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Factors related to perception of quality in hosting services among business tourists from São Paulo / Brazil

Fatores relacionados a percepção de qualidade em serviços de hospedagem entre os turistas de negócios de São Paulo/Brasil

Cláudio José STEFANINI 1; Ana Paula Nazaré Guardia YAMASHITA 2; Carlos Alberto ALVES 3; Roseane Barcellos MARQUES 4

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ABSTRACT:

The purpose of the present research was to identify the factors associated with the perception of quality in hosting services among business tourists. Business tourism represents a significant portion of the industry and is usually disregarded by researchers. We used an exploratory quantitative methodology and data collected through structured questionnaires in a sample of 320 business tourists who stayed in hotels. The results suggest that perceived quality in this segment has specific and different needs from other types of tourists. This study contributes to the emerging literature on business tourism. It is particularly focused on understanding consumer behavior of business tourists. **Keywords**: Consumer behavior, business tourism, quality of services, tourist satisfaction, hospitality

RESUMO:

A finalidade desta pesquisa foi identificar os fatores associados à percepção de qualidade em serviços pelos turistas de negócios. O turismo de negócios representa parcela significativa do setor e normalmente é deixado a margem pelos pesquisadores. Utilizou-se metodologia quantitativa exploratória, dados coletados por meio de questionários estruturados numa amostra de 320 turistas de negócios que se hospedaram em hotéis. Os resultados sugerem que a qualidade percebida neste segmento possuem necessidades específicas e diferentes de outros tipos de turistas. Este estudo adiciona à literatura emergente sobre turismo de negócios. Em particular, para compreender o comportamento do consumidor do turista de negócios. Palavras chave: Comportamento do consumidor, turismo de negocios, gualidade em servicos, satisfação do turista, hospitalidade

1. Introduction

Since the economic crisis of 2008, the various sectors of the economy are adjusting to the new reality. This has had great impact in some countries, as its main effect has been the reduction of growth rate, although without generating recession (Becken & Wilson, 2016; Jayawardena, McMillan, Pantin, Taller, & Willie, 2013; Smeral, 2012). Some tourism sectors have great economic relevance, either in terms of turnover or number of jobs according to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC, 2016).

	2015 2015		2016	2026				
Worldwide	USDbn1	% of total	Growth2	USDbn1	% of total	Growth3		
Direct contribution to GDP	2,229.8	3.0	3.3	3,469.1	3.4	4.2		
Total contribution to GDP	7,170.3	9.8	3.5	10,986.5	10.8	4.0		
Direct contribution to employment4	107,833	3.6	1.9	135,884	4.0	2.1		
Total contribution to employment4	283,578	9.5	2.2	370,204	11.0	2.5		
Visitor exports	1,308.9	6.1	3.0	2,056.0	6.2	4.3		
Domestic spending	3,419.9	4.7	3.3	5,245.5	3.9	4.0		
Leisure spending	3,621.9	2.3	3.0	5,645.8	2.6	4.2		
Business spending	1,106.9	0.7	3.9	1,658.8	0.8	3.7		
Capital investment	774.6	4.3	4.7	1,254.2	4.7	4.5		

Table 1The economic contribution of Travel & Tourism

1 constant prices & exchange rates; 22016 real growth adjusted for inflation (%); 32016-2026 annualized real growth adjusted for inflation (%); 4'000 jobs

% of total refers to each indicator's share of the relevant whole economy indicator such as GDP and employment. Visitor exports is shown relative to total exports of goods and domestic spending is expressed relative to whole economy GDP. For leisure and business spending, their direct contribution to Travel & Tourism GDP is calculated as a share of whole economy GDP (the sum of these shares equals the direct contribution). Investment is relative to whole economy investment.

Source: (WTTC, 2016)

Tourism accounted for 9.8% of world GDP in 2015. Its growth was of 2.8% compared to 2014 while world growth was 2.3%. The growth estimated for 2016 is of 3.5%. Regarding the number of jobs, the sector contributed with 9.5% of the total number of jobs in the world (WTTC, 2016). It is important to note that this contribution is calculated by direct T&T contribution (accommodation, transportation, food & beverage services, culture, sports and recreational services), indirect T&T contribution (impact of purchases from suppliers, T&T

investment spending) or induced T&T contribution – spending of direct and indirect employees – (food and beverages, recreation, clothing) (WTTC, 2016).

