

**A Customer Satisfaction-Based Strategic Planning Method for Tourism Companies: Coping with Different Levels of
Customer Loyalty**

Track: Consumer Behavior

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to develop an instrument for the strategic planning process based on customer satisfaction. To identify the quality dimensions, a Critical Incident instrument was adopted. The result was the creation of 13 macro-dimensions to evaluate tourism services. A competitive position matrix was developed based on the differences between evaluations of the service received and the expectations, in their three levels, ideal, predicted and minimum. The proposed matrix yielded seven competitive positions. Based on those competitive positions, we suggest four sets of loyalty strategies: sales effort, non-interactive communication strategies, benefits and interactive communication strategies.

1. Introduction

Countries can greatly benefit from tourism as a wealth and job generator. The sector depends on cycles, fads and competition. The growth rate of the tourism sector in the world was 6.7% in 2010, which substantiates the recovery tendency started in 2009 (World Tourism Organization, 2011) and surpasses previous estimates. In developing countries, the growth rate was 8% that same year (World Tourism Organization, 2011). Among the main outbound tourism markets in terms of spending abroad, the emerging economies are still stimulating the growth: China (+17%), Russian Federation (+26%), Saudi Arabia (+28%) and Brazil (52%).

This development scenario and the resulting need for companies in the tourism sector to intensify their competitive capacity demands a set of marketing strategies specially designed for the peculiarities this sector assumes. This reality justifies the goal of this study, which is to conceive a method of strategic analysis based on consumer satisfaction. Therefore, the study herein shall propose a method of analysis and development of marketing strategies to increase the rationality and efficiency of the marketing decision making process in the tourism sector. This work's specific goals are to create the quality dimensions that will comprise the strategic method to analyze satisfaction; identify expectations regarding touristic services; measure the evaluation of the service received; and to create a competitive position matrix based on service evaluation. This analysis will result in a set of marketing strategies.

Previous studies have revealed a direct relationship between the way consumers evaluate their perception of services, and the marketing strategies adopted by companies (Ullaga & Chacour, 2001). Consumer satisfaction, known as users' assessment of the discrepancy between what they expected and what they received after the service was rendered (Tse & Wilton, 1988), emerges as a determining element in the construction of the method proposed by this study. A consumer's perception of the quality in specific attributes of a service gives the organization a competitive position in relation to its competition. This perception is the root behind the fact that marketing strategies should be formulated and implemented by service supplier companies in order to improve their competitive position (Ullaga & Chacour, 2001).

We chose to study a developing country, that is, Uruguay, because most of the studies in this area have dealt with developed countries, especially the USA and Western Europe (Sousa & Lengler, 2009). Given the differences between developed and developing economies, it would be unwise to apply previous studies' generalizations to developing country companies (Aulakh, Kotabe, & Teegeen, 2000). This gap in the literature raises the question of whether today's knowledge can be successfully generalized in companies from other countries, especially those in development. South America is a region where few systematic researches about tourism companies have been done.

The next steps of this article will be to present the theoretical reference, the method developed and the results of this work. Finally, it will offer a set of marketing strategies founded upon the previous analysis.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Tourism

The tourism sector relies on cycles, fads and competition. The growth rate of international tourist arrivals was 7% until April of 2010, which substantiates the recovery tendency started in 2009 (World Tourism Organization, 2011). This sector clearly has some peculiarities, which will be presented in this chapter. Firstly, tourism will be defined. Secondly, a synthesis of the main tourism agents will be provided. Finally, concepts of hotels will be presented.

2.1.1. Concept and Definition of Tourism

The conceptualization of tourism has created controversies (J. D. Hunt & Layne, 1991), whose source lies in the several fields that study it or in the point of view of the ideological streams that explain it. The controversies regarding the concept of tourism involve the way it is perceived: as merely a service or as something that adds value, or also something harmful to society (Figure 1). One can also understand the different meanings of the term based on the area of knowledge that explains them or in the viewpoints of different ideological streams.

Figure 1
Viewpoints of Tourism

CONTROVERSY	POINT OF VIEW OF:	DEFINITION OF TOURISM
Industry vs. Service	Economy	It is a service.
	Geography	Going from one point to another over the surface of the Earth.
	Law	Exercising one's individual right to freedom of transit.
	Sociology	A chance to satisfy the needs people usually overlook, when they are immersed in work.
Gathering of People from Different Cultures vs. Exploiting People	Humanistic Theories	Tourism is facilitates the gathering of and communication among peoples, by this means strengthening international peace.
	Alienation Theories	Tourism destroys the environment, contributes to the disappearance of usage and practices, favors the spread of prostitution, drugs, etc.

