

ASSESSING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION – REMODELLING PILLAR OF THE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**Alina SUSLENCO, PhD**“Alec Russo” State University of Bălți, Republic of Moldova
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Abstract

The current paper takes a methodological journey based on identifying the opportunities of assessing the increase of customer satisfaction in terms of implementing information technologies. The aim of this research is the assessment of tourist satisfaction, namely Hilton's customers and their use of the Hilton Honors application. To reach the objective of this enterprise, it was run a multidimensional analysis of the possibilities to assess customer satisfaction in view of implementing art-of-the-state information technologies by accommodation units. Therefore, it was performed a quantitative study on assessing customer satisfaction in the tourism business. In the same context, the data were interpreted based on conclusions and relevant recommendations. The methodology of research focused on a series of methods, such as analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction, abduction, comparison, statistical analysis, and modelling. In conclusion, we can state that the evaluation of customer satisfaction is a SMART pillar of relationship management, a factor for gaining customer loyalty, while information technologies are the main factor for increasing tourist satisfaction. Under the circumstances, the accommodation units should remodel their management system by adopting novel information technologies which will help them meet their customers' requests, be competitive and sustainable, gain the loyalty of their customers, and also identify a strategic approach for reaching a high level of competitiveness.

Keywords: *customer satisfaction, management, assessment of customer satisfaction, excellency, information technologies*

1. Introduction

Customer satisfaction has always been a key objective in all sectors of business since it is well-known that happy customers are more likely to become loyal to the product/ service concerned. Currently, the management system of hotel companies is defined by remodelling attempts in the context of integrating novel IT technologies, and improving the tools of the management applied, from the perspective of digital transformation of the companies from the sphere of the tourism and hospitality industry. Accordingly, the majority of such companies settle on identifying new competitive advantages that could bring both notoriety and sustainability [8, p. 790]. One of these advantages is implementing different mobile apps

that can help accommodation units make their customers loyal to them, and also draw new clients which might bring them added value on the market. Large hotel chains are constantly trying to identify their customers' preferences, and adjust their offer appropriately.

In this paper, we will make a retrospective presentation of the opportunities for improving customer satisfaction through implementing new information technologies in the hotel industry, namely the Hilton Hotel in Bucharest city.

2. The current level of investigation of the issue

Customer satisfaction is often defined in the literature as a “*general assessment of customers on their purchase and consumption experience of a certain service or goods*” [7, p. 12]. Customer satisfaction is a crucial topic since it mirrors the assessment made by clients, and it is an emotional response associated with their consumption experience.

Similarly, prof. Richard L. Oliver stated that emotions derived from assessments determine the general response of an individual in the consumption process [16, p. 24].

Emotions' importance in consumer behaviour models has grown significantly in recent years [11, p. 456]. Particularly, it should be emphasised that the cognitive system and emotions play an important part in the satisfaction formation process. The cognitive system presumably completes the superior mental processes, namely understanding and assessment, while emotions are reportedly linked to the individual feelings towards a certain service. Finally, loyalty or “commitment to a brand is perceived as the main consequence of satisfaction” [2, p. 55].

In light of this, it is clear that customer satisfaction depends on the existence of all overlaid elements such as indicators or expectations of a certain service or commodity. This shows the multi-faced nature of customer satisfaction.

Lately, the consumer role has changed from a passive buyer to an active leading actor in creating/ adjusting products/ services [1, p. 122]. The centrality of the “experience” concept has been consolidated by technological innovations in the merchandise field and consumption. The consumer wants to be more involved and become one of the main actors in creating the product/ service. From this perspective, the experience focuses on the affective and emotional features of the consumption process.

The concept of experience is strictly connected to the entertainment feature and implies consumer interaction during the making/ creation of products and/ or services. To build up an experience means to bring to life the product/ service, and underline its identity through the sensorial involvement of the consumer [18, p. 59]. The researchers Pine B. J. and Gilmore H. J. define experience as the main topic of interaction with consumers: it could be regarded as a new type of supply next to tangible products and intangible services [17, p. 31]. The above-mentioned literature shows the importance of customer satisfaction and loyalty to a product/ service which is also connected to the company's performance values, such as rentability [9, p. 511]. Customer satisfaction reflects “a positive affective state, consequence of the cumulative assessment of the client in relation to the supplier” [10, p. 296]; customer satisfaction is essential in all areas of business due to its impact on future customer intentions and loyalty. Its importance increases especially in those areas where the product/ service to be

delivered is intangible, while the main challenge is providing an experience perfectly suited to consumer expectations.

The available literature shows that customer satisfaction may depend on a series of features revolving around the subjective customer sphere and concerning the quality of the experienced product/ service. Some papers in the field focus on the individual components with an impact on satisfaction (customer perspective), while others address inherent features of the product/ service and the delivery path. Accordingly, customer satisfaction is the result of an overlaid perspective.

In the context of tourism, the concept of tourist satisfaction is quite relevant as well as difficult to deal with, since the tourist product is “complex” [20, p. 142]. In this scenario, the competitiveness of the destination can determine the real success and future of the destination itself. According to some authors, certain attributes can contribute to the increase of competitiveness of the real destination. These attributes refer to the variables influencing tourist satisfaction or discontent during their holiday.

Indeed, it can be easily noticed that the modern tourist wishes to live a unique experience, and he/ she is not interested in purchasing a standard product/ service: to satisfy the latest needs of the tourist demand, destinations must prioritize and maximize customer satisfaction.

The literature on this topic is rather limited due to its multiple facets, and consequently, due to the lack of a holistic approach. In other words, tourist satisfaction should be analysed according to an overlaid perspective that addresses both supply and demand, where the former includes a systemic approach. Actually, one of the main shortcomings is that most papers in the field analyse the link between the destination image and tourist satisfaction without lingering on the behavioural consequences of the tourists such as “loyalty and appreciation” about the destination [23, p. 14].

Indeed, “the image of the destination is defined as a concept of attitude consisting of the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions concerning a tourist destination” [9, p. 511].

Some current studies on the quality of travel services try to determine the factors affecting the quality perceived by clients and shape the differences between client expectations and the real experience provided by travel services. Additionally, they highlight the need for further research in the field to better understand the quality dimensions of travel services [22, p. 817].

