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HQME - Hotel Excellence Measurement and Evaluation Framework

for doctoral (Ph.D) dissertation

THESIS BOOK

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1. Starting points of the research

In recent decades, the concept of quality and, in connection with it, quality management has spread throughout the world and today almost every business and institution strives to comply with quality aspects. In the hotel industry, it is particularly important to address the issue of quality, because it ultimately affects consumer satisfaction and guest and employee loyalty (Dumele et al., 2018).

The increased demand for quality is not only true for simple consumer goods/products, but also applies to services. This is especially characteristic of tourism, and within it the hotel industry, which has undergone enormous development in the last decade. As a result of the growing reputation of the quality-oriented approach, hotels operating in Hungary are increasingly expected to consider self-evaluation as a means of achieving business excellence, and for this it would be important to develop a uniform framework or criteria system that helps hotels in this (Topár, 2009).

Self-assessment helps hotels to:

- identify the organization's strengths and weaknesses,
- identify the most important development areas within the organization,
- determine the direction of further development, even through comparison with other organizations (EFQM, 2005).

1.1. Justification and relevance of the chosen topic

According to Hungarian Tourism Agency (MTÜ) 2024 data, the contribution of tourism to the economy, including indirect effects, is 13% of GDP (Kassay, 2025, Turizmus.com, 2025). The number of jobs in the tourism sector is more than 400 thousand, so 10.0% of jobs are generated by tourism (Turizmus.com, 2024). Furthermore, based on the 2.0 update of the National Tourism Development Strategy 2030, the government wants to achieve a 16% contribution by 2030 (NTS2030, 2021).

My choice of topic was influenced by several factors, one of the most important of which is timeliness and relevance. Hungarian tourism, and within it the hotel industry, has undergone significant development in recent years and decades, as there has been an increase in both the supply and demand sides in terms of the most important indicators of tourist accommodation. Based on the expansion of the capacity of commercial accommodation, including hotels, or the increase in the number of guest nights spent there, it can be stated that tourism in our country

sets records almost every year. The number of operating units (tourist accommodation, including the number of commercial accommodation and hotels), the number of rooms and beds available in them, as well as the number of domestic and foreign guests and the guest nights spent by them, have increased. In 2024, more than 22 million guest nights were registered (Trendriport, 2025).

In addition, in our country, all of the national hotel performances show an increase compared to the previous year. Room occupancy increased by 2.4 percentage points, as did the revenue per available room (REVPAR). The total revenue of hotels also increased, approaching HUF 800 billion in 2024. Proof of the topicality of the chosen topic is also that capacity development did not stop in 2025. More than 40 hotels have opened their doors in recent years (up to and including September 2025). The investments are also supported by the Kisfaludy Accommodation Development Program, which aims to strengthen the offer of the regions in hotels by renovating 30,000 rooms by 2030 (Babik, 2019).

International trends are also having an impact on the Hungarian hotel market, so current areas from the perspective of examining hotel quality management include, among others: the issue of rising operating costs from an economic perspective, changes in guest satisfaction and experience quality, the issue of labor and competency shortages, the advancement of digitalization solutions, new research and strategic directions in quality management (e.g. data-driven analysis), and the rise of sustainability and green initiatives.

In addition to all this, I also have a personal connection to the topic, as I worked in the hotel industry for nearly five years, so I feel it is my personal mission to support the joint development of quality and quality service provision.

2. Significance and objectives of the research

The significance of my research lies in expanding the quality management approach with human factors and in proving the applicability of the EFQM model to hotels. In the framework of the dissertation, the further aim of my research is to develop a practical tool that can help Hungarian hotel managers understand the quality-oriented approach and its conscious, company-level application. I also set the goal of developing a unified evaluation criteria system for the framework, which measures the excellence of hotels, enables the definition of areas for development and is able to evaluate the same attributes and performance criteria regardless of the size and classification of the hotels. The further aim of my research is for hotel managers to take into account, recognize and understand that much more energy should be spent on human resource management, thereby helping, encouraging and appreciating employees, who will thus also be able to provide high-quality work and, incidentally, will also feel good at the given company.

To develop my own framework, I took the EFQM model as a basis and adapted it to the hotel industry, specializing in it. Following this line of thought, I created an evaluation criteria system, with the help of which I conducted measurements in 3-, 4- and 5-star Hungarian Hotels and Restaurants Association (MSZÉSZ) member hotels.