Source: Acerenza (1991).

Other viewpoints have either focused on the etymological study of the word *Tour* or on the concept of idleness. Studies related to the word *Tour* indicate that it has an English origin, having first appeared in 1670, probably as a Gallicism deriving from the French word *tour*, which means a round trip, back to the starting point (Fúster, 1991). Nevertheless, Houlot (1961) indicates that the term has a Hebrew origin, since it is used in the Bible (chapter XII, verse 17), where it seems the ancient Hebrew version of *tour* or *tur* meant going on a reconnaissance or exploring journey, which implies a return to the starting point, therefore being similar to the English connotation. Idleness can be described as something temporal and regarded as a period of time that is not used to make one's living, that is, the available time left after the requirements of work, nourishment and housework have been met. Travis (1983) points out that tourism can be regarded as idle time, when the trip does not qualify as the well-known business tourism.

Besides those viewpoints, it is important to ask what tourism means to consumers. For them, it is essentially an activity related to pleasure, resting, cultural growth and leisure (Burkhart & Medlik, 1975). As noted, tourism is a particular form of employing free time, but it does not involve all the possible uses of said time or recreation, because both concepts are broader. Free time is "a period individuals can dispose of when they are not engaged into unavoidable needs and professional, familial or social duties (UNESCO, 1958).

The form man employs his time can be classified the following way (Acerenza, 1991):

- a. natural or biological life time;
- b. working time;
- c. familial and social duties time;
- d. free time.

Man's free time can be divided into three categories:

- a. end of work day;
- b. weekend;
- c. vacation.

Tourism can be practiced in the second and third categories, for at the end of the work day it is difficult to move around due to lack of time. Some of the more common definitions of tourism can be found in Figure 2.

Figure 2
Definitions of Tourism

AUTHOR	DEFINITION
Glucksmann (mentioned by Gomez, 1988)	The sum of the relationships among people who come across each other in a certain place, and between them and locals
Krapf and Hunziker (mentioned by Gomez, 1988)	A set of relations and phenomena produced by people's moving around and their stay away from home, provided the reasons for such moving are not directly related to a profitable activity.

Cardenas (1986)	Tourism consists of the moving around during free time, which generates socio-economic, political, cultural and legal phenomena; in agreement with a set of activities, goods and service that propose, develop, operate and provide society with health, rest, family, business, sports and culture facets, for consumption purposes, in places away from home, as recreation.
Fuster (1987)	Tourism comprises an increasing group of tourists, and the phenomena and relations that such mass produces as a result of their trips.
For economic purposes (Fernandez Fuster, 1978)	... the concept that comprises all processes, especially economic ones, which can be perceived in tourists' profusion, stay in and return to a certain city, country or state.
Naciones Unidas (1971)	... it is impossible to create a formal concept for the "tourism sector", but it is possible to broadly describe it as a set of industrial and commercial activities that produce goods and services that are totally or partially consumed by foreign visitors or national tourists.
For legal purposes (Gonzalez, 1978)	A set of relations and phenomena that originate from the legal act or fact performed by an individual in order to plan or go on a trip and obtain the right to stay in a place different from that of one's residence.

Source: Adapted by the authors.

These definitions are marked by a diversity of opinions. For this study, the definition adopted was the United Nations' (Naciones Unidas, 1971), because it includes national as well as international tourists.

2.1.1 Main Tourism Agents

The tourism sector comprises a variety of agents. Figure 3 shows the main private agents in this sector.

Figure 3
Private Agents in Tourism

AGENT	ACTIVITIES
Operators	They hire transportation, accommodation and other services to form a package tour that will be directly or indirectly sold to consumers.
Travel Agencies	They act as intermediaries between end customer and operators. Their main service consists of providing an adequate trip and accommodation, as well as offering information and advice about these services. They can handle car rental, insurance and travelers' checks.
Transportation	Transport companies (air, highway, fluvial and railroad) handle regular trips or charters services.
Accommodation	They offer accommodation to tourists, and can be classified like this: Establishments: hotels, apart-hotels, houses, apartments and motels, boarding houses, inns and guest-houses. Campgrounds Apartments and second dwelling units Youth hostels

Source: Valls (1992).

2.1.3. The Hotel

Hotel is the business of receiving and lodging tourists or travelers, offering partial or complete services depending on offer capacity, needs or demand requirements (Andrade, 1998). The hotel should be analyzed according to the complexity of its physical, human or economic structure (Greene, 1998). The physical structure comprises the building, areas allotted to guests' leisure and walking around, furniture, pantry, kitchen, restaurant, management, reception desk,

rooms, parking garage, private areas, employees quarters and other services dedicated to guests (foreign exchange office, beauty parlor, etc.). The human structure is what makes the physical structure work, and is part of the human group formed by management, reception desk and the direct or indirect services rendered to guests.