The researcher Al-Ababneh M. confirmed that the quality of services impacted directly tourist satisfaction in terms of destination accessibility, facilities, and destination attractiveness. Destination accessibility includes cost, speed, and comfort of public transportation means in the area of the tourist destination. Accommodation, restaurants, coffee shops, and transport services can be classified as destination facilities which include other facilities such as souvenir shops, info services, etc. The tourist attractions and natural environment of the tourist destination could motivate tourists to visit the place, especially places with modern architecture, historical buildings, etc. [1, p. 85].

Similarly, some researchers used the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) to assess client satisfaction in relation to the quality of hotel services. For instance, researchers Gupta P. and Srivastava R. analysed client satisfaction related to hotel services using a questionnaire that included 4 major variables in the quality of hotel services, namely: general services, the

reception hall service, room service, and restaurant service. On the other hand, the researchers pointed out that the dimensions and accessibility of the accommodation place, along with location and its components have a direct contribution to the increase of tourist satisfaction as well as the development of tourist industries in regions otherwise avoided by tourists [4, p. 141].

Other researchers, who used the systemic revision for further studies (Della V. and Sciarelli M.), have measured tourist satisfaction by reviewing the existing field of research and identifying 14 indicators that can be calculated. Among them the following stand out: easy access to various types of transport services, accommodation, street quality and street signs, quality and diversity of restaurants, accessibility of information, local transport, perceived security, friendly infrastructure for disabled persons, cleanness of the place, local hospitality, organisation of cultural events and activities [5, p. 47].

Customer satisfaction is conditional on “general feelings or attitudes one person can have towards a product after it was bought” [21, p. 63]. On the other hand, client satisfaction is often at the heart of marketing activities run by companies since it helps them reach the desired strategy in terms of their objectives [12, p. 99]. A higher level of consumer satisfaction can increase client loyalty, cut down costs, improve the capacity to attract new clients, help develop a powerful image on the market, and has a direct impact on customer loyalty [17, p. 63].

Accordingly, client satisfaction is regarded as an essential indicator of the company’s general performance. The basic concepts for determining customer satisfaction are “service quality” and “product/ service value”, which are dependent on the price paid for it [13, p. 203].

The studies showed that the higher the quality in relation to the price paid, the higher the value perceived by consumers [6, p. 227]. Furthermore, it is important to highlight the fact that, for the client, satisfaction is a post-consumption evaluation that disappoints, satisfies, or exceeds their expectations and it relies on the experience lived by the client [24, p. 338].

Expectations are defined as “one’s individual certitudes about the way a product is likely to perform in the future” [16, p. 28].

The direct effect of expectations can be explained through the assimilation theory: individuals go through a psychological conflict when they perceive the discrepancies between performance and previous certitudes [19, p. 143]

Later, consumers are more prone to adjust the perception to their expectations and thus minimize or remove this tension [19, p. 144]. Therefore, the assimilation effect can be described as a tendency to process new consumption experiences in terms of existing certitudes. Under these circumstances, satisfaction will be led by expectations [3, p. 381], and customer satisfaction is defined in terms of post-purchase evaluation of the service provided and its comparison to clients’ expectations and actual experience [6, p. 222].

3. The aim of the research

The general objective of the research is the satisfaction assessment of the Hilton Hotel’s customers in terms of using the Hilton Honours application. This scientific endeavour has

helped us analyse the common traits of the tourists checked in at the hotel concerned, and also evaluate their satisfaction in terms of using the Hilton Honors app.

The adjacent objectives of this research are the following:

- O1: assessment of consumer perception regarding the utility of the Hilton Honours mobile application
- O2: assessment of consumer trust, in terms of perceived security and risks, regarding the use of Hilton Honours app
- O3: identifying the tourist expectations about Hilton Honours app
- O4: identifying the social factors influencing the satisfaction of using Hilton Honours app.

The research hypotheses are as follows:

- H0: the use of the Hilton Honours application has a positive influence on tourist satisfaction
- H1: the Hilton Honours app is quite useful and satisfies the tourist expectations in due time
- H2: the consumers of the Hilton Honours app trust this mobile application
- H3: tourists expect Hilton Honours app to respond quickly and satisfy the necessities related to the accommodation services provided by the hotel
- H4: the main social factor influencing the tourist satisfaction in terms of Hilton Honours app is the necessity to benefit from prompt and quality services.

4. Methods and Applied Materials

We have chosen to perform a quantitative analysis since it helped our investigation better understand the market, seize consumer motivations and behaviours, grasp consumer satisfaction, assess the efficiency of the methods employed by a company, formulate and focus appropriately on the strategies used by a company to maximize their profit in the internal market.

We have chosen Hilton Hotel from Bucharest as our *research object*, where we performed our research and collected the data. The Hilton Hotel is an accommodation unit that distinguishes itself from other similar units through its good reputation, and customer trust in the quality of its services, which also, throughout the years, has managed to stand out by competency and an attractive quality-price ratio for tourists. One of the competitive advantages used by the Hilton Hotel is the continuous implementation of information technologies which helps them maintain their leadership position in the market. Accordingly, the Hilton hotel chain has the upper hand, adjusting their offer to the necessities of their customers and thus providing high-quality services to increase their customer satisfaction.

During its long activity, the hotel managed to apply efficient measures to build its customers' loyalty. One of these measures has been the Hilton Honours application which was designed and developed by the Hilton network to meet their customers' necessities and demands, and also maximize their customer satisfaction.

The research method employed is inquiry. The questions of the questionnaire were put in Google Docs, and the data were collected through Google Forms as graphics, tables, and figures. This method of data collection is quite easy and provides safety, speed, and trust. The questionnaire addressed the tourists who checked in at the Hilton Hotel. Further, the results

obtained were interpreted. On the whole, there were a total number of 314 respondents in this study.

