

ORIENTATION TOWARD CUSTOMER FOR PUBLIC FOOD SERVICE COMPANIES

LIVIU ILIE FACALEATA
ECONOMIST, PITESTI, ROMANIA
facaleataliviu@yahoo.com

Abstract

In the context of accelerated economic globalization and hyper global competition, companies must have a high degree of orientation in the market, to know and respond quickly to volatile markets. In this context, the public food field is one marked by significant changes having regard to needs and consumer behavior.

Public food services are designed to meet first the basic needs which causes certain private actions and a particular mechanism for the training of behavior with significant impact on the way in which the companies of public food should develop services and certain ambient which to contribute to the proper customer service.

Moreover, these companies have aspecial relationship with customers, having regard to the direct interaction between supplier and customer.

This present project aimsto identify good practice in the field of public food serviceregarding the implementation of the philosophy orientation on the marketplace.

To achieve this goal has been used as methodology the analysis of the primary results from previous research in the fields of both market direction, as well as in the hospitality areas, analysis which has had as main objective a stock-taking of the models developed for the hospitality industry and compiling influence factors with impact on the "good service" of the client, but also integration of orientation principles toward market within the framework of these models.

Keywords: hospitality industry, orientation toward market, good customer service, models

JEL Classification: M40, M41

1. Introduction

Since the early 1990s, many researchers have showed their interest in studying a new concept at that time, respectively the orientation on the marketplace.

First researchers who have studied this concept have been Kohl and Jaworki (1990), followed by Nerver and Slater (1990).

Subsequently, many other researchers turned their attention to studying relations between the concept of orientation toward market and organizational performance, based on the theories of Kohl and Jaworki.

Orientation toward the market, a concept that has its origins in the modern concept of marketing, has represented in the last approximately three decades a topic of primary concern. The fundamental idea that has become detached from the studies carried out in these years by the researchers shows no doubt that the organizations/companies that are successful based on a high degree of orientation in the market.

Furthermore, it was pointed out that the companies that have been successful in implementing the concept of orientation toward market have had results in improving organizational performance measured as turnover, market share, sales volume, the ability to create and implement new ideas, products and processes, but also in profit.

The greatest benefit of the organizations which have targeted the vision into the market orientation concept was that they could attract and retain customers in an efficient manner, concentrating and assimilating information about present and future needs of them, producing services, but also products that can satisfy these needs.

It is clear from the above mentioned that these companies have understood the needs and have acquired the ability to adapt, by means of a continuous learning, to respond to the market changes were they activate going on a constant developmental line.

The aim of this work is to bring in the light the interest given to the concept of market orientation by researchers in the field, to analyze the evolution of this concept, as well as to identify the actions within organizations which carry out their activities in the area of public food service, actions relating directly the implementation of a policy that affects orientation toward market.

Also, to provide improved clarity on this point, this work proposes to analyze the opinions of the specialized international literature in this field.

Specialized literature analysis regarding the identification of the conceptual nature phenomenon of the orientation toward market:

The specialized literature offers a broad spectrum of visions through which the concept of orientation toward market receives various conceptual meanings, sometimes also regarded from a subjective point of view, not only objective.

In the first place, it is important to state that specialized people have mentioned on many occasions that many companies have failed in the implementation process on the edge of which is to be carried out the discussion, thus enhancing the idea that it is only an idealistic theory and that in practice any organization could not apply in whole the concept of orientation toward market.

We can say that 1988 may represent the period in which the concept of orientation toward market is under the practitioners debate through the article published in Harvard Business Review, by Sapiro, which offered a first clarification of the notion.

It shows how the President Controller Wolverine Company was analyzing the need to implement in that company the concept of orientation toward market, need linked with the need to get out of the crisis where was the company, reaching the conclusion that he had in front of him two options: to transform the business into one that was going to be conducted by customers or to convert it into a market oriented company.

Later, respectively in the year 1990, "Journal of Marketing" comes to help those caught in the conceptual orientation confusion regarding the market with the first great works which were beginning to provide clarificatory answers regarding this concept. The work contained in the "Journal of Marketing" is evidence of research conducted by the two teams of researchers: Narver and Slater, as well as Kohl and Jarowski.

In the work published by Kohl and Jarowski in 1990, the orientation term toward the market has been used as an implementation of the marketing concept.

