

Conceptual Analysis of Quality through Word Association Test

Emrah Keskin *, Emrah Örgün **, Aysen Akbas Tuna***
and Muharrem Tuna****

It is vitally important for the continuity of business that producing the quality products for creating customer satisfaction by the executive chefs who still work in tourism sector. This study was carried out to reveal the cognitive state of executive chefs working at four and five star hotels in Cappadocia region (city and towns in Nevşehir) and about notion of quality and to determine the misconceptions about the nation. This study, Word Association Test (W.A.T) applied to executive chefs working at four and five star hotels in the region of Cappadocia between January and March in 2015. The participants of this test were interviewed face to face and were informed about W.A.T. In this study, it is evaluated that cognitive state of executive chefs about quality concept.

Field of Research: Management, Word Association Test, Quality, Cappadocia, Executive Chef

JEL Codes: L15, L20 and M10

1. Introduction

Today, the development of the current destinations and occurrence of news destinations direct tourism companies and hotels to a competitive atmosphere (Hyde and Decrop, 2011) and the high quality of the products plays an important role in the selection of destination for tourists (Crick and Spencer, 2011; Dunne et.al, 2011). Used as an alternative growing strategy in economy for years, tourism is also a necessary instrument to have a positive image in international platform (Tosun and Jenkins, 1996). The importance of the quality in tourism companies is related with the service offered and increasing the quality contributes to the development the touristic businesses. Therefore, as in all companies in tourism sector, the high quality products offered in food and drink companies make a huge difference in the selection of hotels by domestic and foreign tourists. So as well as satisfying the need of food by the guests, it also makes difference to psychologically satisfy them. As quality is an important element in food and drink production, it seems to be important how the head cooks of four and five-star hotels' kitchens in Cappadocia, where is one of the most touristic centers of Turkey, perceive the concept of quality.

2. Literature Review

Quality is a concept that is used frequently in business world, thought to be known by everyone, but it does not have a definition known by everyone (Pirnar, 2007; Sebastianelli and Tamimi, 2002). Changing according to people's values and perspectives (Kwong, 2008), quality is the capacity to meet the customers' needs and expectations with product and services (Serrat, 2011; Firat and Dirlik, 2007; Boz, 2007; Hoogervorst, 2005; Koçel, 1999; Ingram and Daskalakis, 1999). Defined as improving the processes of the produced goods and services (Ishikawa, 1985), the concept of quality requires ordering and systematically controlling all organizational functions in the process (Papassavas et.al,

* Emrah Keskin, Nevsehir Hacı Bektas Veli Universitesi, Turkey, E-mail: ekeskin@nevsehir.edu.tr

** Emrah Orgun, Nevsehir Hacı Bektas Veli Universitesi, Turkey, E-mail: emrahorgun@nevsehir.edu.tr

***Dr.Aysen Akbas Tuna, Gazi Universitesi, Turkey, E-mail: aakbastuna@gazi.edu.tr

****Dr.Muharrem Tuna, Gazi Universitesi, Turkey, E-mail: muharrem@gazi.edu.tr

2015). The success of the companies in global markets and their productivity through permanency depend on their perception of the concepts of innovation and quality (Irani et.al, 2004). One of the main elements that play role in the increasing interest in the concept of quality is the change in consumers' expectations. As the consumers begin to be conscious and with the developments in technology, there is a change in the perception of quality (Lewis, 1989). Quality is analyzed in eight topics, namely reliability, appropriateness, performance (functionality), aesthetic, durability, specialty, capacity for service and the perception of quality (Tütüncü, 2009; Pirnar, 2007; Duffin, 1995). These topics are seen as the main elements of the quality and the products that have these features are considered as of good quality.