The economic structure consists of two dimensions. The first involves supplying the needs or contracting the products necessary for its operation. The second relates to the physical location, and is decisive to qualify its resources as well as to attract customers, as a means to obtain the necessary profitability.

2.2. Consumer Satisfaction

Consumer satisfaction is a philosophy and an objective in modern marketing, where the consumer is proclaimed king. Kotler *et al.* (2009) state that according to the social concept of marketing, it is the organization's job to identify the needs, desires and interests of the target market and meet the demands more effectively and efficiently than the competition, so it can maintain or improve customers and society's well-being.

2.2.1. Concepts of Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction

According to Cronin *et al.* (2000), customer satisfaction has attracted a lot of attention in the literature dedicated to this area due to its potential influence over the behavior of consumers and their retention. Consumer Satisfaction (CS) has been defined in several forms, from cognitive or affective approaches (Oliver, 1997) to others that indicate the specific or accumulative character of the transaction (Hoest & Knie-Andersen, 2004). Howard and Sheth (1969) define it as buyers' cognitive state of being served adequately or inadequately after they have worked for it. Oliver (1981) argues that CS can be better understood as an assessment of the surprise related to the experience of purchasing and/or consuming a product or service, and suggests an integration of the theories related to perceptual judgment and emotional answers. Tse and Wilton (1988) define CS as the consumer's response to the discrepancy between previous expectations (or some other predefined rule) and the current performance of a product (service) after consumption. According to Engel *et al.* (1995), CS is the feeling, after consumption, that the choice made is consistent with the previous expectations related to it. Möwen and Minor (1998, p. 221) define consumer satisfaction as an attitude regarding a product or service after its purchase or use.

According to Hunt (1977), satisfaction is like keeping away from an experience so we can assess it. Someone may have a gratifying experience that generates dissatisfaction, because even being gratifying; it is not like it should be. So, dissatisfaction is not an emotion, but rather the evaluation of an emotion. This definition comprises the concepts of dissatisfaction, evaluation and expectation. The last two concepts will be analyzed later. Now, the study will just handle dissatisfaction: is it the opposite of satisfaction or can it be split into two different concepts?

Howard and Sheth (1969) claim that satisfaction and dissatisfaction are the ends of a scale where there is an intermediate point of neutrality that corresponds to a state which is neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. This way, the term satisfaction will be employed as positive or negative satisfaction.

Satisfaction is affected by three antecedents (Anderson, Fornell, & Lehmann, 1994). They are the perceived quality, the price (perceived value) and expectations. According to Fornell et al. (1996), two elements help evaluate the quality perceived: the customization level of a company's offer and the credibility of this offer in relation to non-existing flaws. The perceived value is the second antecedent of CS (Anderson et al., 1994), and the quality in connection with the price has a direct impact on CS (Fornell, et al., 1996; Voss, Parasuraman, & Grewal, 1998), and when the result is not predictable, the price is used to form performance expectations (Grewal, 1995).

Dubois (1990) defines satisfaction as a psychological state where there is no distance or deviation between expectations and product performance. Consumers develop a feeling of satisfaction or dissatisfaction after consumption (Evrard, 1993).

2.2.2. Measuring Satisfaction

Some authors suggest that evaluating satisfaction be done by means of objective or subjective measurements. Objective measurements can be carried out by monitoring complaints (for a review, refer to Singh, 1998), returns for new purchases, or brand loyalty (Bloemer & Polesz, 1989). Subjective measurements, on the other hand, use measuring scales that deal with the attributes in connection with the product or service consumed (Oliver, 1980, 1981; Tse & Wilton, 1988).

Monitoring complaints and their respective solutions may become a strategy to keep customers (Ettore, 1994) or the key of a quality strategy (Lovell, 1994), although little is known about the response actions taken by organizations (Goodwin & Ross, 1992). According to Morgan and Hunt (1994), solving customers' problems is linked to service reliability, being particularly significant in loyal consumers (Kelley & Davis, 1994), and the results can be improved if the problem-solving process includes an additional benefit (Conton & Murray, 1996). Reliability is an important factor in the development of a relationship strategy (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

According to Evrard (1993), satisfaction can be measured in different forms. In a simple approach, it is regarded as a unidimensional continuum between two opposing poles: satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Cadotte, Woodruff, & Jenkins, 1987; LaBarbera & Mazursky, 1993). This unidimensional feature (bipolar continuum of satisfaction/dissatisfaction) is widely used because of its simplicity. However, it fails for applying only two extremes to evaluate satisfaction, without offering information about the different dimensions of CS, herewith ignoring its complexity.