As regards the terminology concept of orientation toward the market, still in the early days of the 1990s, it has a certain ambiguity, the phenomenon cannot describe in concrete terms. For example, Trustrum (1989) sustains the fact that the orientation toward marketing and orientation toward the market are synonymous. Later, in the year 1991, Sharp uses the term orientation toward marketing instead of orientation toward the market.

In the years that followed, respectively 1993- 1994, specialized people strengthen the terminology confusion: Chang and Chen are using the terms of orientation toward the market orientation toward marketing and customer orientation as if they were equivalent. Deshpande, in 1993, and Webster, in 1994, use the term customer orientation to use the same concept.

In the year 1994, Slater, in an article published in "Business Horizons" accentuates that orientation toward market is a term preferably up against orientation toward the marketing, from the simple reason that orientation toward the market concerns the whole company, while the second time concerns only the specific activity of marketing.

As mentioned above, Narver and Slater, as well as Kohl and Jarowski are the authors of the first results of the research conducted by them.

Currently, the specialized literature has as promoters Narver and Slater, as well as Kohli and Jaworski through the work launched in the year 1990, those which have imposed a new perspective on the marketing concept, perspective which had an impact particularly in the training in the last 25 years of specialized literature.

Taking account of the manner in which adapted to the concept of market orientation, an adaptation that demonstrates in different contexts. The various companies and industries located in an economy developed or in development showed a significant interest to implement this concept.

In conclusion, we can say that specialized literature was the one who offered a first vision on the notion of orientation toward the market. A vision that did not offer at that time a clear picture on it. But, at the same time, in a manner gradually and systemic, all the specialized literature has offered to those interested the conceptual clarifications that were needed.

As regards, providing precise definitions of the concept, researchers in this field have not yet been able to reach a unanimous opinion. Existing otherwise in the course of time a large number of definitions of the term orientation toward the market, a variety that sometimes led to understand the concept. For example, in the year 1993, from his point of view Dreher said that there is a degree of ambiguity with respect to the phenomenon on nature of the orientation toward the market. Also, at a similar opinion also reaches Gabel in the year 1995, which claims that this concept is not clearly and correctly defined.

These conceptual debates have in mind the doctrine opinions about in rapport with different areas of interest, such as marketing, strategic management and human resources, public services.

In spite of all controversies and opposite opinions on concept, it has to be accepted that all starts from a standard point, namely : orientation toward market connects with the organization in its operational environment, through the collection of market information and its dissemination within the organization, at the level of departments, having as purpose the improvement of organizational performance.

FLAWLESS HOSPITALITY - MAJOR OBJECTIVE OF SERVICES RENDERED IN THE FOOD SERVICE UNITS WITH A RESTAURANT PROFILE

Public food services are designed to meet the needs of vital food, according to the manifestations of private behavior and some individualized preferences of consumption, in specific ambient conditions

In the services category rendered for the population also integrates the establishments providing restaurant and bar services, characterized by a broad variety of profiles, and degrees of specialization. Some of these units activate independently and others are parts of a bigger company, as, for example, restaurants from hotel complexes or of private clubs, restaurants aboard river and maritime ships, wagons restaurant, etc..

All these firms live, and they'll be able to develop to the extent that can achieve profitable economic results from the services offered to consumers - beneficiaries of services.

Because public nutrition satisfies primary physiological requirements of food, the consumer behavior of functions of food is not essentially indistinguishable from customers behavior that these one display in the usual manner to their home. What a service provider of nourishment must take into account is the request by the upper ambient conditions and serving from consumers. Ensuring these conditions, though involves a high volume of work for the preparation and presentation of the service of food, is a factor of competitiveness, consumers satisfaction related to the preparations consumed, the level of service and ambiance created constituting essential elements in the provider image.

To all this is added the fluctuation intensity of unequal arrivals not only during certain periods of the year but also during a day. Agglomerations which are formed at certain times have an cascade effect, through an extension of the waiting time up to reserving the place at the table, prolonging the time of preparing the order etc., all of which may cause dissatisfaction of the consumer.

For this reason, in the organization of providing a public food service should be forecasted a continuous stream of serving for that the time in the waiting wire to be as small as possible, and satisfaction following consumption as high as possible.

In these circumstances in which the individual behavior influences consumer behavior of services of food, personal taste, diet imposed, the pulses of time s.a., meet clients preferences becomes a problem growing ever more difficult.

Satisfactory /fulfillment service work embedded in food service becomes visible only when the demand for the products is sufficiently attractive, and the service flawless, to meet preferences and to stimulate the customer's consumption.