3. The Aim of the Research

Today, it is an undeniable fact that the quality is a very important factor in food and drink departments of the hotels. In their study, Clark and Wood survey the factors that affect consumers' selection for restaurants and the results show that the most important factor that affects consumers' selection is the quality of food with 95% (Clark and Wood, 1998). Choosing low quality products in food and drink production units makes a negative effect for companies' image and profitability. Therefore, it is considered an important subject to define how the concept of quality is perceived by the employees in food and drink sector and what the conceptual mistakes are. The abstractness of the concepts like quality leads to a negative effect on building a cognitive structure (Knipples et.al, 2005; Krawczyk, 2007). The difficulty to build a cognitive structure results from people's incapability to interrelate the conceptual structures of the subject. It is possible to explain these structures only by disclosing people's views about the key concepts (Gilbert et.al., 1998). For this reason, Word Association Test (WAT) is applied in this study to find how the managers in the kitchen departments of four and five-star hotels in Cappadocia region (the city of Nevşehir and its districts) think about the key concept of quality and it is thus analyzed how the head chiefs express the concept of quality. WAT is one of the assessment and evaluation techniques which allow observation of the cognitive structure, the connection between the concepts that constitute this structure and the information net that is built in mind and it contributes to determine whether the concepts in mind are adequate and meaningful (Özatlı and Bahar, 2010). Used in many researches in the field of physical sciences to collect data (Bahar and Özatlı, 2003; Kostova and Radoynovska, 2010; Torkar and Bajd, 2006), this technique is used today in many disciplines in social sciences, particularly in psychology (Bahar and Kılıç, 2001; Aydın and Taşar, 2010; Çiftçi, 2009; Işıklı et.al. 2011, Keskin and Örgün, 2015).

This study aims a better perception of the concept of quality and a conceptual analysis by determining the conceptual structure that the head cooks in the kitchen departments have about "quality" via the use of WAT and how they construct the concept of quality in their mind.

4. The Method of the Research

The design of this study is the descriptive scanning model. Scanning models are the research models that aim to depict a case as it is today and in the past. (Karasar, 2008). Therefore, WAT is applied in this research as a qualitative research method, as it provides a better understanding about the opinions and perceptions (Şimşek, 2013). WAT is preferred as this method has not been used in previous researches to determine the quality perception. WAT is preferred in the research, because it is effective to find the

attendants' perception about the concept. WAT consists of two parts. In the first part of WAT, the attendants are asked to write the words that express the concept and they use the concept in a sentence in the second part. This second part is used to understand if the attendants really grasp the concept.

4.1. Population and Sample of the Research

The study is applied in Cappadocia Region mainly because this region has an important touristic potential in Turkey and is frequently visited by domestic and foreign tourists. It is considered important for the destination to determine the perception of quality by the service employees in the region's tourism companies and to make suggestions ready for application. Therefore, this region is preferred as the research population. The research population consists of the head cooks from the kitchen departments of the four and five-star hotels in Cappadocia. According to the data of Nevşehir Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism (2014), there are 7 five-star hotels and 14 four-star hotels in Cappadocia. As the whole population is accessible, it is aimed in the study to reach all the population and make a complete inventory. However during the interviews, it is found out that one of the head cooks works in two hotels and one has left his job, so the research is completed after the interviews with 20 head cooks.

4.2. Data Collection Tool

In this study, WAT was used as a data collection tool. The data that was obtained via WAT was first made ready for the analysis and after this process was completed the frequencies of the data were calculated. In the application, the "concept of quality" was listed one under the other for 10 times. It was listed one under the other for 10 times in order to prevent the risk of successive answer. It was because of the fact that the attendants might write the words that were reminded by the concept they wrote before instead of the key concept and it could prevent the test to achieve its goal (Polat: 2013, p.104). In the research, the attendants were informed about WAT before the application, then they were asked to write in 30 seconds the related concepts that they associated with the key concept. The time was controlled by the applicators with the help of a timer. The 30-second period was accepted as an appropriate timeframe as it had been defined as the most appropriate in the previous academic studies (Kempa and Nicholls, 1983; Bahar et.al, 1999; Bahar and Özatlı, 2003; Özatlı; 2006; Yalvaç; 2008; Polat; 2013; Keskin and Örgün, 2015). The attendants wrote down the key concepts that they thought related to the concept of quality. Moreover, as the parts of the associated sentence were more complex and high level (whether the sentence was scientific or not and it involved conceptual mistakes) compared to the one-word answer and as it played an important role in the evaluation process (Ercan and et.al, 2010, quoted in Şimşek, 2013; p.68), 20 seconds of additional time was given to the attendants.