The research tool is the questionnaire that is broken down into 4 key sections as follows:

- I: The informed consent* – the aim of research and the general data involving this endeavour are presented here;
- II: Use of mobile apps for accommodation* – in this section, there are 4 questions that help us sketch the tourist profile in terms of use of accommodation apps;
- III: Tourist behaviour towards Hilton and the Hilton Honours mobile app* – These helped us analyse customer satisfaction, expectations, trust, and motivation towards Hilton hotel and its mobile app.
- IV: Identifying respondents*: this section includes the questions that helped us identify the respondents involved in this research in terms of age, gender, education level, income, and social background.

After collecting the data, we performed the interpretation of the results obtained. Therefore, the results got (for each question in the questionnaire) were presented as well as the significance of the results obtained.

The scientific novelty of the research. The complex methodological approach of this paper helps us identify the role and huge contribution of information technologies in terms of improving the management system of hotel units. The research results point out that information technologies are the primary factor in enhancing customer satisfaction. Consequently, remodelling the management system of the hotel units in terms of IT usage becomes a dire necessity for all competitive accommodation units.

The practical importance of the research. The research performed indicates that the implementation of novel information technologies increases customer satisfaction in the field of tourism. The obtained results in the present paper raise awareness of the necessity to remodel the management system of the hotel units in terms of implementation of information technologies that bring added value, on one hand, and, on the other, contribute to the increase of customer satisfaction.

5. The Obtained Results and Discussions

Accordingly, in the figure below, we shall render the data along with a description of the studied sampling depending on the following variables: gender, net monthly income, age, and country of origin.

As seen in the figure above, the female respondents prevail (52,17%), followed by male respondents (42,75%), while 5,07% of them preferred not to answer.

Regarding the age variable, the top position is occupied by the respondents ranging between 18 and 25 years old (42,03%), followed by the 26-35-year-old category (33,33%), and the last position is taken by persons aged over 65 years old (2,17%).

In what concerns the net monthly income, we can firmly assert that most respondents (42,75%) have an income under 1.000 Euros, followed by those with an income ranging between 1.000 and 2.000 Euros (26,09%). At the same time, 17,39% of the respondents stated

their income is between 2.000 and 3.000 Euros. On the other side, only 5,07% of the surveyed persons have an income between 3.000 and 4.500 Euros or above 6.000 Euros. The least percentage (2, 17%) belongs to the persons with a net monthly income ranging between 4.500 and 6.000 Euros.

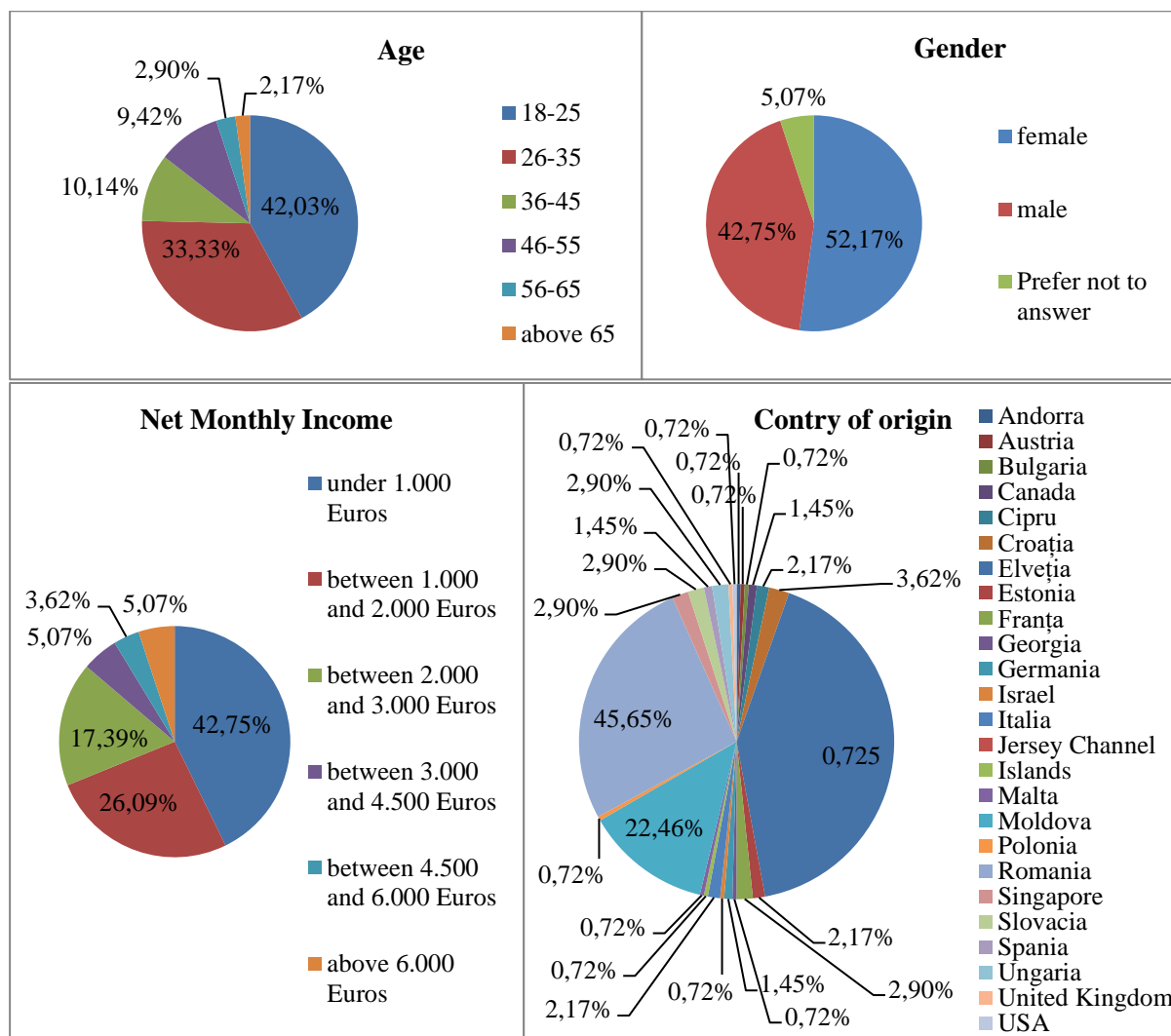


Figure 1. Sampling distribution based on demographic criteria

Source: developed by authors

Thanks to the analysis of the variable “Country of origin”, we can estimate that most respondents are Romanian citizens (45,65%), followed by persons from all over the world, such as Moldova (22,5%), Hungary (3,6%), Italy (2,9%), Canada (2,9%), Austria (2,2%), Switzerland (2,2%), U.S.A (2,2%) Cyprus (0,7%), Spain (0,7%) and France (0,7%).