The authors use Likert scales, comprising evaluation items that are important to consumers, with five or seven points (Churchill & Surprenant, 1982; Oliver, 1980, 1981; Oliver & Swan, 1989). Oliver (1981) claims that this form of measurement has the best internal consistence, alongside the semantic differential scale.

Westbrook (1980) suggests the use of the seven-point D-T scale (Delighted-Terrible), used to evaluate life, by adapting it to the consumer satisfaction study. The author shows that this scale is more valid than the simple “satisfied-not satisfied” bipolar scale. Despite the advantages presented, the author has only tested and used this scale with one single item, which does not necessarily indicate that its performance is higher in multi-item scales.

Swan and Combs (1976) show that not all attributes of a product or service directly affect the concept of satisfaction. Some relate to satisfaction (expressive, affective evaluation) and others relate to dissatisfaction (instrumental, cognitive evaluation), creating a distinction between the two concepts. Maddox (1981) broadens this concept by creating a “two-factor theory”, according to which satisfaction and dissatisfaction are two different concepts, once both are not directly related. He indicates that the levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction are independent, and can be explained by means of the critical incident methodology. But Evrard (1993) reveals that this approach has been abandoned due to the difficulty involved in the measurement.

Evrard (1993) claims that measuring *a posteriori* expectations of consumption strengthens the correlation of the constructs studied, involving some rationalization. Other statements refer to the adaptation of longitudinal studies to the time needed to make a decision, including monitoring the solutions for complaints (Tax, Brown, & Chandrashekar, 1998). Marchetti and Prado (2001) have discussed the scales as well as their advantages and disadvantages.

2.2.3. Model for Satisfaction Formation

Several authors have created a number of theories about the mechanism of forming satisfaction (Bachelet, 1995; Larrea, 1991; Spreng, Mackenzie, & Olshavsky, 1996). This item will only investigate the theory produced by the last three authors, because it has more in common with the goal of this work.

Spreng, Mackenzie and Olshavsky (1996) have developed a model for satisfaction formation that comprises the following elements: overall satisfaction, satisfaction with attributes satisfaction with information, congruence with desires and expectations, desires, expectations and perceived performance.

The definition of the elements is as follows:

- a. Overall satisfaction: it is an affective state in the presence of an emotional reaction regarding a service experience;
- b. Satisfaction with attributes: it is the result of a subjective assessment of the performance perception of service attributes;
- c. Satisfaction with information: it is the result of a subjective evaluation of the information used when choosing a product;
- d. Congruence with expectations: it is the result of a subjective relation between expectations and the perceived performance;
- e. Congruence with desires: it is the result of a subjective relation between desires and the perceived performance.

2.3. Service Quality

The level of quality perceived by a customer regarding a service is determined by the difference between the expected quality before receiving a service and the quality experienced during and after that service is rendered (Grönroos, 2004). When a service does not reach the level of expectation the customer has, there is either a problem in quality or a flaw in rendering the service, for the service consists of an interactive experience that affects the customer in different levels of intensity. Therefore, quality is related to an intangible performance that does not come merely from production factors (Lovelock, 1994; Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2006). Moreover, consumers rate services not only on technical aspects, but also on functional aspects, like, for example, the concern displayed by employees and the trust they inspire (Verruck, Bampi, & Milan, 2009). For the company, being successful in a highly competitive market, where services are similar, quality may be the means to stand out (Hoffman & Bateson, 2002).

Quality is the difference between perceptions regarding the perceived service and customers' expectations regarding that same service (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1994). This definition has three important conceptual aspects:

- a. Quality as an attitude: (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985) claim that service quality is an evaluation similar to an attitude, for consumers voice an appraising opinion about the quality of the service, without considering the service itself.
- b. Quality and satisfaction: satisfaction is an evaluation of a specific transaction, while quality is an overall evaluation, resulting from the sum of specific transactions (Oliver, 1981).

Contrary to that idea, Teas (1993) suggests that satisfaction is a function of the perceived quality.

- c. Objective quality and perceived quality: Holbrook and Confman (1985) state that the definition distinguishes between mechanistic and humanistic quality. The mechanistic quality refers to the actual characteristics of an object, and the humanistic one reflects the subjective reaction individuals have toward objects, and represents a relative phenomenon that stands out according to the people who evaluate it.

