFQM model's human factor criterion, can be a new tool for measuring employee satisfaction and serving as a self-assessment tool for companies that want to monitor the effectiveness of how they manage and develop their workforce staff. The second study hypothesis attempts to highlight the overall satisfaction of people who work in a firm that adheres to quality management standards/models/systems vs those who work in a company that does not adhere to anything. There are clearly statistically significant disparities between the two groups. Participants whose firms adhere to quality management standards/models/systems are more satisfied with their work than those whose firms do not adhere to such standards.

This finding was plausible because an employee's overall satisfaction with the organization/business for which they work is likely to be influenced by various factors that are not directly related to their colleagues or workplace. When considering their happiness, an employee may evaluate issues such as leadership, corporate social responsibility, company reputation, and so on. All these elements are incorporated into the standards/models/quality management systems and models used by businesses/organizations. Also, an organization that is certified in quality systems can improve working conditions for its employees, allowing them to become more involved in the organization, more motivated, and feel safer at work. In addition, firms with recognized quality systems can improve their human resources' working environment as a first step toward employee happiness. This is possible because quality systems include a variety of processes and practices that aid in the growth of persons and

work environments (Li et al., 2008). Furthermore, organizations that implemented a quality system (e.g., ISO 9001) increased overall payroll and, to a lesser extent, yearly earnings per employee faster (Levine et al., 2010).

There are studies in the literature that claim that implementing Total Quality Management methods can lead to enhanced operational and financial performance, as well as an increase in an organization's competitiveness (Antunes et al., 2018). Finally, one of the most significant benefits of quality system certification is the promotion of the first step in the application of QM practices. This is because it promotes the development of an environment for change in the way companies are managed (Quirós et al.,2013). The difficulty in locating enough hotel units to participate in the survey was an initial drawback of this research. Also, due to the pandemic and restrictions on accessing venues under conditions, the survey was performed electronically. In other cases, the quantitative survey might be supplemented with qualitative research, and qualitative data could be gathered from specific managers within the hotel hierarchy. It is also evident that our sample is not representative of the public, and the survey results cannot be generalized to the entire workforce in the industry.

Furthermore, identifying hotels with certifications was difficult because, according to a survey, few have released data on certifications and models to follow. In four and five star hotels, the culture of adopting standards appears to be more touching. With a bigger and more representative sample of firms that adhere to standards and those that do not, as well as the stars they may have received, different conclusions and sub-hypotheses may be proposed. Another drawback of the study is the absence of literature on the combination of the Internal Service Quality scale and the EFQM business excellence model to compare the research results obtained with other studies. Future research can be carried out in hotel units certified with the EFQM business excellence model and in others certified with other models/standards/quality management systems, so that more comparisons can be made on their impact. Moreover, additional study can be undertaken based on the various degrees of hierarchy that exist in businesses, including the hotel industry. Within a company/organization, different hierarchical levels (entry level, middle level, and senior level) can be compared. Finally, it would be interesting to conduct this research in industries other than the hotel industry. Our research discovered a relationship between the Internal Service Quality instrument and the EFQM human factor criterion.

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