With all heterogeneous profile of undertakings which provides the services of restaurants in their work, it is to be noticed a common thread. The suction to cultivate and maintain an image of the mark by which should distinguish from other competing firms, by implementing and intensification the professional hospitality relationships with their clients. Within the managers task framework of the companies providing restaurant services, an important place returns, therefore, steering operation and control such relations of hospitality, relations that determine that intangible side of the quality of service. In other words, the substance of the matter when ensuring a high quality level and constant aspect of the restaurant services consists not only in making use of intrinsic quality material consumption (side of tangible benefits), but also in equal manner in the art of hospitality. This art acquisition by the restaurant's staff is aimed to build relationships with customers in such a way that the products and services consumer to feel that treated as agues.

It should not be forgotten, therefore, that in the market economy quotes "CUSTOMER IS THE KING", "OUR CUSTOMER IS OUR MASTER" or "CUSTOMER IS ALWAYS RIGHT" (often considered to be in a centralized economy conditions) not only that have not lost their importance, but, even more so, become commandments in their efforts to win his loyalty from customers.

Hospitality, therefore, includes different limits of comfort category of units and the quality of the object of consumption of the client, with the condition that this object of use (culinary preparations, drinks, desert, etc.) to meet the needs of its physiological and psychological of nourishment.

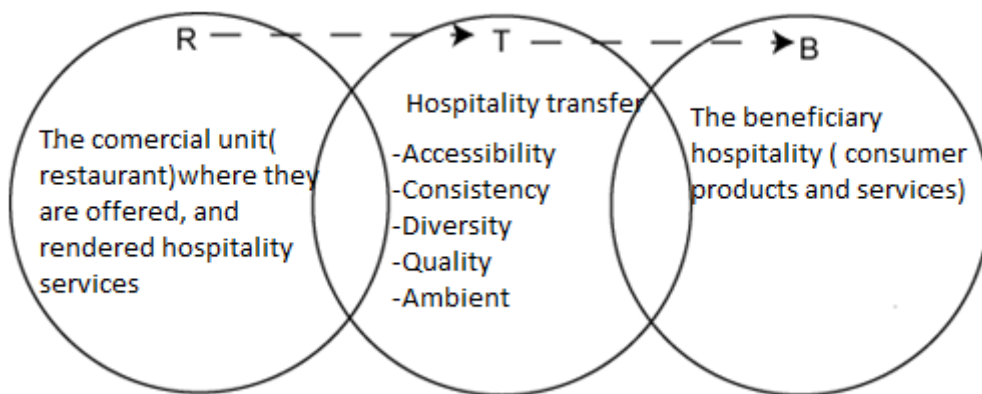
Quality analysis of benefits in the sector of restaurant services assumes, therefore, prior knowledge of the tendered on the mechanism of hospitality.

In the opinion of Michael Porter and in this process there are three main components:

- Hospitality services provided by the supplier in a unit of food (R);
- Hospitality transfer from the services provider to the recipient of the services requested (T);
- The hospitality beneficiary –the recipient and the consumer of goods and services requested (B).

The interference of these three components can be illustrated graphically in the diagram of fig. 1.

Diagram 1: The mechanics of the process of transfer of hospitality



Source: MagielVenema (Edu Tour BV Manager, Teacher) – An introduction to the tourism system, Education for tourism, 2009, Edu Tour, Olanda

In the diagram above presented, we can conclude that the transfer process of hospitality consists in offering by the recipient of the following commercial essential elements: good faith personnel, various products and services of high quality delivered in a consequent manner in a pleasant environment.

In this model, the customer is in the center of attention.

The mechanism analysis transfer process of hospitality allows concluding that in any situation of hospitality can be found following five components:

A tangible **material product** offered by the supplier (for example, a culinary preparation, a product of pastry- pastries, etc.) Requested by customer after consulting the list menu of the day's work (P);