There is a sample page setup below:

GENDER:.....
Term of Employment in Profession:.....
Quality
Quality
Quality
Quality
Quality

- Quality
- Quality
- Quality
- Quality
- Quality
- A Sentence about Quality

4.3. The Analysis of the Data

Before the analysis of the data, the answer sheets of the head cooks from the kitchen departments of four and five-star hotels in Cappadocia Region were numbered from 1 to 20. Afterwards, the answered words for the concept of quality in order to evaluate WAT results are alphabetized and word tables that show the number of the repetition of the words were made.

In the tables, the key words that were given by the head cooks for the concept of quality were listed. According to the data obtained from the tables, the words given and most repeated by the head cooks from the kitchen departments of four and five-star hotels in Cappadocia region to express the concept of quality were analyzed and a map of concepts was created.

5. The Findings

Table 1: The Words that the Attendant Head Cooks Associate with the Concept of Quality and Frequency of their Repetition

| | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| A la carte (1) Love(1) Commitment(2) Success(1) Liking(1) Expectation (5) Document(1) Knowledge(3) Consciousness (1) Recognition(1) Accumulation(1) Budget(1) Integrity(3) Hard work(1) Diversity (6) Change(2) Supervision(2) Permanence (5) Discipline(1) Honesty(1) Thinking(2) Order (5) Education (5) Labor(1) Empathy(1) | Esthetics(1) Philosophy(1) Pricing(2) Income(1) Visuality(1) Appearance(1) Power(1) Good Humour(3) Assurance(1) Raw Material(1) Everything(1) Hygiene(3) Addressing(1) Service (7) Interest(2) Image(2) Stability(1) Improvement(2) Welcome(1) Taste(2) Cost (5) Material(2) Brand (6) Satisfaction (6) Menu(2) | Vocational Education(3) Motivation(1) Perfectness(1) Customer(3) Non-compromise(2) Importance(1) Devotion(3) Expensiveness (6) Staff(4) Planning(1) Professionalism (5) Competition(2) Risk(1) Loyalty(1) Strength(1) Ownage(1) Capital(1) Certificate(1) Infinity(1) Result(1) Standardization (6) Presentation(4) Process(3) Teamwork (1) Demand(2) | Experience(1) Technology(1) Cleanliness(1) Preference(2) Cheapness(1) Mastership(2) Appropriateness(2) Expertness(1) Price(1) Product(8) Productivity (3) Life Style(2) Innovation(1) |
| The Number of the Words that are Thought to be Associated with the Concept of Quality: 88 The Number of Repetition of the Acquired Words: 190 | | | |

Totally 20 head cooks attended in the research. All are men, 3 of them work for 6-10 years, 7 of them work for 11-15 years and 10 of them work for 16 years and more at this

profession. As a result of the study, the words that the attendants associate with the concept of quality are indicated in Table 1. This table is formed in order to determine which words the head cooks associate quality with.

In the second analysis of the study, the dimensions of quality that are put forward by Tütüncü (2009), Pınar (2007) and Duffin (1995) are matched with the words associated with quality by the head chiefs and the word thought to be associated with these dimensions are classified on the basis of dimensions.

Table 2: The Analysis of the Words that the Attendant Head Chiefs Associate with the Concept of Quality on the Basis of the Dimensions

| Reliability | Appropriateness | Performance | Aesthetics | Durability | Specialty | Capacity for Service | Perception of Quality |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|------------|----------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Supervision | Pricing | Success | Menu | Permanence | Order | Service | Liking |
| Assurance | Income | Hard work | Image | Stability | Taste | Professionalism | Expectation |
| Raw Material | Addressing | Education | Presentation | Material | Productiveness | Mastership | Thinking |
| Hygiene | Cost | Labor | Visuality | Durability | | Expertness | Image |
| Material | Material | Welcome | | Infinity | | Integrity | Improvement |
| Loyalty | Expensiveness | Material | | | | Interest | Brand |
| Certificate | Capital | Product | | | | | Preference |
| Standardization | Cheapness | Technology | | | | | Demand |
| Cleanliness | Appropriateness | Innovation | | | | | Satisfaction |
| Product | Price | Motivation | | | | | Perfectness |
| Process | Product | | | | | | Philosophy |
| Risk | | | | | | | Recognition |