Business tourism represents a significant part of the total volume of this sector, but it is still a poorly researched area (Guizi, Wada, & Gandara, 2016). It is verified that the expenditure of business tourism in 2015 was more than US\$ 1,106bi (WTTC, 2016). However, the perception of quality among consumers is present regardless of the nature of the purchase (private or corporate) (Byung-Gook & Hyojin, 2016; Oliveira, 2011; Veludo-de-Oliveira, Mascarenhas, Tronchin, & Baptista, 2014).

The representativity of the sector is extremely important in Brazil since it is the country that hosts the most international events in Latin American, occupying the 11th position in the global ranking according to the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA, 2016). The contribution to GDP attributed to the tourism sector in Brazil in 2015 was of US\$ 152bn and more than 7,342,000 jobs (WTTC, 2016).

Given the expressiveness of the data, the study of the business tourism market is justified. The purpose of this article was to identify the factors associated with the perception of quality in services among business tourists.

1.1. Tourism

The displacement of people is not a recent event, however, it has intensified since the development of the means of transportation. Today, the possibilities of transportation are diversified and allow sufficing the intense flow between countries and regions.

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2016) and the Brazilian Ministry of Tourism (MTur, 2016), tourism is defined by all as "the activities that people perform during their travels and their stay in places other than where they live in for a period of less than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes."

According to the UNWTO, the flow of tourists has grown significantly in recent years, and despite the economic crisis of 2008 there was an increase of approximately 138 million tourists according to the statement confirmed by MTur and WTTC (MTur, 2016, UNWTO, 2016, WTTC, 2016).

Tourists travel for different reasons, which allows creating a classification and segmentation. This segmentation is defined by the Ministry of Tourism in 12 different approaches: social tourism, ecotourism, cultural, studies and exchange, sports, fishing, nautical, adventure, sun and beach, rural, health, and business and events. The only category that will be addressed in this study is the business tourism segment (MTur, 2013).

The MTur defines Business & Events Tourism as "the set of tourist activities resulting from meetings of professional, associative, institutional, commercial, promotional, technical, scientific and social nature" (MTur, 2013).

Business tourism moved more than US\$ 13.1bn in 2015 in Brazil. In the Americas, it moved more than US\$ 376bn. In the whole world, the movement was of US\$ 1,106bn. These values represent the inflow of resources in the country and the expenses of business tourists locations. (WTTC, 2016)

The Ministry of Tourism of Brazil defines the activities related to business tourism as meetings of professional, associative and institutional interest. "They refer to contacts and work relationships, corporate, in different forms, such as meetings, visits, missions and events of different natures. "(MTur, 2013; Stefanini, Wada, & Ferreira, 2011)

There is also the relationship of business tourism with commercial, promotional, technical, scientific and social purposes such as: travel associated with transactions in the purchase and sale of products and services; promotions for dissemination; technical, scientific and social, involving matters of the common welfare of society. (MTur, 2013)

The tourism business and events sector encompasses a range of themes that reveal their importance and economic, social and strategic representation.

When analyzed separately, business tourism represents a significant portion of the reasons for travel, food consumption, complementary services, recreation or even leisure. This occurs even if the initial motive of the trip was some type of business (commercial or otherwise) (MTur, 2013).

Business and events tourists have specific characteristics that distinguish them from other tourists. They are usually tourists that travel frequently and are, therefore, especially demanding because they have more experience in different places and know how to distinguish a good service from a regular one. Business tourists have higher expenses than those of other types of tourists (usually because companies refund all expenses to the business travelers, which makes them consume better and more expensive products). Some characteristics of the business tourist are: high purchasing power and expenses, higher education, represents companies or institutions, demanding in relation to the quality of what is consumed and an average stay of 4 days (national) and 8 days (international). The average daily expense for these tourists is of \$165 (MTur, 2013).

