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QUALITY OF HOTEL SERVICES AS A FACTOR DETERMINING THE TRUST OF CUSTOMERS – CONSUMER RESEARCH

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Abstract. The aim of the study was to investigate the respondents' opinion about the quality of hotel services as a factor affecting the trust of customers occupying accommodation facilities in the ęłaskie voivodeship. The study was conducted in late May and June 2013 among 100 respondents. In order to establish a statistically significant correlation between the answers and the factors differentiating Chi² test was used using Statistica software v.10.0. The strength of the correlation between responses and factors differentiating the study group established by the designation factor V Cramer. The analysis found that the preferences and behavior of guests occupying accommodations in ęłask are not dependent on gender, age, education or place of (permanent/temporary) residence of respondents. Hotel guests occupying accommodations in ęłask are characterized by high awareness on the categorization of hotels, which is based on frequent use of hotel services for tourism, mainly accommodation of individual or group trips. The main determinants of accommodation choices facilities in ęłask by hotel guests proved to be the location of the property, the price, the comfort of its rooms and the quality of services offered, including the quality of the work of the staff and the quality of additional services.

Keywords: hotel services, quality of service, customer trust

INTRODUCTION

One of the oldest industries, hospitality offers a broad range of services which include addressing the customer's key needs, primarily such as accommodation,

catering, rest and leisure, healthcare and protection of property (Cieřlik et al., 2013). In the era of increasing price and quality competition in the hospitality market, a comprehensive service portfolio is of major importance. It enables gaining a competitive edge, and provides the hotel establishment with the ability to address their customers' needs better than their competitors (Cieřlik et al., 2011a). When considering the competitiveness of service companies and the customer's assessment of their activities, service quality plays a major role (Oęarek, 2004). While the relevant literature provides multiple definitions of quality, modern science still struggles to standardize this concept. Usually, quality is defined as: meeting the customer's demands (Zalewski and Maleszka, 1995); the extent to which the product's class has the potential to satisfy the consumers (Borecki and Urbaniak, 1996); foreseeable level of homogeneity and reliability of a product that matches the market needs at the lowest possible cost (Borecki and Urbaniak, 1996); compliance with the requirements (Kraszewski, 2001); the extent to which a set of inherent properties meets the requirements (PN-ISO 9000:2000). In view of the above definitions, the quality of any good or service should be perceived as the relationship between its properties and customer needs (Iwaszkiewicz, 1999). Tourist, as buyers of tourist services (including hospitality services), pay increasingly more attention to the values that drive service quality, to customer service standards and to the staff's skills and behavior.

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Also, they pose requirements which, if addressed, have a major influence on the choice of the hotel by potential guests. Modern customer service is a highly complex, multidimensional concept because the staff's behavior is perceived differently depending on the customers' needs and expectations (Urban, 2004). Note also that customer satisfaction should always be the ultimate result (Dominik, 2009).

As the hotels, in addition to their typical activities, specialize in providing multiple services, customer service should be considered as some kind of mission of the hotel establishment. Satisfied customers are the key to the company's success and the determinant of a lasting success for the organization, which also translates into customer loyalty (Cieślík et al., 2014a).

The purpose of this paper was to seek the views of respondents on the quality of hospitality services as a determinant of trust of hotel guests staying in rooms offered by accommodation facilities in the Śląskie voivodeship.

MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY

The analysis was based on primary survey data collected with a proprietary single-choice and multiple-choice questionnaire. The survey was conducted in May/June 2013 among 100 hotel guests staying in rooms offered by accommodation facilities in the Śląskie voivodeship.

The test group was composed of women (74%) and men (26%), mostly young people aged between 18 and 25 (56%) (Fig. 1), with a secondary education (60%) (Fig. 2), living in large cities with a population above 100,000 (52%) (Fig. 3).