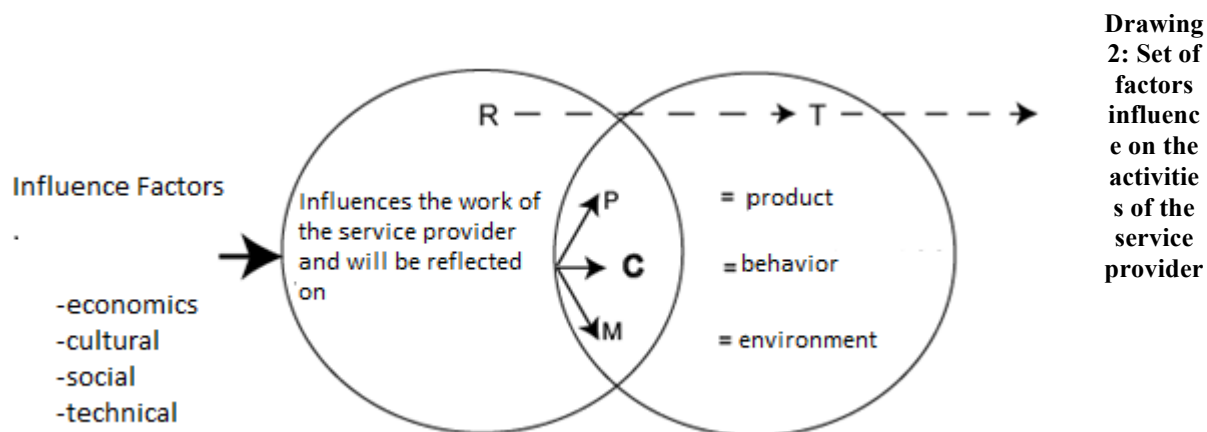
The consumption behavior of the recipient of beneficiary's services of food, respectively of the customer who launched the order and who consumed the material product involved (C);

The environment in which is prepared (the kitchen, the Office, the annex), served and consumed the product (restaurant lounge, room for breakfast, terrace of summer, etc.) (M).

From the point of view of the hospitality process above referred to, the activities of the service provider are limited, or restricted in a given situation by the influences of a set of determining factors of the forces and weak sides of the performance, of which the most important are the economic, cultural, social and technical factors, as a result of drawing 1.

The needs of the beneficiary of services for comfort during the process of consumption (N);

The objectives which the customer wants solved customer in a situation of hospitality (for example, on the occasion of a custom order of particular preparations, served "a la carte", on the occasion of a festive meals, etc.) (O).

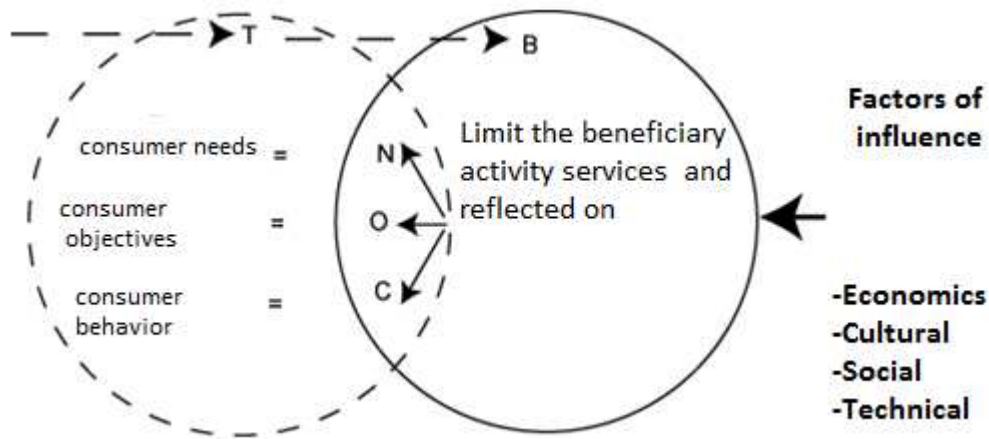


Source: MagielVenema (Edu Tour BV Manager, Teacher) – An introduction to the tourism system, Education for tourism, 2009, Edu Tour, Olanda

In their turn, the needs (N), and also the objectives (A) of the beneficiary of services are also influenced by the same factors (economic, cultural, social and techniques), which will determine limits of behavior or consumption (C), as shown in the diagram 2.

The influence factors referred to above shall be reflected in the product, behavior and the environment in the process of transfer hospitality, the beneficiary does not have control over it.