Knowing the profile of these tourists, their needs and characteristics, allows the manager to develop and guide their actions. This study seeks to understand the criteria related to the choice of tourist products (lodging) and intends to enrich the literature by adding data on the business and events tourist profile (Da et al., 2015; Wada, Cavenaghi, & Salles, 2015).

1.2. Quality of services in tourism

The perception of quality in tourism services involves a series of factors that are usually measured and evaluated, such as tangibility, reliability, receptivity, safety and empathy of the collaborators (Guiry, Scott, & Vequist IV, 2013). The security item also appears in the Mondo & Fiates (2015) study in addition to the technical aspect for quality perception, or focusing on stakeholder approaches (Dedeoğlu & Demirer, 2015; Shing, Koh, & Nathan, 2012).

The perception of quality in hotel services can be defined as meeting customer expectations — that is, delivering what the customer expected when acquiring a service and meeting their needs. If what was delivered surpassed those expectations, a differential will be created (Albarracin, Johnson, Fishbein, & Muellerleile, 2001). It is noteworthy that the studies on perception of quality in relation to tourism usually focus on leisure tourism, leaving business tourism is aside (Rejowski & Bastos, 2015; Lima et al., 2016).

The guest's perception of value when related to collaborator satisfaction is related to the opportunities offered by the companies. It stands in evidence, then, that the perception of value among the guests can be directly related to the satisfaction of the collaborators. This study also reinforces that collaborator training directly influences customer satisfaction (Dhar, 2015), and that the relationship of customer satisfaction can be strategic for the managers of any type of business (Alves, Varotto, & Gonçalves, 2016).

Business tourists consider the following aspects as essential: location, easy access, good Internet connection, comfort in the room (bed, shower and cleaning) and the assistance of the employees. Since these kinds of tourist want speed and convenience in everything they do, they have to work for communication, connection and content (O'Connor, Cowhey, & O'Leary, 2016; Stefanini, Souza, & Yamashita, 2012; Reis et al., 2016).

The easy access to means of transportation, respect for guests with reduced mobility, such as the elderly and people with special needs, demonstrate that the establishment fulfills its social role and is concerned with social inclusion. Even if it does not directly affect the business tourist, he will notice these characteristics that contribute to the perception of quality of services (Becken & Wilson, 2016; Chan, Hsu, & Baum, 2015; Lam & So, 2013).

Still, Mak & Wong, & Chang (2011) analyzed the collaboration network of the Macau and Hong

Kong tourism industry, addressing stakeholder satisfaction and how this satisfaction affects customers' perception of quality. Six categories of problems were found: 1) unhealthy business practices of foreign travel agencies in China; 2) immaturity of the Chinese tourist market; 3) abusive measures by tourism entry operators; 4) human resources issues; 5) role conflict; and 6) quality assurance mechanism of the service.

It was verified that the "human resources" factor is fundamental because labor in a provision of service is an inseparable part of its evaluation. In addition, the authors propose that the professionalization and standardization of the services provided is fundamental for the evolution of the tourist network, as well as the importance of the standardization of activities (José Tarí, Heras-Saizarbitoria, & Pereira, 2013).

When analyzing the satisfaction of the tourist in relation to the various services used and charged for during the trip, the assistance to the tourist showed the greatest impact while the leisure activities are related to the experience of the leisure tourist (Chan et al., 2015).

In a comparative study between Spain and Australia, Vila, Darcy & González (2015) found that other factors influence the satisfaction of the business tourist. The respondents of Spain mentioned aspects like the climate, the location and the tourist structure. While the quality of services, brand and infrastructure are the influencing factors among tourists in Australia, the price variable appeared as an analysis mediator (Vila et al., 2015).

2. Methods

The GoogleDocs platform was used through the form tool for data collection. The data collection period was from August to September 2016 in the metropolitan region of the city of São Paulo/Brazil. The questionnaire was sent to the contact group of the researchers. Later, these respondents forwarded the form to their contacts. This is known as snowball technique (Creswell, 2013).

Initially, respondents indicated that they had traveled for work in the last 12 months and used hotel services. The questionnaire had 32 questions, 15 descriptive questions to characterize the sample and 17 questions on a Likert scale of five points: (1) strongly disagree - (5) strongly agree. At the end of the data collection period, it was verified that more than 510 people answered the survey, but only 320 questionnaires were validated, since some respondents did not travel for business in the last 12 months.