The Distribution of the Associated Words on the Basis of the Quality Dimensions

Mostly related to the word of luxury (Kölük and et.al, 2010), the concept of quality is defined as a production system producing a product or service economically and responding to customer services (Çoban, 2004) within the innovations for the demands by customers (Aydın, 2007; Çekirge, 2009; Sharabi and Davidow, 2010). In the view of this definition and the quality dimensions (reliability, appropriateness, performance, esthetics, durability, specialty, capacity for service and the perception of quality) expressed by Tütüncü (2009), Pınar (2007) and Duffin (1995), the words that the attendant head cooks associate with quality are distributed on the basis of dimensions and the words considered to be associated are given in Table 2.

In the second part of WAT, the sentences written by the head cooks for the concept of quality are examined and categorized according to their meanings. During this categorization, the study of Ercan and et.al (2010) was taken into consideration. According to this table, the related sentences are categorized as the sentences including scientific information, non-scientific sentences, sentences including sciolism and lastly the sentences with conceptual mistakes. While the categories are determined, the definitions

for quality in the literature are taken into consideration and the sample sentences obtained are given in Table 3.

In the last analysis of the study, the sentences expressed by the head cooks are analyzed and classified. As a result of the classification, it is found out that the head cooks can make sentences that include scientific content and can express the fundamental meaning of the quality. While the sentences are categorized, the definitions of the quality in literature and the dimensions related to the concept of quality are taken into consideration.

Table 3: The Sample Sentences that the Attendant Head Cooks Give for the Concept of Quality

| Sentences Including Scientific Information | Sentences including Non-Scientific Information or Sciolism | Sentences with Conceptual Mistakes |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Q-2: It is the moment that the art of Cooking meets with the Customer Satisfaction.</p> <p>Q-3: Quality is the Philosophy of the Business.</p> <p>Q-4: Quality is a Process and the Whole of the Services.</p> <p>Q-8: Quality means Offering Reliable Service that meets Customers' Demands.</p> | <p>Q-7: Quality is a concept that is difficult to reach.</p> | <p>Q-1: Quality is a work to Create a new Product.</p> <p>Q-15: It is the Service given to High Level People.</p> |

With the analysis of the sentences in Table 3, it is seen how the head chiefs define the concept of quality. The head cooks express quality with sentences including the words of philosophy, satisfaction, process and reliability. In the light of these expressions, we can say that the head cooks working in the region have knowledge about the concept.

6. Result and Suggestions

In this study, the aim is to determine the cognitive structure of the head cooks from the kitchen departments of the four and five-star hotels in Cappadocia about the concept of quality via WAT. It is asked the attendants what the concept of quality means and 88 words are obtained as a result of the analysis of their answers. When the words are examined, the words which the head cooks associate with the concept of quality are Service (7), Diversity (6), Brand (6), Satisfaction (6), Expensiveness (6), Standardization (6) and Professionalism (5). When the most frequently repeated words, namely service, diversity, brand, satisfaction, standardization and professionalism, are examined; it can be said that they are closely related to food and drink sector. The quality can be raised within the facts that the food and drink sector is a service sector, it is possible to access to bigger

markets and satisfy the customer through the diversity in the services, it leads to the emergence of the corporate brands and development of the professional service understanding. In the last analysis of the study, the words associated with quality by the head cooks are analyzed and classified. As a result of the classification, it is found out that the head cooks make sentences with scientific content and they can express what the quality fundamentally mean. While the sentences are classified, the meanings of quality in literature and dimensions of the concept are taken into consideration.

As a result of the study, it can be said that the head cooks working in Cappadocia (City of Nevşehir and its districts) have the right information about the concept of quality. According to the statements of the head cooks, quality is a result of the improvements in the service, buying the requested products (raw materials), employing the qualified staff in the kitchen and supplying the products (raw material) on time. In addition, the demands by the owners of the businesses from the head cooks (low cost, working with a team with low salaries, open buffets, long working hours, high profit, use of cheap products) may eliminate the quality. Therefore, it can be easier to offer high quality products and service if other studies on local basis for high quality products and services are carried out for the business owners and their perception of quality is determined.

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