Drawing 3: The set of factors influence on the behavior of the customer's consumption

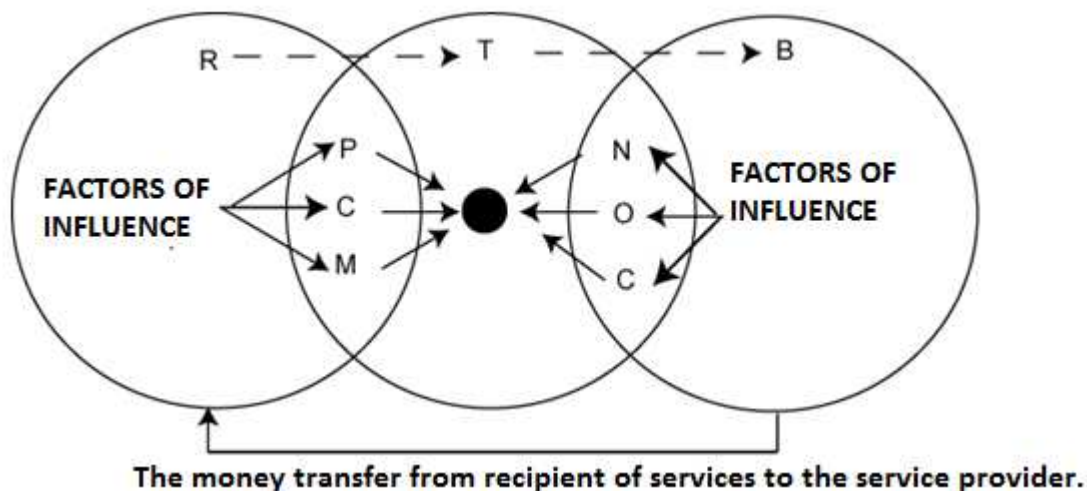


Source: MagielVenema (Edu Tour BV Manager, Teacher) – An introduction to the tourism system, Education for tourism, 2009, Edu Tour, Olanda.

By repeating the definition gave above, the process of professional hospitality can be summarized in a model of hospitality (drawing 3).

The factors influence social, economic, social and techniques are likely to have an impact on both of the service provider (as defined in Schedule 2), and also on the consumer. Depending on the context it creates factors of influence; the customer may change its needs, the objectives and behavior, such as being able to high versatility from the provider of the service to a view to the completion of the optimum transfer of hospitality.

Diagram 4: The hospitality model



Source: MagielVenema (Edu Tour BV Manager, Teacher) – An introduction to the tourism system, Education for tourism, 2009, Edu Tour, Olanda

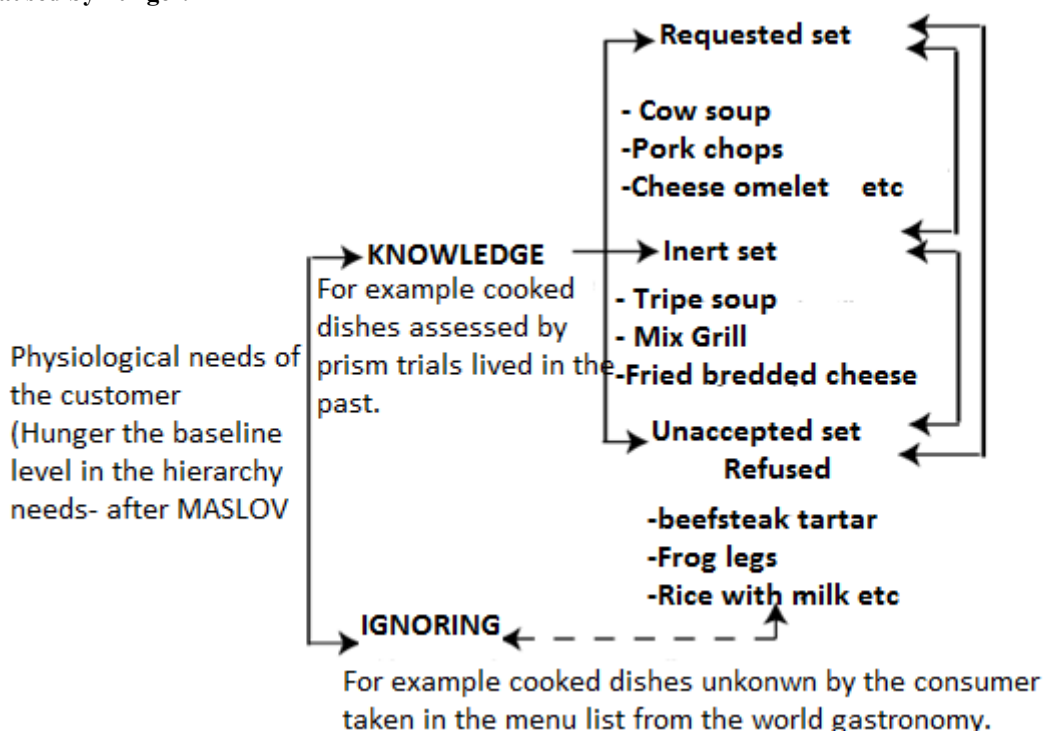
In the context in which, irrespective of the factors of influence, the provider meet the needs, objectives and beneficiary behavior products, the services and the environment in which they are offered, the transfer hospitality translates through the money transfer from the client to the service provider.