As seen in Table 1, the analysis of the general behaviour for using the specific accommodation applications shows that, on average, respondents said they agree with “It brings benefits only” with a total score of 4,00 (responses were graded according to a scale from 1 to 5, 1 meaning Total Disagreement, while 5 was equal to Total Agreement).

At the same time, we can identify that, on average, respondents agree with the following statements: “It raises interest” and “It is easy to use” which scored an average of 4,04 and

4,11 (the answers were coded from 1 to 5, where 1 meant Total disagreement and 5 Total agreement). The average was calculated according to the formula: $Average = \frac{\text{no. of respondents who ticked Total disagreement} * 1 + \text{no. of respondents who ticked Disagreement} * 2 + \dots + \text{no. of respondents who ticked Total agreement} * 5}{\text{Total number of respondents who took part in the study}}$.

By applying this formula we were able to calculate the average for each option. Thus, we can firmly state respondents pay greater attention to the Hilton Honours mobile application.

Table 1. Describing the general behaviour of using mobile apps

Attitude	Total Disagreement	Disagreement	Neither, nor	Agreement	Total Agreement	Average
It brings benefits only	5,8%	2,9%	10,9%	46,4%	34,1%	4,00
It raises interest	4,3%	2,9%	8,7%	52,2%	31,9%	4,04
It is easy to use	5,1%	2,2%	2,9%	56,5%	33,3%	4,11

Source: developed by authors

We have also analysed the duration of use for specific accommodation apps as well as their number. Accordingly, we can mention that most respondents (28,26%) have been using specific accommodation apps for 1 or 2 years, while only 8,70% of the persons surveyed have used these apps for 5-6 years. As shown in the figure below, we can state that 35,51% of the respondents have approximately 2 apps for reservations, and only 8,70% of them have 3-4 applications of the sort.

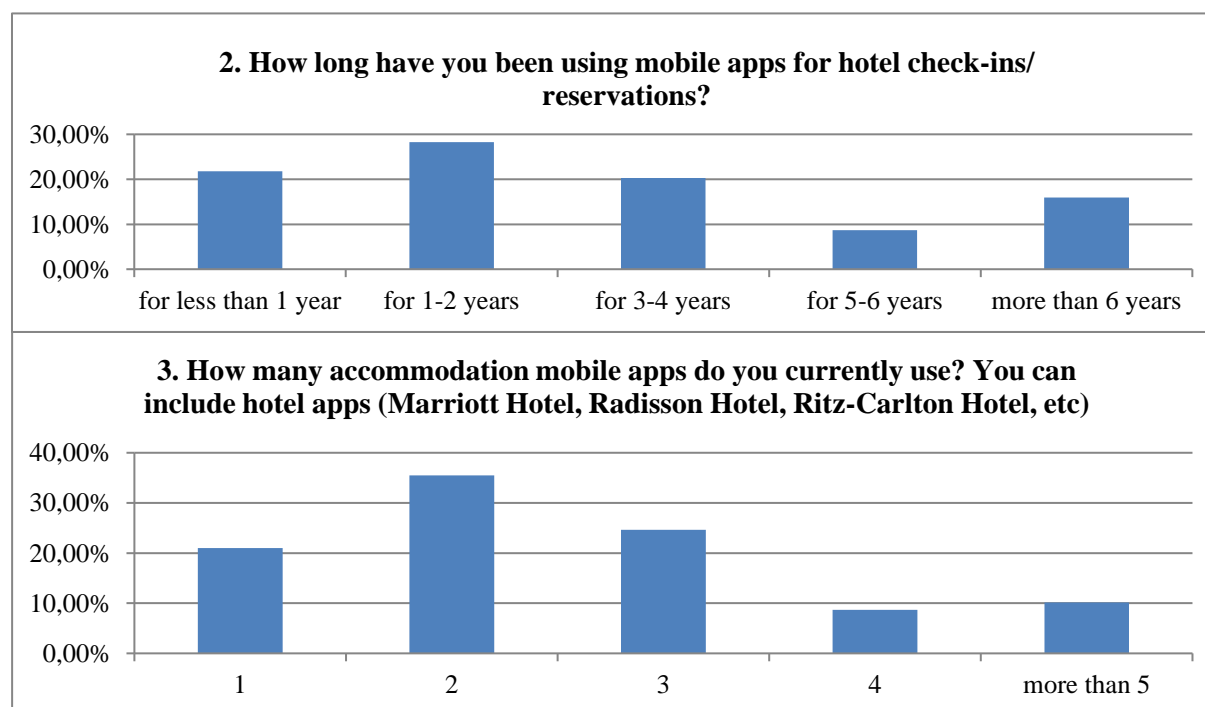


Figure 2. Determining the duration of use for various accommodation apps

Source: developed by authors

The methods of information are presented in table 2 as well as the methods of accommodation used by respondents. Accordingly, it is certain that 29,7% of the respondents use quite often specialized websites for making reservations with a percentage of 18,8%, while 13,8% of them always use them.

Table 2. Determining the usage frequency of various accommodation methods

	Never	Very rarely	Rarely	Often	Frequently	Always
Websites for online reservations (Booking, Airbnb...)	4,3%	8,0%	25,4%	29,7%	18,8%	13,8%
Mobile Apps for online reservations (TripAdvisor, Expedia, etc.)	3,6%	7,2%	26,1%	27,5%	20,3%	15,2%
Looking up information and reservations on the website	4,3%	8,0%	20,3%	31,9%	18,1%	17,4%
Finding the hotel through tourism agencies	18,8%	19,6%	19,6%	18,1%	8%	15,9%
Making a reservation by telephone at the hotel reception	20,3%	18,8%	18,1%	18,1%	8%	16,7%

Source: developed by authors

In the case of using accommodation mobile apps, we can specify that 15,2% of the respondents always use apps such Expedia or TripAdvisor, roughly 20,3% of them use frequently/ very often these types of apps, and 27,5% of respondents use them often. We can also see that 31,9% of the surveyed persons often look for information on the hotel websites, and merely 1,4% always look up information. We can observe that only 15,9% of the respondents always seek assistance from tourism agencies, while a mere 8% make frequent use of their services. On the other hand, only 8% of the respondents ticked that they frequently call the hotel reception for extra information or for making reservations, while 16,7% of them always contact the hotel reception to get actual info at first-hand. The analysis performed from the perspective of Hilton Honors app usage by tourists allows us to observe that 41,30% of the respondents have been Hilton Honors members for less than one year, 26,09% have been members for 1- 3 years, 15,94% have been loyal members of the Hilton chain for 4 -6 years, 4,35% are long-time members (7-9 years), and 12,32% have chosen the Hilton chain for more than 9 years.