This research is defined as exploratory quantitative. The sample used is non-probabilistic nor accessible. The multivariate technique of data used was the factorial analysis or the common factor, which is a multivariate interdependence technique that seeks to synthesize the observed relationships between a set of interrelated variables, seeking to identify common factors. The basic idea lies in the premise that it is possible to represent a set of original variables observed through a smaller number of intrinsic factors (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2010).

Factor analysis is used to identify latent dimensions or factors that explain the correlations between a new and smaller set of variables that are uncorrelated and to replace the original set of correlated variables in the multivariate analysis (Hair et al., 2010).

3. Results

The descriptive statistics show that respondents in this study included 34.38% female (N = 110) and 65.63% male (N = 210) business tourists. In relation to the marital status, 50% of the interviewees are single, 35% married and 15% in another situation. In relation to the respondents' age, 60% of the sample is between 26 and 39 years old (26% are 26-30 and 34% are 31-39). Hence, the sample is considered predominantly adult.

It was also found that 61% are company employees and 27% own their own business. The respondents work predominantly in large companies according to the characterization in Brazil, with 27% (86 respondents) working in medium-sized companies (100 to 500 employees) and

38% (120 respondents) in large companies (more than 500 employees). It was found that 40% (128 respondents) stay for up to 2 days and 40.6% (130 respondents) stay for 3 or 4 days.

In order to identify and summarize correlation patterns between the variables of this study, each group of variables was analyzed to indicate their adherence to the factors. To do so, the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software was used.

Factor analysis was identified using four factors from the variables of the research. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test sample was found to be 0.781, which was considered good for the factorial analysis, and the Cronbach's alpha was from 0.812, a high degree of internal consistency (Hair et al., 2010).

The total variance explained was 66%. The extraction was made by the main components method, the rotation used was Varimax and all variables showed commonality higher than 0.50. For a better presentation of the factorial loads, only values greater than 0.50 were kept, as shown in Table 2.

	Variables	Component				
	Variables	F1	F2	F3	F4	
	Fitness Academy	.758				
Entertainment Services	Spa services on site					
	Options for cultural tours					
	Availability of alternative transportation for travel					
	Knowing different cultures					
	Additional services such as restaurant and laundry	.546				
Accessibility	Ease of access to the handicapped		.799			
	Means of transport adapted for the handicapped		.775			
	Daily prices		.712			
	Ease of access to public transport		.696			
Localization	Hotel location			.847		
	Availability service center near the hotel			.813		
	Proximity to cultural attractions			.502		
	Means of transport to the airport				.793	
Facilities	Meeting rooms				.699	

Table 2Rotary Component Matrix

		Hotel in commercial center				.673
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Source: Field survey (2016).

The variable that addressed the item "meals included daily" was excluded because the factor load was less than 0.50 and distributed in all factors indicating the lack of adherence to the constructs. The sample of this research was formed strictly by business tourists, which shows the irrelevance of the meals included, since this guest normally dines outside the hotel.

3.1. Discussion

The identification of the attributes for the perception of quality to the business tourist is vital for the maintenance and growth of hotels, since this guest has a distinct purpose when compared to the leisure guest. The four factors identified in this research will be presented and discussed below.

- F1 Entertainment Services: This factor was formed by the following variables: fitness academy, SPA services, options for cultural tours, availability of alternative transportation for travel, getting to know different cultures in moments of leisure, additional amenities including restaurants and laundry facilities. Albarracin et al. (2001) state that services are fundamental for the perception of the guest, while the aspects related to leisure and entertainment are identified by Chan et al. (2015) as directly related to the experience of the tourist (Lima et al., 2016).
- F2 Accessibility: This factor was formed by the following variables: ease of access for the handicapped, means of transport adapted for the handicapped, daily prices, easy access to public transportation. Becken & Wilson, 2016 and Chan et al. (2015) state that companies should encourage inclusion and respect among business tourists because they are usually more enlightened and politicized people that value these characteristics (Lam & So, 2013; Stefanini et al., 2012).
- F3 Localization: The third factor was formed by the following variables: hotel location, availability service center near the hotel, and proximity to cultural attractions. These findings confirm the results presented by Albarracin et al. (2001) and Chan et al. (2015) in which they affirm that the lived experience will contribute to the perception of quality in the guests.
- F4 Facilities: The fourth factor was formed by the following variables: means of transportation to the airport, meeting rooms, hotel in commercial centers. Such aspects reinforce that for the business tourist the agility in the displacement —easiness to arrive and leave the city— is fundamental, as it guarantees saving time and energy and eliminating or reducing stress (Dhar, 2015; Mak et al., 2011; O'Connor et al., 2016; Vila et al., 2015).