Materialized at the base of technical material production and serving of a restaurant which has the necessary conditions in order to prepare and deliver culinary products after national and international kitchen, the hospitality model requires the following explanations:

Products materials (P) reflect culture in the field of culinary highlights of the tendered (level of vocational qualifications, experience gained in practice activities of restaurant and bar, the standard of knowledge in gastro-technique, initiative, creativity, etc.), but this culture expressed in tangible side of services will correspond to the physiological needs for food only to the extent that it will be compatible with Customer's culture-consumer.

The client interprets differently the offer of various cooked dishes and ingredients components thereof, which are shown in the list menu of the restaurant. After consulting the provider offer, the customer goes through a mental process of selection, accepting the products known that meet its taste (the set evoked), manifesting indifference against the products known, but which, in a given situation, cannot satisfy their preferences (inert set), or by refusing to pay attention to products which does not know or in which has no confidence (the rejected set). Diagram 4 illustrates the variables possible response from the customer in the supply of products of a restaurant.

Drawing 5: Exemplifying possible variants of reaction from the customer to satisfy the physiological needs caused by hunger.¹



Source: Magiel Venema (Edu Tour BV Manager, Teacher) – An introduction to the tourism system, Education for tourism, 2009, Edu Tour, Olanda

Behavior of consumption (C) expresses the customer culture, more precisely their preferences both for own consumption of products, as well as in regard to environment services rendered (serving ceremony processes, the order in which he wishes to be served various cooked dishes, etc.).

Medium (M) reflect an ambiance in which is made the consumption itself in units of food, which can exert a powerful force of attraction to visit, respectively the repeated attendance at a custom restaurant. For this reason, creating a physical pleasant and reassuring environment, through original fitting-out and decoration of the premises, by cleanliness and hygiene, by the discreet lighting of buildings, etc., gives the restaurant rooms a distinguishing mark, thus contributing to the cultivation atmosphere of the intimacy of the units.

The physical environment, though its character of intangibility, do not contribute to physiological needs of the consumers, but consumers grant the appropriate importance due the account of expression cultural environment, which enhances psychological satisfaction just by unique features of this environment. Companies managers who know these psychological effects and are concerned about the "intangibility" of what is intangible (of the software units) by coordinating rooms, positioning tables in the quest, by variety and originality of finely inventory of serving (brightly, cutlery, glasses, etc.), through processes of "miss-en-place" - differentiated in accordance with the rules established nationally and worldwide, depending on the nature of preparations and beverages served - by impeccable uniform and expressive of their staff, by technical equipment auxiliary willing

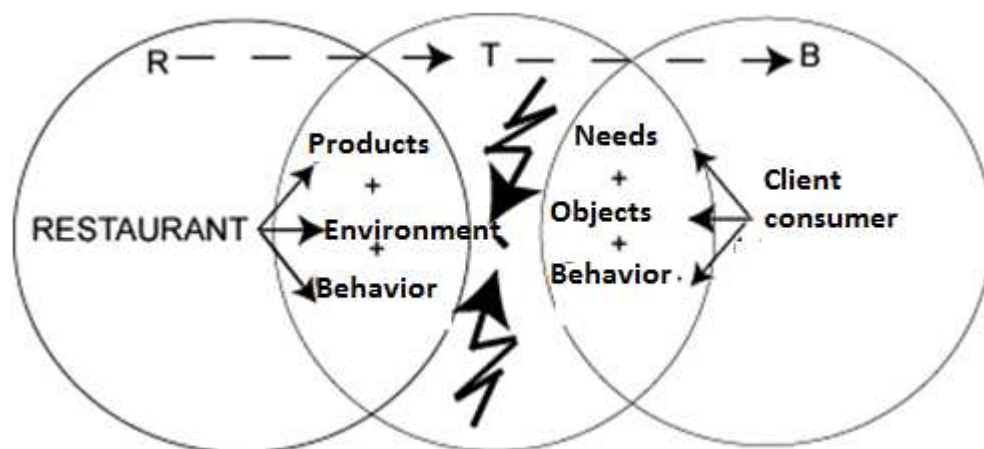
functional and suggestive in the dining room salons. All of these are subordinated to the same purpose: ensure speeding up restaurant services and differentiation of other competing units.