In light of the obtained results, we can conclude that 28,99% of the respondents checked in less than once per year at the Hilton hotels, and 30,43% checked twice at most. The majority of clients mentioned they use the mobile app throughout the year, scoring 43,48% out of the total number, and yet, only 10,14% have used the application for more than 6 years. It is quite certain that loyal clients can be identified by the usage frequency of the app throughout the year, and, consequently, 31,16% of the surveyed persons stated they use the Hilton Honors app once every few months, while 16,6% use it several times per month.

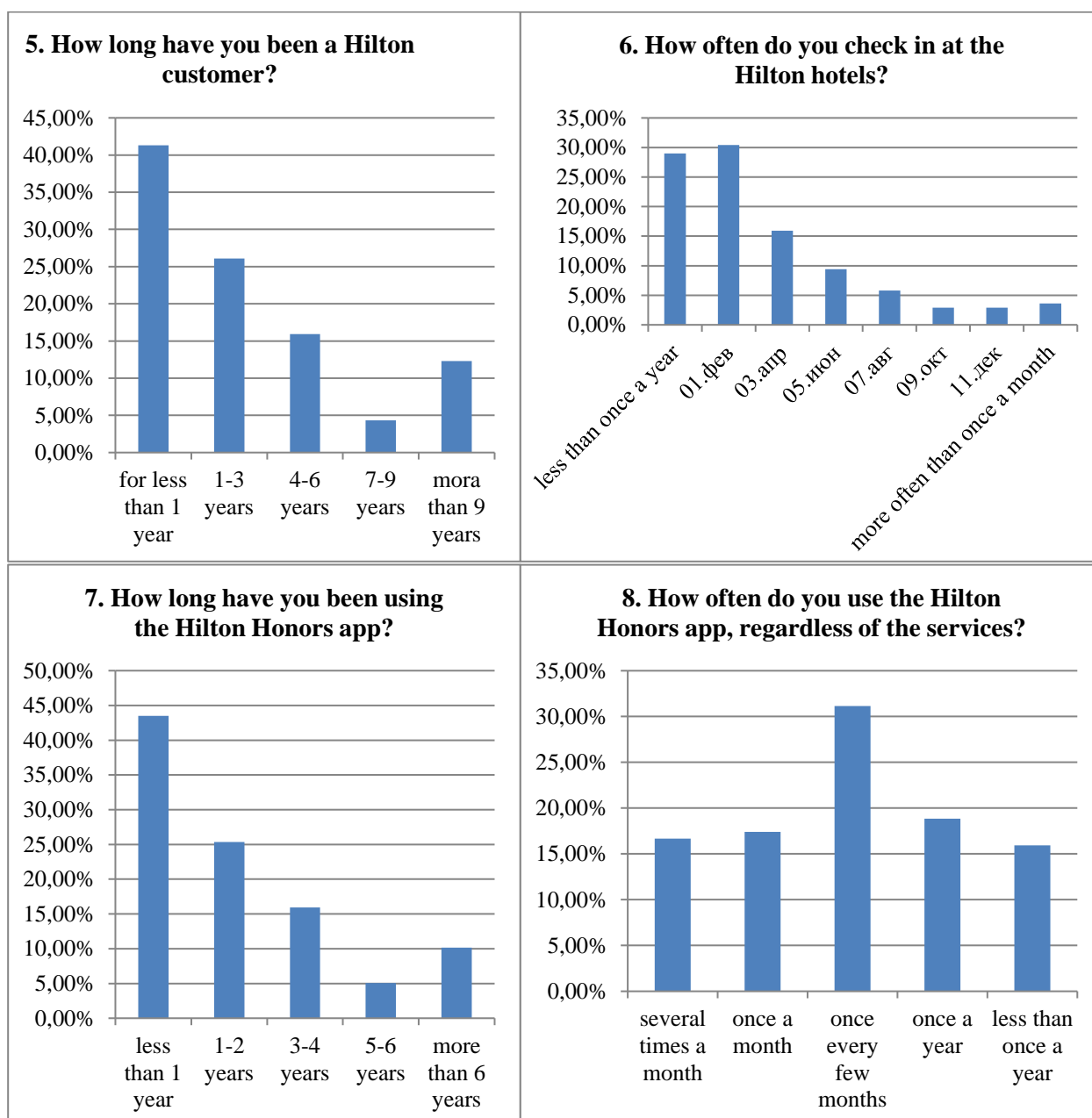


Figure 4. The usage behaviour of the Hilton Honors app

Source: developed by authors

Further, we are presenting which benefits and services are most sought by tourists. Accordingly, the analysis of this feature (table 3) shows that the most used service is hotel reservation which amassed 65,2%, followed by the option of choosing rooms while using the Hilton Honors app (60,1%). It should be mentioned that the following services are also highly appreciated: the Hilton chains provide free Wi-Fi (58,7%), accumulation of bonus points due to previous check-ins (55,8%), promotional offers (51,4%), and digital check-in (52,2%). Less interesting or appealing services to the respondents were the following: late check-out (33,33%), free accommodation for the second person (39,9%), free welcome drink (41,3%), and digital keys (42,8%).

Besides the services and benefits provided by the Hilton Honors app, the respondents also specified how often do they choose to check in the Hilton hotels. Accordingly, the analysis of

the answers showed that 42,75% of the respondents use the app for less than 25% of the check-ins at the Hilton hotels, 28,26% use the app in 25-50% of the check-ins, and 28,98% of the clients often check-in between 50 and 75% of the check-ins) or very often (over 75% of the situations).