Cronin *et al.* (2000) and Cronin and Taylor (1992), authors of the SERVPERF model, argue that:

- a. Customers' perceptions are enough and better than the idea of measuring expectations and perceptions, because introducing reflections and expectations only adds redundancy to the model;
- b. Satisfaction has a meaningful effect on purchase intention and is better than service quality;
- c. Service quality is an antecedent of satisfaction.

The formula for service quality is the following (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1994):

$$PQ = P - E$$

Where:

PQ = Perceived quality
P = Customers' perceptions
E = Customers' expectations

2.4. Market Actions to Obtain Loyalty

According to Hoffman and Bateson (2002), there are several new programs geared toward increasing customer retention and loyalty. Among them: frequency marketing, relationship marketing, post marketing, service warranties and management of turnover. Frequency marketing puts together data compilation, communication, customer recognition and rewards to establish lasting relations. Simply put, it is a way of increasing the number of current customers (Barlow, 1990).

Relationship Marketing highlights the importance of retaining customers as well as focusing on quality (Christopher, Payne, & Ballantyn, 1991). In the relationship market, the customer is seen in a broad picture, where it is taken into account all the groups that take part in the process of delivering a product or service to markets. The focus of post marketing is customer loyalty, using data base techniques, satisfaction measurements, formal communication programs and development of an organizational culture to maintain a relationship after the first purchase (Vavra, 1992). Service warranties reduce the risk perceived by customers, because they help them overcome their concern by providing a higher value (Hart, Schlesinger, & Maher, 1992). Managing the turnover is a systematic process to retain customers, and consists of monitoring the reasons for the turnover and constantly improving the system of rendering services (Rechheld & Sasser, 1990).

While Hoffman and Bateson (2002) systemize the actions to achieve loyalty into axes that organize them around programs, Lehu (1999) enlightens the techniques used to maintain a lasting relationship between the company and its customers. The techniques proposed by the author comprise actions such as sponsorship, newsletter, information letter, customer club, electronic couponing, cross-selling, Internet listing, merchandising, toll-free phone number, gifts, customer service, Internet site and member card.

Therefore, it is possible to say that external marketing tries to bring clients closer to the service supplier company. Interactive marketing, in its turn, focuses on the interaction between customer and service supplier, and can be divided into two types:

Type 1: the one that seeks to turn a potential customer into a real customer.

Type 2: the one that develops alongside the customer. Type 2 interactive marketing is the one that seeks customer loyalty.

3. METHOD

The strategic analysis method of consumer satisfaction adopted in this study consists of four phases (Mello Moyano, 1999). The phases are as follows (Figure 4): identifying quality dimensions, identifying expectations, evaluating the level of service received, and strategic analysis. The strategic analysis will lead to marketing actions designed for tourism companies, a subject that will be the theme of the next section of this work. Each phase of the strategic analysis method will be discussed below.

**Figure 4
Method Phases**

1	Identifying quality dimensions
2	Identifying the expectations of the service that will be provided
3	Trip
4	Evaluating the level of service received
5	Strategic Analysis

3.1. PHASE 1: Identifying Quality Dimensions (before thbe trip)

The instrument used to identify quality dimensions is the Critical Incident (Flanagan, 1954), where respondents are asked to indicate positive and negative examples of previous trips, if any. In case they do not have that experience, they are asked to indicate positive things they expect in connection with the trip and negative things they do not expect to happen.

The phase ends with a selection of micro-dimensions of quality and the construction of scales to be used in the subsequent phases.

3.2. PHASE 2: Identifying Expectations (before the trip)

Second phase interviewees were asked to identify the level of expectations in three categories: desired, predicted and minimum. The identification required 10-point scales, where 10 represents the highest value.

3.3. PHASE 3: Evaluating the level of service received (after the trip)

Second phase interviewees were asked to evaluate the service received after the trip, in the micro-dimensions used in the previous phase.

3.4. PHASE 4: Strategic Analysis

The strategic analysis was developed by applying a seven-category Competitive Position Matrix (Mello Moyano, 1999). After comparing the service received with the expectations (ideal, predicted and minimum) in each of the dimensions previously created, the micro-dimensions were categorized according to three measurements. These measurements are called a) SMM - Service Minimum Measurement; b) SPM - Service Predicted Measurement; c) SIM - Service Ideal Measurement.

Each measurement is calculated by means of the following equations:

The relative levels of perceptions and expectations determine the competitive position of a company from the point of view of service quality.

The SMM reflects the minimum level expected by customers, where a negative result means the company has a “crisis”, and if the result shows evenness, it reflects a “competitive disadvantage”.

The SPM reflects the adequacy of a service to the expectations predicted by consumers, and the results of evenness reflect a position of light competitive advantage.