To identify statistically significant relationships between the answers and the group's differentiating factors, the χ^2 test was performed at $p \leq 0.1$ with the use of Statistica v. 10.0. In turn, to identify the correlation between the answers and the group's differentiating factors, Cramér's V was calculated as follows:

$$V = \sqrt{\frac{X^2}{n(m-1)}}$$

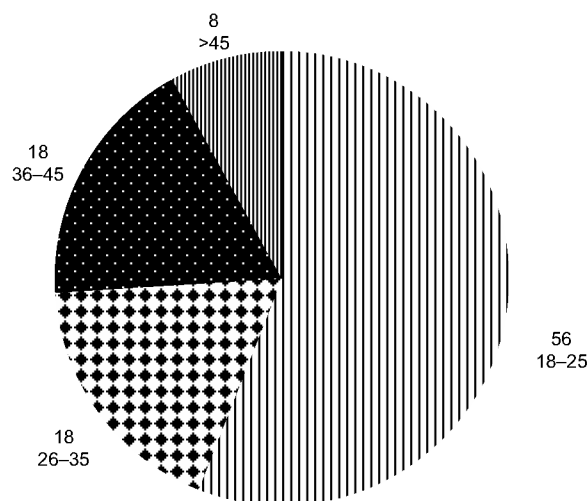


Fig. 1. The age distribution of respondents
Source: own elaboration.

Rys. 1. Rozkład wieku respondentów
Źródło: opracowanie własne.

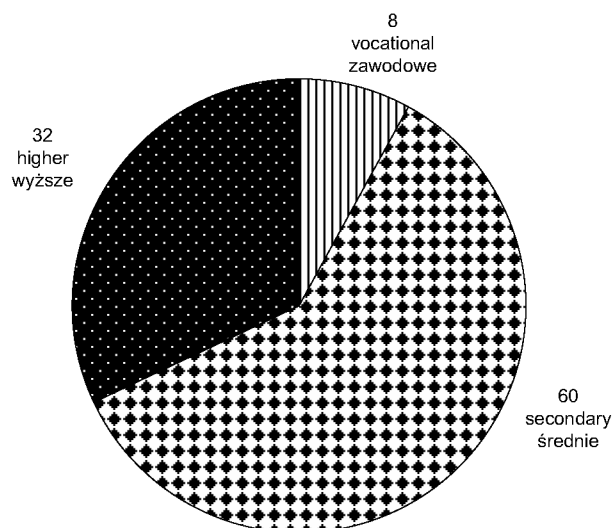


Fig. 2. Distribution of respondents' level of education
Source: own elaboration.

Rys. 2. Rozkład poziomu wykształcenia wśród respondentów
Źródło: opracowanie własne.

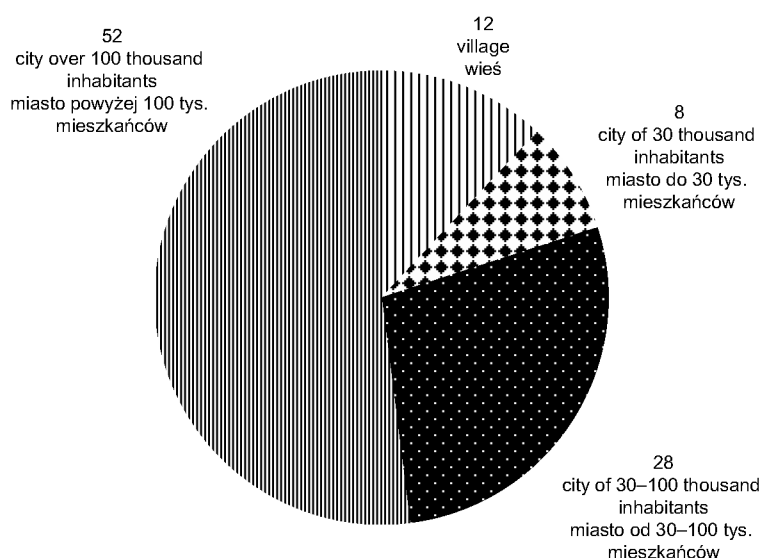


Fig. 3. Distribution of respondents' residence

Source: own elaboration.

Rys. 3. Rozkład miejsca zamieszkania respondentów

Źródło: opracowanie własne.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis, it was concluded that the vast majority (97%) of hotel guests who used accommodation services in the Śląskie voivodeship were aware of the hotel's classification principles and were able to explain the hotel star ratings used in the classification process. Such a high awareness of hotel ratings among the respondents can be ascribed to a frequent use of hospitality services. More than a half (52%) of the group considered use hospitality services at least once a year; 33% of them visit hotels 2–5 times a year; 10% of them stay at a hotel 6–10 times a year. Only 2% and 3% of the respondents stayed overnight in a hotel more frequently, i.e. once a week and once a month, respectively. The source of information on hospitality facilities also affects the choice of a hotel. The largest part of the interviewees (45%) found Internet to be the most popular and most reliable source of information on hotels. This comes as a confirmation for the results of the author's previous own studies (Cieślík et al., 2013). A slightly smaller part of interviewees claimed to have relied on the opinion of their friends (35%) or tourist offices (15%) when choosing a place to stay overnight.