Table 3. Types of benefits and services appreciated by the clients of the Hilton chain

	Yes %		Yes %
Booking of the stay	65,2%	Promotional offers	51,4%
Choosing the room (app reservation)	60,1%	Digital key	42,8%
Free Wi-Fi	58,7%	Free welcome drink	41,3%
Gaining bonus points	55,8%	Free accommodation for the second person	39,9%
Digital check-in	52,2%	Late check-out	33,3%

Source: developed by authors

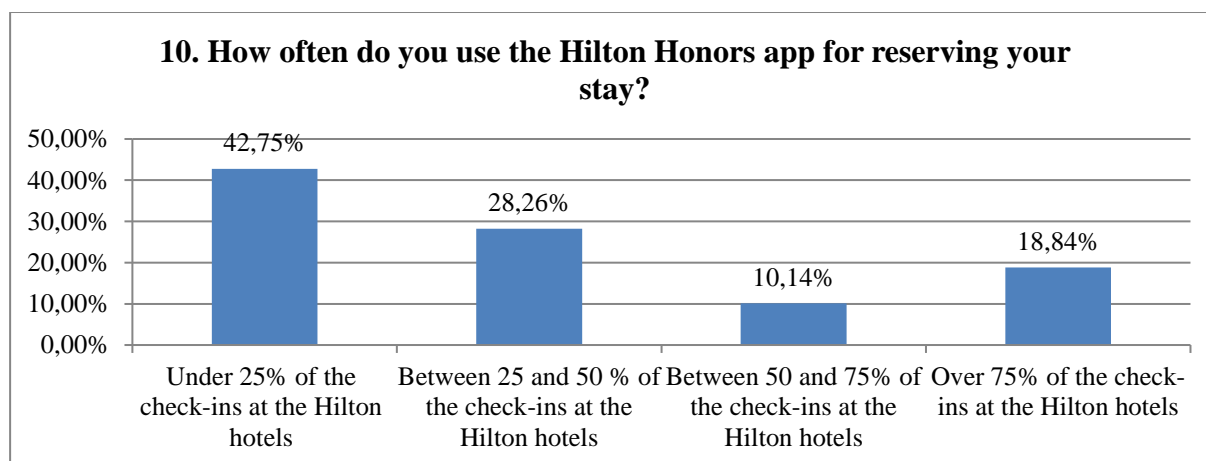


Figure 5. Customer attitude towards Hilton Honors App

Source: developed by authors

To assess customer behaviour in terms of the Hilton Honors app, we have asked a series of questions containing multiple factors which could influence the usage opinions, such as Customer Satisfaction, Atmosphere App, etc. The first parameter is Customer satisfaction, and all related data are included in Table 4.

The analysis of the average score obtained (4,18) at this compartment shows clearly that the Usage Satisfaction factor exceeds the average limit which proves that customers are pleasantly satisfied with the Hilton Honors mobile app, where most respondents gave the qualitative Agreement. In this context, the two most important motivations are "By using the mobile app I have effective time management", with an average of 4,22, and "The usage experience of the mobile app is satisfactory", with an average of 4,18.

To determine the degree of trust in the factors that influence customer satisfaction, we used the analysis based on the Cronbach Alpha coefficient. This coefficient gets values ranging between 0 and 1. This way the value between 0,8 and 1 shows a high degree of trust, while values less than 0,8 reveal a lower degree of trust.

In the case of the Usage satisfaction factor, we have recorded a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0,934, above the limit of 0,8, which shows a high degree of trust. Accordingly, each factor is separately investigated based on the answers collected from the respondents.

Table 4. “Customer Satisfaction in terms of Hilton Honors App” Factor

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION	Total disagreement	Disagreement	Neither, nor	Agreement	Total agreement	Average
By using the mobile app I have effective time management	2,2%	1,4%	10,1%	44,9%	41,3%	4,22
On the whole, the usage experience of the mobile app is satisfactory	1,4%	2,9%	8,7%	50%	37%	4,18
Generally, I am satisfied with the services and benefits provided by the app	2,2%	2,2%	10,9%	49,3%	35,5%	4,14
The app improves the service performance provided by the hotel	2,2%	2,2%	11,6%	44,2%	39,9%	4,17
Average Score						4.18

Source: developed by authors

Another side of the present research has focused on the assessment of the App Atmosphere which gathered an average score of 4,08. Consequently, we can point out that the average score obtained by this factor has a satisfactory influence on the customer attitude in terms of the Hilton Honors app, which corresponds to the answer version “Agreement“. The analysis of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient showed that the factor concerned got a value of 0,929, revealing a high degree of trust.

Table 5. “Atmosphere of Hilton Honors app”

ATMOSPHERE	Total disagreement	Disagreement	Neither, nor	Agreement	Total agreement	Average
The hotel staff gets involved in solving problems through the App chat	2,9%	3,6%	19,6%	39,1%	34,8%	3,99
Th number of Customer Assistance is given in the application	2,2%	4,3%	16,7%	37,7%	39%	4,07
The app system processes swiftly the information requested	2,9%	3,6%	10,9%	44,9%	37,7%	4,11

The confirmation details of the reservation are sent by SMS, email in 24 hours.	2,9%	3,6%	10,9%	40,6%	42%	4,15
If there are any problems related to the reservation, one can easily get in touch with a hotel representative	3,6%	1,4%	19,6%	35,5%	39,9%	4,07
Average score						4,08

Source: developed by authors

The third factor under investigation was the “The app reliability and receptivity” scoring 4,09, which shows that most respondents have given the Agreement qualificative. The app appearance and the registration process in the application are the most important features of this factor, accumulating an average value of 4,17. At the same time, at the compartment of app customization, the item concerned got a value of 3,95. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient for the factor concerned obtained a value of 0,935 which shows a high degree of trust.