The results presented are specific to the sample of this research and should not be generalized. However, they reflect the reality of the sample of business tourists, thus justifying their attention on the part of the managers and researchers of this area. Besides, this contributes to a segment that has scarcely been researched.Texto do subcapitulo 3.1.

4. Conclusion

This study aimed to verify the perception of quality in the means of hosting used by business tourists. The studies on consumer behavior are present in several areas. Knowing expectations and analyzing customer satisfaction is fundamental and strategic in organizations because operational and strategic actions can be taken to correct or change the standard of services offered considering the results shown.

In this limited survey of 320 respondents from the city of São Paulo/Brazil, some factors were observed that do not pretend to answer all the questions regarding what makes business tourists feel satisfied. They present a restricted prospect to the items surveyed about the perception of quality in relation to travel hosting services for professional purposes.

In the sample surveyed, it was verified that four factors stood out, especially considering the characteristics of services and entertainment and the needs of tourists to ease of access to

some services, besides the cultural and recreational interest during trips. In spare moments, business tourists have the habit of visiting tourist destinations and also experiencing cultural and sporting aspects, such as theater, cinema, music, sporting events.

The second factor identified was accessibility. This item is presented specifically to reinforce the aspects of social responsibility of tourists, since they usually value inclusion and also the ease of access to public transportation. Although Brazil is not recognized for its urban transport network and São Paulo is one of the largest cities in the world with high rates of congestion and difficulty in transportation, the tourists who answered this survey reside in the city of São Paulo and travel to other places, some of the world's leading business centers that have excellent public transport network and thus facilitating the movement of the business tourist to the destinations.

The third factor identified was location because business tourists are concerned with reducing travel time, and so the proximity to the places where they will concentrate their activities facilitates and reduces the time spent. It is also important to highlight that this factor correlates and complements the characteristics of the first and second factor because business tourists want to be close to cultural attractions and also to service centers such as food, shopping and entertainment, and still have easy access to the places where they will work.

The fourth factor indicated the preference of business tourists for the ease of access to the airport, shopping centers and facilities available in the hotel, such as meeting rooms, always aiming to decrease their travel time.

This work adds to the literature on business tourism, specifically regarding consumer behavior of hosting services, since this is a segment left aside in tourism research despite its relevance, both in relation to direct or indirect financial volume, and their representativeness in the number of jobs generated directly or indirectly.

4.1. Limitations and future research

Some limitations in the interpretation of the present study should be considered. Initially, the research did not have the objective of generalizing its results, therefore what is here exposed should be seen as a result of its sample and within its cultural, social, economic and educational characteristics, working merely as a reference to develop related work. Another limitation refers to the political and economic aspects currently experienced in Brazil, since recently the president was impeached and the vice-president assumed the presidency, as determined by the constitution, and there is still a climate of apprehension regarding the approval of measures that will reverse the current economic situation.

For future research it is suggested that a comparison be made between countries of different cultures and continents in order to identify their differences and similarities. Another interesting study would be a gender comparison, because despite the objective of the trip being professional, men and women probably have different expectations regarding the services and the assistance received.

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1. Universidade Anhembi Morumbi. Professor and researcher of the graduate program in hospitality. cjstefanini@gmail.com

2. Universidade Anhembi Morumbi. Researcher in the Group: Services and Organizations in the line of Research Organizations and Hospitality

3. Universidade Anhembi Morumbi. Professor and researcher of the graduate program in hospitality.

4. Universidade Anhembi Morumbi. Professor and researcher of the graduate program in hospitality

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