When choosing a hotel, the rating (standard) was of importance only to 14% of the interviewers. Others were guided mainly by the price of the room or by the location of the facility (Fig. 4). According to further results of this study, the room price was the basis for choosing a hotel, especially as regards standard rooms, preferred by most (84%) of the respondents. Superior rooms and apartments were indicated, respectively, by 15% and 3% of the interviewees. Price preferences are also reflected in the answers. Note that the room price affected the number of individual trips (51%) and tours (40%) planned by the respondents. According to the respondents, the price room was also determinant for the duration of their stay in a hotel which usually is "2–3 days" (34%) or "from 4 to 7 days" (39%). Barely 12% of respondents declared to stay in a hotel for "more than 1 week" while 15% of them stayed overnight in a hotel just for "1 day." The results are consistent with those obtained by other authors, including Kłossowska (2010), who conclude that price room is the key criterion for an average Pole when choosing an accommodation facility.

Also, a vast majority of the respondents (78%) specified tourism as the motive for their trip and, thus, as the reason for staying at an accommodation facility. Barely

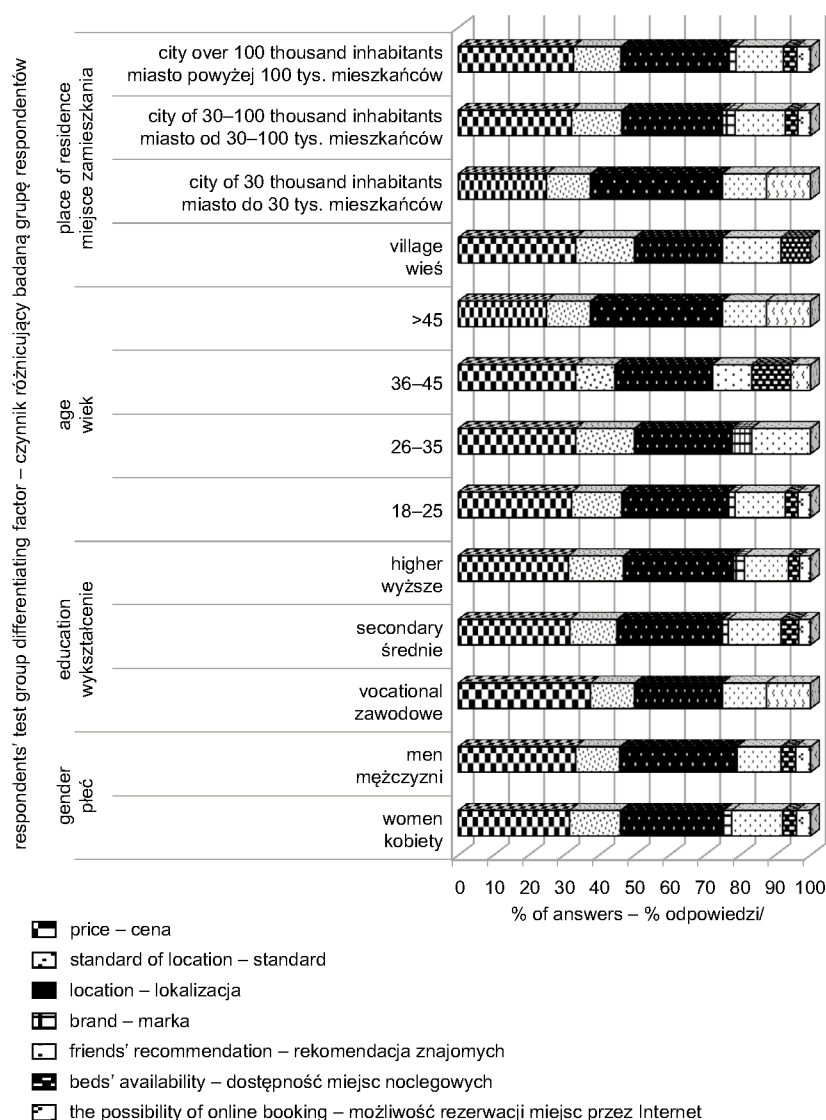


Fig. 4. Criteria for selecting specified accommodation facilities by the respondents, by differentiating study groups' factors (%)

Source: own elaboration.