Table 6. “Reliability and receptivity of the Hilton Honors app” Factor

PERCEIVED RELIABILITY AND RECEPTIVITY	Total disagreement	Disagreement	Neither, nor	Agreement	Total agreement	Average
The app appearance is stylish/elegant and appealing	2,2%	1,4%	10,1%	50%	36,2 %	4,17
The app seems to use art-of-the-state technology	2,2%	3,6%	16,7%	44,2%	33,3%	4,03
The registration process in the app is easy	1,4%	3,6%	12,3%	42%	40,6%	4,17
The app has customized apps	2,2%	3,6%	19,6%	46,4%	28,3%	3,95
The app includes functions that are time and money savers (booking the room by card validation in the app, choosing the favourite room, etc)	1,4%	2,9%	13,8%	43,5%	38,4%	4,14
Average score						4,09

Source: developed by authors

Table 7 shows the results obtained in assessing the factor “Ease of use” which accumulated an average score of 4,32. The most important features were registered by “Very simple language”, with an average of 4,37, followed by “The app is available round the clock” which got an average value of 4,36. The last positions are taken by “Information is easy to understand” and “Basic reservation services are available in the app” which have an average of 4,28. The calculus of Cronbach Alpha coefficient is 0,957, which shows a high degree of trust.

Table 7. "Ease of Use" factor for Hilton Honors mobile application

EASE OF USE	Total disagreement	Disagreement	Neither, nor	Agreement	Total agreement	Average
Very simple language	1,4%	1,4%	7,2%	38,4%	51,4 %	4,37
Information and instructions are easy to read and understand	1,4%	2,2%	10,9%	37,7%	47,8%	4,28
The app interface is friendly/ easy to use	1,4%	1,4%	8,7%	43,5%	44,9%	4,29
The basic reservation services are available in the app	2,2%	0,7%	10,9%	39,9%	46,4%	4,28
The app is available 24/7 in any place and at any moment	1,4%	1,4%	8,7%	36,2%	52,2%	4,36
Average score						4.32

Source: developed by authors

The analysis of the data included in table 8 allows us to see that "Perceived Utility" factor accumulated an average score of 4,22, close to the average threshold corresponding to the answer version of "Total Agreement". Among the most valuable components are "The application provides quick access to specific information" (4,29), "Reservations are quickly and easily processed", and "The app enhances my activity", both having an average of 4,21. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient has a value of 0,945, representing a high degree of trust.

Table 8. "Perceived Utility" factor of the Hilton Honors app

PERCEIVED UTILITY	Total disagreement	Disagreement	Neither, nor	Agreement	Total agreement	Average
Reservations are quickly and easily processed	2,9%	1,4%	8%	47,1%	40,6 %	4,21
Application provides quick access to information such as hotel identification, provided services, etc.	2,2%	1,4%	7,2%	43,5%	45,7%	4,29
App enhances my efficiency in using the accommodation services	2,2%	1,4%	10,9%	44,2%	41,3%	4,21
It understands the basic requests and needs of the customers	1,4%	2,2%	12,3%	41,3%	42,8%	4,22
App is constantly updated in terms of fees, last minute offers, etc.	2,9%	0%	15,2%	38,4%	43,5%	4,20
Average score						4.22

Source: developed by authors

The analysis of the perceived security shows that the average scored registered here was 4,13, the equivalent of "Total agreement". Particularly, the criterion "Personal data of clients are used for authorized purposes only" had an average of 4,23, followed closely by the criterion "The app replies promptly in case of cancelled reservation", with an average of 4,16. The last positions were occupied by features such as "If there is any mistake, the app corrects it quickly and efficiently" (4,09), and "In case of losing internet connection or inactive account, the user is unblocked" (4,04). The Cronbach Alpha coefficient of this factor amassed a value of 0,925, which points to a high level of trust.

Table 9. "Perceived Security" Factor of the Hilton Honors app

PERCEIVED SECURITY	Total disagreement	Disagreement	Neither, nor	Agreement	Total agreement	Average
App replies promptly if the reservation is cancelled or there are any other activities related to reservation	2,2%	2,2%	11,6%	45,7%	38,4 %	4,16
Account access is protected based on authorisation at multiple levels to prevent unauthorized access (membership number, security questions, etc.)	1,4%	1,4%	15,2%	45,7%	36,2%	4,14
Customer personal data are used for authorized purposes only	1,4%	2,2%	10,9%	42,8%	42,8%	4,23
In the event of losing internet connection, the user is logged out	2,2%	2,2%	22,5%	35,5%	37,7%	4,04
If there is any mistake, the app corrects it quickly and efficiently (first name, last name, etc.)	2,2%	3,6%	15,9%	39,9%	38,4%	4,09
Average score						4.13

Source: developed by authors

On the other hand, the "Usage Risks" factor has got an average score of 3,34 (Table 10), the equivalent of the "Agreement" option. The highest environments got the following features "There could be risks in personal data breeches" (3,42), followed by "There could be the risk of cancelling a reservation" (3,37). The last positions are occupied by the features "The system errors could be worrisome" (3,33), and "There could be unauthorized access to personal data" (3,25). The Cronbach Alpha coefficient has got the value of 0,934, which stands for an advanced level of trust.

The accumulated average score for this factor is 4,15 (Table 11), which is the equivalent of the answer "Total agreement". The primacy of the factor is given by the following feature "On the whole, I believe it is trustworthy", with an average of 4,25. Additionally, the features related to the commercial design and offer stand out, amassing an average of 4,15, followed closely by the component of sensitive data generated by the app (4,10), and by the feature

linked to getting to know customers and their particular needs through data, with an average of 4,09. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient has got a value of 0,932 which shows a high level of trust.