The SIM indicates service superiority towards the desired level and can have two categories: when positive, “customer loyalty”, and when even, a “competitive advantage”.

The Matrix too considers two transition categories. The first, when SIM and SPM are even, and the second, in case SPM and SMM are even.

3.5. Characterizing the Sample

The sample consisted of 133 tourists who traveled from Uruguay to the Middle East (Egypt, Israel and Turkey), hiring the services of a tour agency. Of the 133 cases surveyed, 27% are male and 73% are female. Regarding their education, 48% have not finished high school, and 52% have college degrees. In relation to interviewees' age, the average is 63.9 years old; 20% ranging from 40 to 59 years old; 80% are 60 or older.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Identifying Quality Dimensions

The quality dimensions were identified through the critical incident instrument (Figure 5). Eighty-nine micro-dimensions were identified in groups of 13 macro-dimensions according to the similarities of respective themes. After an analysis done by three judges, 26 micro-dimensions were selected.

Figure 5
Critical Incident Instrument

Questions asked according to interviewee's experience	
With previous experience	Without previous experience
Give positive examples of previous trips	Say positive things you expect from this trip
Give negative examples of previous trips	Say negative things you do not expect from this trip

Source: Mello Moyano, 1999.

4.2. Strategic Analysis

The strategic analysis was developed based on the tests between the evaluations of the service received and the expectations. After the identifications of similarities and differences among the answers, a Competitive Position Matrix was built, where variables are categorized in seven levels, as per test results. What follows are the analyses carried out.

4.2.1. Expectations VS. Evaluation of Service Received

This chapter will present the results of the tests done to identify possible differences between the evaluation of the service received and the expectations in their three levels: ideal, predicted and minimum. The results can be seen in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Evaluation of service received versus expectations:
summary of averages, differences and t test (n=133)

DIMENSIONS	AVERAGES	DIFFERENCES	t-TEST									
	SERV- RECEIV ED SR	EXPECTATIONS	IDEAL I	PRE- DICT ED P	MINI MUM M	SR vs. I	SR vs. P	SR vs. M	SR vs. I	SR vs. P	SR vs. M	
1. Overall organization		8.2	9.7	9.0	7.6	-1.5	-0.8	0.6	XXX	XX	NS	
2. Compliance with general aspects		8.1	9.8	9.2	8.2	-1.7	-1.1	-0.1	XXX	XXX	NS	
3. Assistance to matters prior to departure		9.2	9.7	9.0	8.1	-0.5	0.1	1.1	NS	NS	XXX	
4. Coordination between the two countries		8.4	9.7	9.0	8.0	-1.4	-0.6	0.4	XXX	NS	NS	
5. Number of days spent in each place		8.2	9.6	8.9	8.3	-1.5	-0.8	-0.2	XXX	XX	NS	
6. Time spent going from one place to another		8.1	9.6	9.0	8.0	-1.5	-0.8	0.1	XXX	XX	NS	

7.	Hotel location	8.6	9.6	9.0	8.0	-0.9	-0.3	0.6	XXX	NS	XX
8.	Hotel service in general	9.0	9.7	9.0	8.2	-0.7	-	0.8	XXX	NS	XXX
9.	Overall quality of hotels	8.9	9.8	9.1	8.2	-0.9	-0.2	0.7	XXX	NS	XXX
10.	Employees' service at hotels	8.8	9.8	9.0	8.3	-1.1	-0.3	0.5	XXX	NS	NS
11.	Attention given to tourists at visited places	9.2	9.6	9.3	8.3	-0.5	-0.1	0.8	XX	NS	XXX
12.	Guide's knowledge of the place visited	8.5	9.9	9.7	8.9	-1.5	-1.2	-0.5	XXX	XXX	NS
13.	Guide's ability to solve problems	8.5	9.8	9.2	8.4	-1.4	-0.8	0.1	XXX	NS	NS
14.	Guide's ability to unite group members	8.4	9.7	9.1	8.4	-1.3	-0.8	-0.1	XXX	NS	NS
15.	Level of friendship within the group	8.3	9.8	8.8	7.8	-1.4	-0.5	0.5	XXX	NS	NS
16.	Compliance with group schedule	9.5	9.7	8.9	7.9	-0.3	0.5	1.5	NS	XX	XXX
17.	Group members' enjoyment	8.7	9.4	8.6	7.8	-0.6	0.1	0.9	XX	NS	XXX
18.	Onboard food	8.6	9.5	8.7	7.9	-0.9	-0.1	0.7	XXX	NS	XXX
19.	Compliance with flight schedules	8.5	9.7	8.8	8.2	-1.2	-0.2	0.4	XXX	NS	NS
20.	Time spent at airports	6.5	9.5	8.5	7.6	-3.0	-1.9	-1.1	XXX	XXX	XX
21.	Quality of lunch and dinner	8.4	9.5	8.8	8.0	-1.1	-0.3	0.4	XXX	NS	NS
22.	Quality of breakfast	9.4	9.5	8.8	8.2	-0.1	0.5	1.2	NS	XX	XXX
23.	Knowledge of foreign customs	9.0	9.7	9.1	8.1	-0.8	-0.1	0.9	XX	NS	XXX
24.	Quality of places visited	9.1	9.6	9.0	8.1	-0.5	0.1	1.0	NS	NS	XXX
25.	Feeling safe	8.9	9.9	9.6	8.9	-1.0	-0.7	0.1	XX	NS	NS
26.	Feeling well	9.2	9.9	9.5	8.8	-0.6	-0.3	0.4	XXX	NS	NS