Rys. 4. Kryteria wyboru określonego obiektu noclegowego przez respondentów wg czynników różnicujących badaną grupę (%)

Źródło: opracowanie własne.

17% of the respondents declared to have used accommodation services due to business trips while only 2% of the interviewees were visiting their family or friends. Another confirmation of these findings is the respondents' specification of the type of services used when staying in accommodation facilities. As many as 95% of

the interviewees use only the accommodation services while barely 1% of the interviewees decide to organize parties and family reunions in such facilities. A group of 4% rents conference rooms. Therefore, these figures poorly coincide with previous results of the author's own studies (Cieřlik et al., 2010) which concluded that

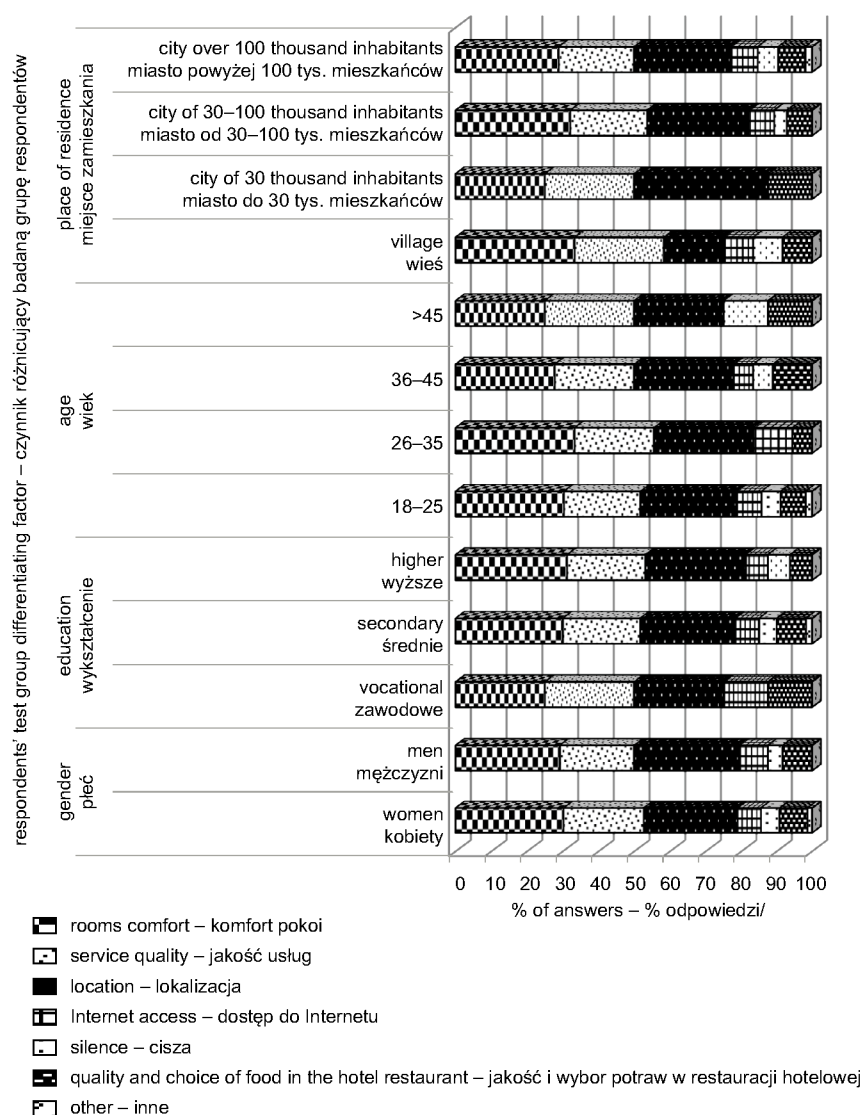


Fig. 5. Factors determining the quality of the chosen accommodation according to the respondents, by differentiating study groups' factors (%)

Source: own elaboration.

Rys. 5. Czynniki determinujące jakość wybranego obiektu noclegowego w opinii respondentów wg czynników różnicujących badaną grupę (%)

Źródło: opracowanie własne.

increasingly more respondents were organizing family celebrations using hotel catering services rather than at home due to financial capacities and larger space.

The respondents identified some determinants of hospitality service quality offered by facilities they chose (Fig. 5). According to this data, hotel guests paid

most attention to the rooms' comfort (30%), the hotel's location (27%) and service quality (22%).

