Response

To the opponent review of Dr. László Juhász

I would like to thank my opponent, Dr. László Juhász for reviewing my Phd thesis and sharing his opinion with me, which are going to be very useful in my future academic career and of course in case of the publications.

The opponent misses a hypothesis which concludes all the topics written in the thesis. I tried to make the issues of this research clear, in the first chapter the goals of the research are being summarised and the issues of the thesis are introduced. Actually I think that also the title of the thesis can answer the question about the objective of the research.

I am glad that the first hypothesis can provide some interesting results according to my opponent. I agree that it seems obvious that the hotel chain member hotels' standardisation is higher than independent hotels', although in this research my aim was to measure the influence of this factor, which was rather surprising (because it was only 5%). Since the basic characteristics were measured in this thesis, the number of rooms could not be left out and it indeed had a significant correlation with the level of standardisation.

Dr. László Juhász states that the topic is novel and useful which I appreciate very much because, these two goals had the priority during the research.

In the literature review, my opponent misses a definition, which is of course true but the elements of the suggested 'sentence' are mentioned by other authors whose paper are contained (for example interaction is emphasised by Payne, 1993, Kasper et al, 1999, Johns, 1999, Grönroos, 2000) and they appear in my own definition as well.

In case of the standardisation and customisation chapter, not all the definitions (from the table) are detailed in the text, only some of them are highlighted which seemed more relevant for the current thesis. These phrases were primarily used for showing the different words used for the same concepts: standardisation and customisation. The personal opinion concerning the topic is mostly shown by chapter 2.3, when the theoretical model is introduced.

Dr. László Juhász states that the foreign guest percentage is highly influenced by the location and not the standardisation and customisation. This performance indicator is emphasised in

statistics, which made it important to put into the circle of important factors. The results actually show that foreign guest percentage and Tripadvisor evaluations belong together and that those hotels which are standardised and customised have higher percentage of foreign guests. But the location would be an interesting topic and factor which could be examined in my further research.

The opponents misses the summary of the hotels' capacity, which is true, also the candidate did not want to put the exact data into the PhD thesis, since the hotels could be recognisable and also it would not contain any important information. The other way would have been to classify the hotels into small, medium and big category but since the correlation did not use this classification, it would have only shown the sample characteristic.

The candidate agrees with the opinion of the opponent concerning the cleanliness standards. These standards refer to the process instead of the exact cleanliness of the room or other places in the hotel. The names of the standard groups are not changed, they are exactly as they are phrased in the standardisation document.

I accept the criticism that the summary of the research results are not detailed enough. I will pay more attention to these conclusions in my future papers. Concerning the managerial implications, a manual is going to be made especially for hotel managers, because I think it would be easier for them to think about or even use these ideas in their everyday operation.

Dr. László Juhász mentions the question of the relationship between the performance indicators and the level of standardisation and customisation, which is detailed in Hypothesis 5, where the different clusters are examined further for finding out that the high standardisation-high customisation and the high standardisation-medium customisation groups are the most successful.

Thank you for the criticism of the structure of the thesis and I will try to avoid the mentioned mistakes in my future academic life to make the papers more professional.

Questions:

1. The need for standardisation in the hotel industry originates from the beginning of mass tourism in the early years of the twentieth century. These times people were already able to travel, transportation was capable to take high number of tourists from one place to another.

Standardised hotels were originally established in the United States of America for mostly business purposes. Mass tourism was the reason for independent hotels to join chains by franchising, management contracting, leasing and any other operation forms to exploit mostly the financial advantages. Then standardisation became a deal breaker when American hotel companies started to expand and establish hotels, hotel chains all over Europe and other countries in the world. They had to transfer the knowledge, the rules and the recipe or the formula for success. That is the reason why the international marketing perspective of standardisation is mentioned in the current thesis.

The international expansion makes it difficult for hotel chains to make a decision what to customise and standardise according to Praporski (2008)[1]. Hotels realised that the different needs of the destinations – where the chain members are - need to be satisfied as well. Nowadays, as it is mentioned the doctoral thesis, the expectations of the customers made it very important for standardised hotel chains to introduce the customisation and emphasise its role in the hotel operation. For example Hilton Hotels started a program, where guests can customise their own stay with the help of their mobile devices, tablets or computers.

2. The aim of the thesis was to combine standardisation and customisation and exploit all the advantages and avoid the disadvantages. Chapter 2.2.2.2 introduces the most important advantages and disadvantages of each. Both concepts contribute to customer satisfaction; standardisation can provide the product or service that they expect to get. At the same time customisation will make the company able to satisfy the individual needs. Standardisation ensures quality through the zero failure strategy. Standards make sure that the processes are regulated and if they are kept, no mistakes can happen. In leisure firms especially, standardisation is able to help assuring consistent quality. On the other hand customisation represents the customer side of quality and connects it to customer satisfaction emphasising the perception of the guests which is helped by the special treatment for each customers. Standardisation can assure cost effectiveness as well as providing consistent quality. Customisation however is able to increase the price of the product or service since customers are willing to pay more for special treatments and outcomes. Innovation and standardisation are both necessary for the successful internationalisation of a company; a standardised company make systemised innovation. With customisation innovation can be customer-near, which means that new ideas come from the customers and that is a guarantee for success.

[1] Praporski, N. (2008) Customization and Standardization in Global Hotel Expensions; UNLV Theses/Dissertations/Professional Papers/Capstones. Paper 630.

3. Before stating Thesis 5, the testing of Hypothesis 5 has been performed. As I mentioned earlier, a cluster analysis has been made forming four groups of hotels. After that these circle of hotels have been analysed further. The result showed that high standardisation-high customisation and the high standardisation-medium customisation groups are the most successful considering the examined performance indicators.

4. The results of testing Hypothesis 3 suggested that the cleanliness standard groups should not only be standardised but customised as well. In my opinion the time of the cleaning can be altered according to the guests' needs. Some of the objects which are put in the rooms can be different concerning different guests and for example the scent used in the room could be changed as well. The guest participation services – for example beverage services, check-in, check-out, reservation, restaurant services and room service – are not only customised (which could be assumed because it is highly in connection with the guests – but standardised as well. There are exact standards for the check-in or the reservation process which are quite strict but do not exclude any customisation only assure minimum quality.

And once again I would like to thank Dr. László Juhász for reading my PhD thesis and helping me to improve my academic skills.

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