Of those set out, it appears that the relationship of hospitality assumes a permanent cultural confrontation, but different from a situation to another, between the person offering the services and the customer which aspire to satisfaction with faultlessly services. The cultural clash between the provider behavior of the services and the client's consumption is illustrated schematically in diagram 5.

Even from a simple analysis of the components graph detaches easily the conclusion that a confrontation between the elements referred to will take place in any situation of professional hospitality, battle which will end in one form or another with positive or negative results for both partners involved in the flow of the process of serving.

If the cultural confrontation is carried out smoothly, without remarkable aspects or easy to solve, the consumer is going to leave the unit, with feelings of satisfaction, he may return in the future in the unit concerned and occasionally will recommend the restaurant in his circle of acquaintances.

Diagram 6: The cultural confrontation between the behaviors of the provider of restaurant services and the behavior of the solicitant of food services



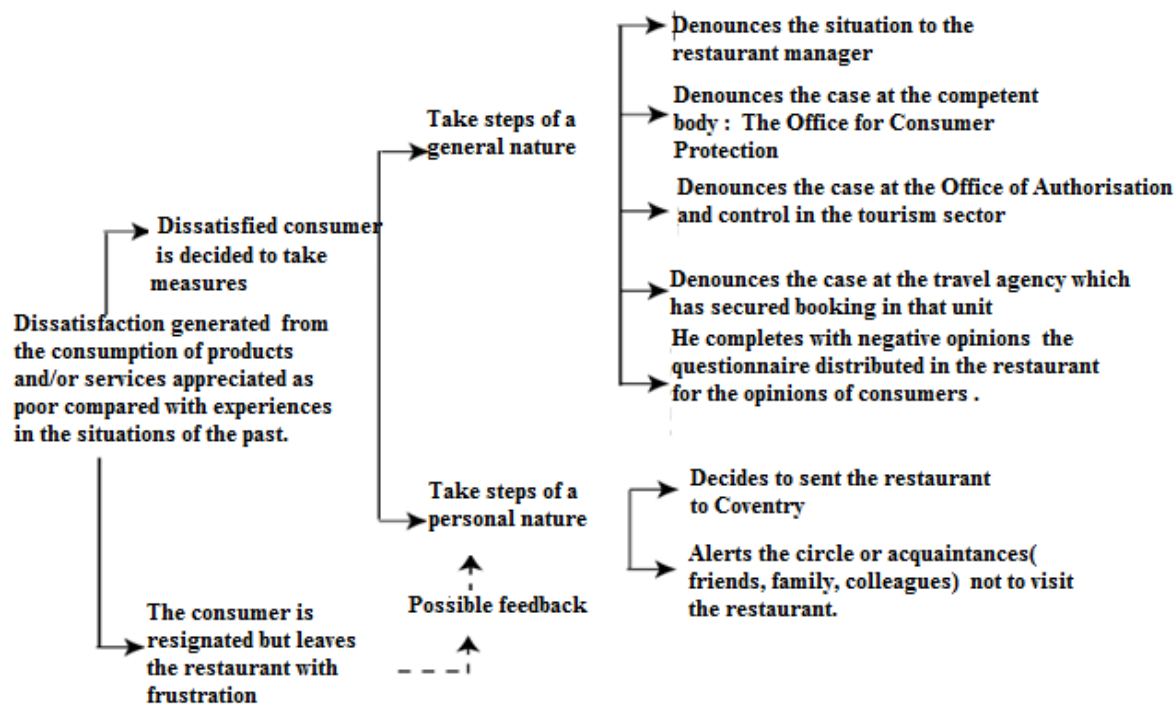
Source: Magiel Venema (Edu Tour BV Manager, Teacher) – An introduction to the tourism system, Education for tourism, 2009, Edu Tour, Olanda

If the confrontation will finally lead to significant roughness, the customer not satisfied will leave the establishment with the conviction that he will not visit it in the future and, in addition, he will become a cynical propagandist, but active, seeking to persuade on average other 10-12 people not to become consumers in the establishment in question, which will reflect negative on the results of promotional efforts for the cultivation and settling an image of the brand on quality service of the restaurant in question

Drawing 6 illustrates how deals the consumer of the unsatisfaction if he appreciates that the products and/or services of the restaurant have been weak from the point of view of the relations of professional hospitality. Researchers in the field who places quality of benefits of services at the centre of the concern of a restaurant are of the opinion that the efforts to ensure the quality of services will be beneficent in a company only if the managers follow the next logic reasoning:

-increased the volume of business and making profits are subject to customer loyalty;

Figure 7: Exemplifying how consumers treat the dissatisfaction if they consider that the products and/or services provided by the visited restaurant have been unappropriated.