The hotel staff is required to handle a proper customer relationship, and to perform their work in a professional manner and with the appropriate urgency. The vast majority of respondents (Fig. 6) declared the

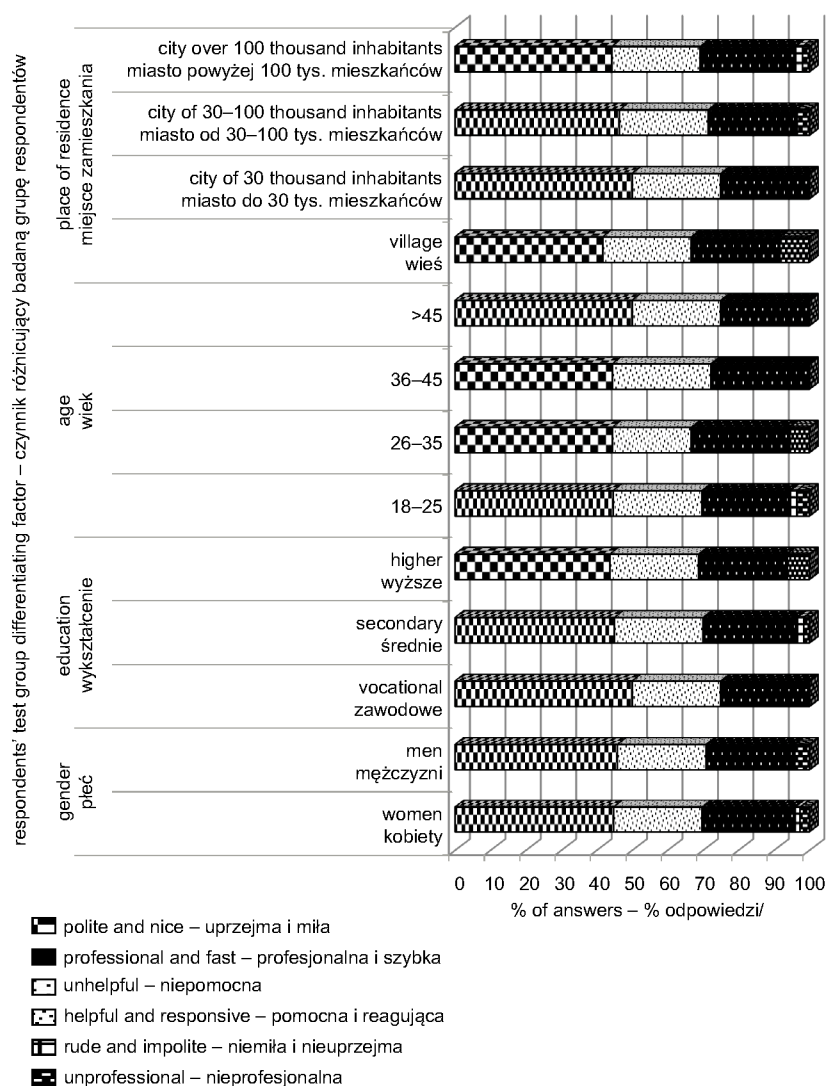


Fig. 6. Distribution of respondents' opinion about the quality of hotel service, by differentiating study groups' factors (%)

Source: own elaboration.

Rys. 6. Rozkład opinii respondentów na temat jakości obsługi hotelowej wg czynników różnicujących badaną grupę (%)

Źródło: opracowanie własne.

following to be a determinant of hotel service quality (in descending order of importance): polite and nice staff; professional and fast staff; helpful and responsive staff. Similar results were obtained by Przybylińska (2011). In her study, 95% of guests staying in Łódź hotels declared to be satisfied with the quality of service they were provided with.

Catering services also affect the way the hotel is perceived by its guests. According to the author's previous own studies (Cieślik et al., 2011a), the customers expect a hotel with a higher star rating to offer high-quality catering services and an appealing range of supplementary services. As a consequence, before choosing a hotel, they check whether it has a restaurant (Cieślik et al.,

2011a). The results of the aforesaid study also support the outcomes of a survey among guests of hotels located in Górny Śląsk (Cieślík, 2014a): 83% of them used the catering services of their hotel. Therefore, these results suggest that particular attention should be paid to the hotel's catering facilities, and best efforts should be used to meet the guests' catering expectations in every aspect.