Source: (Mello Moyano, 1999)

(X) NS: Not significant; XXX significant to the level of 1%; XX significant to the level of 5%

An analysis of Table 1 indicates that of the 26 dimensions of service evaluated by respondents, four do not show significant differences between the service received and the ideal expectations. In 18, the difference is significant to the level of 1%. In the remaining four dimensions, that difference is significant to the level of 5%. In the 22 dimensions where the difference was statistically significant, the ideal expectations surpassed the service received.

With regards to the difference between the service received and the predicted expectations, one can observe that in 18 of the dimensions evaluated there are no differences. Of the eight pairs where there are significant differences, five hit the level of 5%, and another three, the level of 1%. In two of the pairs where the difference is significant, the evaluation of the service received was better than the service predicted.

A comparison between the service received and the minimum expectations consumers had before the trip showed that in 14 of the 26 dimensions evaluated there was no significant difference. In 12 of the remaining dimensions, 10 had significant results, to the level of 1%, and two to the level of 5%. In 11 of the 12 pairs that presented statistically significant differences, the service received was better than the minimum expectation consumers had before the trip.

4.2.2. Competitive Position Matrix

Based on the statements thereupon, it is possible to infer that the evaluation of the service received in relation to the expectations reached the following results, as per the competitive position matrix (Figure 6).

Two dimensions reached an ideal level, with a null Service Ideal Measurement (SIM, perceived service minus ideal expectation), thus indicating a competitive advantage for the service supplier company. Another two dimensions are in a transition phase, for SIM and the Service Predicted Measurement (SPM, perceived service minus predicted expectation) were equal, placing them halfway between a full competitive advantage and a light competitive advantage.

Seven of the evaluated dimensions fall into the condition of light competitive advantage, with a null SPM, for the service received was considered equal to the predicted expectation. Placed in a transition phase, with equal SPM and Service Minimum Measurement (SMM, perceived service minus minimum expectation), we have nine of the dimensions evaluated by consumers, which indicates a condition between light competitive advantage and competitive disadvantage. Five of the dimensions where the SMM is null represent a competitive disadvantage for the company, because the consumer evaluated the perceived service just like the minimum expectations. Finally, one of the dimensions represents a condition of crisis for the service supplier company, because respondents considered it inferior to the minimum expectations, therefore with a negative SMM. This condition includes the time spent at airports, considered long by respondents.

Figure 6
Competitive Position Matrix

EXPEC-TATIONS	SERVICE RECEIVED	SERVICE MEASUREMENTS	POSITION	DIMENSIONS
IDEAL	SUPERIOR TO IDEAL	SIM = POSITIVE SPM = POSITIVE SMM = POSITIVE	CUSTOMER LOYALTY	
	EQUAL TO IDEAL	SIM = NULL SPM = POSITIVE SMM = POSITIVE	COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE	Compliance with group schedules Quality of breakfast
TRANSI-TION	EQUAL TO IDEAL AND PREDICTED	SIM = NULL SPM = NULL SMM = POSITIVE	TRANSITION 1	Attention given to tourists at visited places Assistance to matters prior to departure
PREDIC-TED	EQUAL TO PREDICTED	SIM= NEGATIVE SPM = NULL SMM = POSITIVE	LIGHT COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE	Hotel Service in general Overall quality of hotels Quality of places visited