Source: MagielVenema (Edu Tour BV Manager, Teacher) – An introduction to the tourism system, Education for tourism, 2009, Edu Tour, Olanda

- Customer loyalty will result from consumer satisfaction;
- Satisfaction is influenced by the value assigned by customer services;
- The value is created by loyal and productive employees
- Staff loyalty is the resultant support from services provided by the managers who stimulate the employees from the first line (in direct contact with their clients) to obtain good results in the processes of serving;
- Providing support services involves new responsibilities for managers in stimulating staff, through training, pay wages, rewards and cast light on the activities of customer service.

It can be said that profitability in business services enterprises will depend on the quality of the service, through the creation of a new climate of organizational culture. In this new environment, the act of self-leading becomes itself a form of service: managers serve line staff of contact with customers, and this staff, in turn, helps customers dining room.

From this concept is shown that, in order to succeed in the business, the restaurant manager will have to grant the same value to serving staff and of support and customers served.

2. Conclusions:

Market orientation concept represented one of the fields of research which have caused enough controversy at the doctrinaire level, but it has offered, at the same time, an alternative for organizations and businesses to their problems.

The doctrine has provided over the time only conceptual explanations, launching many times ideas that were expressing their lack of confidence in the philosophy orientation policy toward the market. For example, it has been claimed in more than one work that despite theoretical clarification of the concept no company has been able to implement it in full.

On the basis of analyzed models, developed for hospitality industry it could be affirmed that in this type of industry, orientation toward market is particularly important in the relationship between supplier and customer. Thus, the customer must represent the starting point in shaping the services which would provide superior value by building also around these services, a number of other tangible elements that could result in the final stage in an excellent customer service.

Concluding, we can say that the hospitality industry orientation toward market is theoretical and practical concept particularly important, that contribute to the business success.

¹ *Connections for potential reversibility (curiosity, out of a desire to imitate behavior of consumption of other consumers, etc.) and as a result of economic factors of influence (price/level of income, etc.).*

3. References:

- [1] Dreher A. – *Marketing orientation: How to grasp the phenomenon*, New York, 1993
- [2] Pierre Eiglerși Eric Lavgeard, *Servuction, une approche du marketing des services*, Ed. McGraw-Hill, 1986
- [3] Gabel T.G. – *Market orientation: Theoretical and Methodological Concerns*, Illinois, 1995 SUA
- [4] Jaworski, B.J., Kohli, A.K. (1993). *Market Orientation: Antecedents and Consequences*, Journal of Marketing, Volume 57
- [5] Jaworski, B.J., Kohli, A.K. (1996). *Market orientation: Review, refinement, and roadmap*. Journal of Market-Focused Management, Volume 1
- [6] Jaworski, B.J., Kohli, A.K., Sahay, A. (2000). *Market-driven versus driving markets*. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, Volume: 28
- [7] Kohli, A.K., Jaworski, B.J. (1990). *Market Orientation: The Construct, Research proposition, and Managerial Implications*. *Journal of Marketing*, Volume: 54
- [8] Kohli, A.K, Jaworski, B.J., Kumar A. (1993). *MARKOR: A Measure of Market Orientation*. Journal of Marketing Research. Volume: XXX
- [9] Pandelică Amalia, Pandelică Ionuț, Dumitru Ionel. (2009), *What is market orientation and how did it evolve during the time? What do empirical findings show;* Business Review, Cambridge, Volume 13, nr.1
- [10] Michael Porter, *L'avantage concurrentiel*, InterEditions, Paris, 1986
- [11] William D. Perreault, Jr. E. Jerome McCarthy, *Basic Marketing – A Global anagerial Approach*, Irwin McGraw-Hill, New York, SUA, 1996
- [12] Magiel Venema – *An introduction to the tourism system, Education for tourism*, 2009, Olanda
- [13] Robert A. Woods, *Quality Leadership and Management in the Hospitality Industry*, Edit. American Hotel & Motel Association, East Lansing, Michigan, 1996