Note also that most of the respondents (72%) declared to have used supplementary services during their stay in a hotel, including leisure services such as pool (40%), sauna (24%) and fitness facilities (11%), as well as SPA and wellness centers (10%). Moreover, most of the respondents (79%) declared to be satisfied with the quality of supplementary services and believed they were good value for money (85%). Therefore, these results support the outcomes of the author's previous own studies (Cieślík, 2014a) where the ability to use supplementary services offered by the hotel was important to 32% of guests staying in accommodation facilities located in Górny Śląsk. In turn, 54% of the respondents reported the need for hotels that provide supplementary services with a good value for money (80%).

The survey also demonstrates that the largest part of the respondents enjoyed swimming and relaxing in sauna while wellness centers were visited by the smallest group. In Poland, the development of SPA services has only begun. According to research by Lutycki and Sadkowska (2006) and Cieślík et al. (2011b), the number of SPA facilities grows consistently at a yearly rate of 50%-70% approximately. However, in the literature (Kozłowski and Michalak, 2012) data may be found that demonstrates the guests show little interest in supplementary services offered by the hotel. The subject of the above study was a hotel in the Warmińsko-mazurskie voivodeship, a region that offers multiple forms of adventure tourism in Poland. For the enthusiasts, Internet is the main source of information on the availability and locations of adventure tourism sites. Trekking, tramp-ing, caving, paintball, windsurfing, bungee jumping and rafting (Cieślík et al., 2014b) are the most popular forms of adventure tourism.

In summary, the group of 96% of guests who enjoyed their stay in a hotel clearly shows the respondents' overall satisfaction with the quality of services offered by the chosen accommodation facilities. These results are consistent with those obtained in a study by Przybylińska (2011). Accordingly, most of the respondents rated their stay in a hotel as "nice" or even "very nice."

As shown by the statistical analysis of answers to specific survey questions, no significant relationships exist between the distribution of answers and the differentiating factors of the test group, i.e. gender, age, education and place of residence (at $p \leq 0.1$). The calculated values of Cramér's V ($V < 0.3$) also demonstrate a loose relation between the distribution of answers and the respondent group's differentiating factors.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Based on the analysis, it was concluded that the preferences and behavior of hotel guests staying in rooms offered by accommodation facilities in the Śląskie voivodeship were not related to the respondents' gender, age, education or (permanent/temporary) place of residence.
2. Hotel guests staying in accommodation facilities in the Śląskie voivodeship are highly aware of the hotel's classification principles. This is because they frequently use hospitality services (mainly including accommodation) for tourism purposes, whether as a part of individual trips or tours.
3. When choosing an accommodation facility in the Śląskie voivodeship, the key determinants were the location, price, room comfort and quality of services offered, including staff quality and supplementary service quality.

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JAKOŚĆ USŁUG HOTELARSKICH JAKO CZYNNIK WARUNKUJĄCY ZAUFANIE KLIENTÓW – BADANIA KONSUMENCKIE

Streszczenie. Celem badań było poznanie opinii respondentów odnośnie do jakości usług hotelarskich jako czynnika warunkującego zaufanie gości hotelowych, zajmujących obiekty noclegowe na terenie województwa śląskiego. Badanie przeprowadzono na przełomie maja i czerwca 2013 roku wśród 100 respondentów. W celu stwierdzenia statystycznie istotnych zależności między udzielonymi odpowiedziami a czynnikami różnicującymi posłużono się testem χ^2 z wykorzystaniem programu Statistica v.10.0. Siłę korelacji między udzielonymi odpowiedziami a czynnikami różnicującymi badaną grupę ustalono przez wyznaczenie współczynnika V Cramera. Na podstawie przeprowadzonej analizy stwierdzono, że preferencje i zachowania gości hotelowych zajmujących obiekty noclegowe na terenie województwa śląskiego nie są zależne od płci, wieku, wykształcenia ani miejsca (stałego/tymczasowego) zamieszkania respondentów. Goście hotelowi zajmujący obiekty noclegowe na terenie województwa śląskiego charakteryzują się wysoką świadomością dotyczącą kategoryzacji hoteli, której podstawą jest częste korzystanie z usług hotelarskich w celach turystycznych, w tym głównie noclegowych, w ramach wyjazdów indywidualnych czy też grupowych. Głównymi determinantami wyboru przez gości hotelowych obiektów noclegowych na terenie województwa śląskiego były lokalizacja obiektu, ale także cena i komfort jego pokoi oraz jakość oferowanych usług, w tym jakość pracy personelu i poziom usług dodatkowych.

Słowa kluczowe: usługi hotelarskie, jakość usług, zaufanie klientów

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