				Group members' enjoyment
				Onboard food
				Hotel location
				Knowledge of foreign customs
TRANSITION	EQUAL TO PREDICTED AND MINIMUM	SIM= NEGATIVE SPM =NULL SMM =NULL	TRANSITION 2	Coordination between the two countries
				Employees' service at hotels
				Guide's ability to solve problems
				Guide's ability to unite group members
				Level of friendship within the group
				Compliance with flight schedules
				Quality of lunch and dinner
				Feeling safe
				Feeling well
MINIMUM	EQUAL TO MINIMUM	SIM=NEGATIVE SPM =NEGATIVE SMM =NULL	COMPETITIVE DIS-ADVANTAGE	Overall organization
				Compliance with general aspects
				Number of days spent in each place
				Time spent going from one place to another
	INFERIOR TO MINIMUM	SIM= NEGATIVE SPM =NEGATIVE SMM=NEGATIVE	CRISES	Guide's knowledge of the place visited
				Time spent at airports

Source: (Mello Moyano, 1999)

4.3. Competitive Positions and Marketing Strategies

Based on the competitive positions described in the previous section, four sets of loyalty strategies were devised (Figure 7). Each set was attributed to the several competitive positions, according to their particularities and requirements in terms of marketing strategy application. Therefore, attributing loyalty strategies took into consideration how critical each competitive condition was. These strategies were categorized into four groups as follows: Sales, No Interaction Communication, Benefits and Communication With Interaction. Strategies denominated Sales (S) are designed to stimulate repurchase. No Interaction Communication (NIC) strategies are supposed to provide consumers with updated information on the company and its products, this way indirectly stimulating sales. Benefits (B) will reward customers for their lasting relationship with the company. Communication With Interaction (CWI) strategies aim at establishing a direct communication channel with consumers for a correct use of products and services.

Figure 7
Competitive Position Matrix and Loyalty Strategies

EXPEC-TATIONS	Need to Convince	Attitude	Competitive Advantage	Loyalty Strategies			
				B	S	CWI	NIC
IDEAL	Little	positive	Customer Loyalty	X			
			Competitive advantage	X			
TRANSITION			Transition 1	X	X	X	
PREDICTED	More or less	More or less	Light competitive advantage	X	X	X	
TRANSITION	A lot	negative	Transition 2		X	X	X

MINIMUM			Competitive disadvantage		X	X	X

			Crises		X	X	X

Source: Survey carried out by the authors.

The strategies consist of marketing actions (Figure 8), developed according to what was explained in the theoretical review. Sales strategies include the following actions: sponsorship, cross-selling and merchandising. No Interaction Communication: newsletter, Internet listings, consumer magazines, Internet site and push technologies. The Benefits strategy consists of the following actions: customer clubs, electronic couponing, gifts and member cards. Finally, Communication With Interaction involves the following actions: toll-free number, customer service and after-sales service.

The loyalty strategies and the respective marketing actions presented above were distributed among all of the competitive positions described in Figure 6 (Competitive Position Matrix). The strategies were assigned according to the severity of each competitive position.

Figure 8
Marketing Actions according to Loyalty Strategies

Market ing Actions	Loyalty Strategies
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	B	S	CWI	NIC
Sponsorship		x		
Cross-selling		x		
Merchandising		x		
Newsletter				x
Internet listings				x
Consumer magazines				x
Internet sites				x
Push technologies				x

Customer clubs	x			
Electronic couponing	x			
Gifts	x			
Member card	x			
Toll-free number			x	
Customer service			x	
After-sales service			x	

Source: Survey carried out by the authors.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The goal of this work was to propose a method for the development of marketing strategies based on consumer satisfaction toward tourism services. The specific goals were as follows: first, to generate quality dimensions for the instrument to identify consumers' satisfaction toward tourism services; second, to identify expectations regarding a tour trip; third, to measure the evaluation of services received; then, a competitive position matrix was developed based on service

evaluation. Finally, to meet the overall goal of this work, it was necessary to build a set of marketing strategies for four companies, based on the competitive positions previously identified.

The results presented in this study allow to increase the productivity and rationality of the decision making process in marketing. We can underline that the contributions to professionals whose companies work in connection with tourism services are as follows: the first contribution is adding the consumers' perspective to the formation of a marketing strategy. In this method, consumers' perceptions, expectations and evaluations assume a guiding character, and are the source of the marketing strategy proposal.

The second contribution is the use of an experimental project with a "before" measurement that makes it possible to know the expectations prior to the trip. This treatment allows decision-makers to plan a service that will be supplied in a more adequate form and in a way that will meet consumers' requirements.

The third contribution refers to the development of a competitive position matrix as well as the indicators that are used in its formation. This matrix will guide tour managers through the process of selecting marketing strategies, supplying an analysis framework and allowing the improvement of the rationality in the process.

The fourth contribution is the development of a set of strategies and respective marketing actions, assigned to each of the competitive positions of the matrix according to severity.

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