Table 10. "Usage Risks" Factor of the Hilton Honors app

USAGE RISKS	Total disagreement	Disagreement	Neither, nor	Agreement	Total agreement	Average
There could be risks in personal data breeches	7,2%	12,3%	31,2%	29,7%	19,6 %	3,42
There could be the risk of cancelling a reservation	8,7%	13%	30,4%	28,3%	19,6%	3,37
There could be the risk of unauthorized access to personal data by cybercriminals	9,4%	13,8%	35,5%	24,6%	16,7%	3,25
The system error, software problems, internet connection could be worrisome	7,2%	17,4%	29%	28,3%	18,1%	3,33
There could be the risk of losing or paying twice the fee for stay	10,9%	15,2%	26,8%	21%	26,1%	3,36
Average score						3,34

Source: developed by authors

Table 11. "Trust in the Hilton Honors mobile application" Factor

TRUST	Total disagreement	Disagreement	Neither, nor	Agreement	Total agreement	Average
App usually meets the commitments made	2,9%	2,9%	8,7%	48,6%	37 %	4,14
The commercial design and offer of the app takes into account the desires and needs of its users	1,4%	2,9%	14,5%	41,3%	39,9%	4,15
I feel like they know well enough their users to provide products and services which best accommodate their needs	2,9%	2,2%	13,8%	45,7%	35,5%	4,09
I think that providing sensitive data is safe during the selection process of the hotel	2,2%	1,4%	13%	49,3%	33,3%	4,10
On the whole, I think it is trustworthy	1,4%	0,7%	10,1%	46,4%	41,3%	4,25
Average score						4,15

Source: developed by authors

6. Conclusions

Following the complex methodologic approach, we can state that customer satisfaction is one of the most important variables determining the company decision to further develop, and it is the main pillar of the evaluation made by the customer who appreciates a product/ service based on his/ her expectations. Therefore, customer satisfaction in the hotel business is quite a complex concept, since the wide range of customer expectations in terms of hotel services makes difficult an effective assessment of tourist satisfaction.

Based on the analysis of the methods and techniques employed by companies for assessing tourist satisfaction in the hotel business, we can notice the most relevant ones, particularly: questionnaires addressing tourists, evaluation of the feedback given by tourists on the hotel websites or reservation platforms, application of the total quality management or other relevant methods. However, we think that each of these methods should be applied according to the objectives pre-set by companies.

Coming back to the hypotheses of this research, namely the basic H0 hypothesis: "the use of the Hilton Honours app has a positive influence on tourist satisfaction", we can affirm that, based on the obtained results, the hypothesis has been confirmed. Thus, *the H0 hypothesis is confirmed*.

At the same time, the H1 hypothesis: "the Hilton Honors app is useful and satisfies tourist expectations in due time" has been confirmed based on the answers provided by the respondents to this research. On average, this factor got 4,18 out of the maximum 5, which shows that tourists are satisfied with the Hilton Honors mobile app and will use it in the future as well. The research data show that most respondents (65,2%) use the application for booking their stay. Thus, *the H1 hypothesis has been confirmed*.

On the other hand, the H2 hypothesis "The Hilton Honors users trust the Hilton Honors application" got an average of 4,15 out of the maximum 5, which proves that most respondents trust this application. Thus, *the H2 hypothesis has been confirmed*.

Finally, the H3 hypothesis, namely "Tourists expect the Hilton Honours app to be able to quickly respond and satisfy their needs in terms of accommodation services in the hotel", got 4,32, the highest average of all the studied factors. This proves that *the H3 hypothesis has been confirmed*.

Accordingly, we would recommend all accommodation units make use of information technologies in their management system to assess their customer satisfaction, which will help them meet their customer requests, gain the loyalty of their clients, be competitive and sustainable, and allow them to identify a strategic approach in terms of competitiveness.

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Rezumat

Prezenta lucrare reprezintă o incursiune metodologică axată pe identificarea posibilităților de evaluare a creșterii satisfacției clienților prin prisma implementării tehnologiilor IT. Scopul cercetării este evaluarea satisfacției turiștilor hotelului Hilton de utilizarea aplicației Hilton Honours. În vederea atingerii scopului cercetării, a fost efectuată o analiză multidimensională a posibilităților de evaluare a satisfacției clienților prin prisma implementării noilor tehnologii informaționale în cadrul unităților de primire turistică. Drept urmare, a fost efectuat un studiu cantitativ privind evaluarea satisfacției clienților în domeniul turistic. În același context, datele au fost interpretate fiind trasate concluzii și recomandări relevante. Metodologia cercetării s-a focusat pe

utilizarea multiplelor metode: analiza, sinteza, inducția, deducția, abducția, compararea, analiza statistică, modelarea. În concluzii, putem menționa că evaluarea satisfacției clienților reprezintă un pilon SMART al managementului relațional, un factor al fidelizării și loializării clienților, iar tehnologiile IT reprezintă un factor principal al sporirii satisfacției turiștilor. În acest context, unitățile de primire turistice trebuie să-și remodeleze sistemul de management prin infiltrarea de noi tehnologii IT care le va ajuta să facă față cerințelor clienților, să fie competitive și sustenabile, să-și loializeze turiștii, pe de o parte, dar și să-și identifice o abordare strategică în atingerea competitivității.

Cuvinte-cheie: satisfacția clienților, management, evaluarea satisfacției clienților, performanță, tehnologii IT

Аннотация

Настоящая работа представляет собой методологический экскурс, направленный на выявление возможностей оценки повышения удовлетворенности клиентов за счет внедрения ИТ-технологий. Цель исследования - оценить удовлетворенность туристов отеля Hilton использованием приложения Hilton Honors. Для достижения цели исследования был проведен многоаспектный анализ возможностей оценки удовлетворенности клиентов через призму внедрения новых информационных технологий в подразделениях приема туристов. В результате было проведено количественное исследование по оценке удовлетворенности клиентов в сфере туризма. В этом же контексте были интерпретированы данные и сделаны соответствующие выводы и рекомендации. Методология исследования ориентирована на использование нескольких методов: анализа, синтеза, индукции, дедукции, абдукции, сравнения, статистического анализа, моделирования. В заключение можно отметить, что оценка удовлетворенности клиентов является SMART-столпом управления отношениями, фактором верности и лояльности клиентов, а ИТ-технологии являются основным фактором повышения удовлетворенности туристов. В этом контексте подразделения по приему туристов должны перестроить свою систему управления, внедрив новые ИТ-технологии, которые помогут им соответствовать требованиям клиентов, быть конкурентоспособными и устойчивыми, с одной стороны, сделать своих туристов лояльными, а с другой стороны, определить стратегический подход в достижении конкурентоспособности..

Ключевые слова: удовлетворенность клиентов, управление, оценка удовлетворенности клиентов, производительность, ИТ-технологии

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