I defined the framework of my research according to three main aspects:

a) Hotels with a 3-star category and above have a level of management that makes them suitable for examining the operation of the aforementioned framework, and the resulting interventions can have a meaningful impact on them.
b) I examined MSZÉSZ member hotels, as the goals of the Hungarian Hotels and Restaurants Association include “raising the operating standard, improving the quality of services, and the international competitiveness of our tourism.” In addition, MSZÉSZ represented Hungary as one of the countries that founded the Hotelstars rating system in 2009. (MSZÉSZ, 2025).
c) In my previous research, I only examined hotels in Zala County, so due to the relatively small sample size, I was limited in my measurements. For this reason, I wanted to extend the research to hotels operating in other regions of the country.

Research questions:

1. Can a unified "Hotel Excellence" concept and its content elements be defined based on the literature and standards, recommendations, models, and guidelines related to the topic?

During my research, I wanted to explore the common areas based on the literature and relevant standards, manuals, and models that can be used to describe the quality factors of hotels, as well as to determine the definition of hotel excellence.

2. Can a framework be created to measure hotel quality excellence by placing recommendations and guidelines for hotel quality management into an appropriate framework?

Using the EFQM model as a framework and specializing in hotels, I wanted to create a unique framework that could measure hotel excellence. To do this, I developed criteria, sub-criteria and information points.

3. Which of the hotel's characteristics support and which hinder the achievement of excellence?

During my research, I tried to map out whether, for example, the size of hotels, the number of employees, and their classification by quality/purpose have a positive or negative effect on their excellence.

4. Is there a correlation between certain characteristics of the hotel and the results achieved in certain areas of quality excellence?

During my research, I placed great emphasis on exploring whether there is a relationship (and if so, in what direction) between certain characteristics of hotels and achievements in certain areas of excellence (e.g. employee outcomes).

5. Can the hotels in the sample be grouped into distinct categories based on the level of excellence of their quality activities?

In answering this research question, the goal was to explore whether the hotels in the sample could be grouped into homogeneous clusters based on their level of excellence.

6. Are there any regional differences in the excellence results of the hotels studied?

Here, I was primarily interested in whether it was possible to group the hotels in the sample based on their excellence results by geographical location.

3. Areas of study in the literature

During the literature review, I present the definitions of quality and service quality, the concept of hotel quality, supplemented with the most important findings on the role of human resources, and the definition of employee satisfaction.

The concept and definitions of quality and quality dimensions are presented, among others, by Feigenbaum (1983), Grönroos (1984), Garvin (1987), Kotler (1998), Vargo – Lusch (2015, 2016), Oertzen et al. (2018), De Giovanni (2019) and Martin et al. (2020) definitions, while on the subject of service quality, I drew upon the research of Parasuraman et al. (1988), Grönroos (1990), Zeithaml et al. (1990), Tenner – De Toro (1997), Brady – Cronin (2001), Grönroos (2006), Klaus – Maklan (2013), Bagul – Mahajan (2023), and Wu el al. (2021). To introduce the concept of hotel service and service-dominant logic (S-D Logic), I used the definitions provided by Hepple et al. (1990) Ariffin et al. (2011) and Vargo et al. (2020), and examined the studies of Bártfai (2006), Papp (2017) and Tahiri et al. (2021).

In my dissertation, I then describe the benefits of using a quality management system, its development stages, and the importance of applying the TQM model. I also explore the topic of guest satisfaction, which includes the most important research and methods for measuring guest expectations and guest satisfaction.

Quality management is an integrated approach that directs the activities of all parts of the organization to improve quality. Deming (1986) created the so-called PDCA cycle (plan, do, check, act) for the principle of continuous improvement. Continuous improvement is the process where services and operations are continuously reviewed and improved (in the hotel industry this includes, for example, taking into account guest feedback, optimizing service processes and training employees) (Sikó, 2024). The model and development stages of quality management include the stages of quality control, quality regulation, quality assurance systems and TQM (Total Quality Management) (Kövesi – Topár, 2006). It is also important to mention the name of Shiba (2006), who played a role in the international dissemination of the TQM philosophy, the formalization of the problem-solving process, the collection and analysis of non-quantifiable data, and the clarification of the factors influencing organizational breakthrough management (Demeter, 2016).

During the review of the literature, it was not possible to identify a definition that would capture hotel excellence in a way that would be sufficiently complex and in line with the objectives of the research. Therefore, in order to establish a system of criteria for measuring excellence, the

research uses its own conceptual definition, which also provides the conceptual framework for the subsequent chapters.

"Hotel excellence can be interpreted as a complex concept that, in addition to the fulfillment of objectively measurable service parameters and the economic effectiveness of operations, also includes hotel self-evaluation, the ability to continuously learn and adapt. It is a dynamic development process that integrates strategic thinking, adaptation to changing market and consumer needs, and the conscious development and appreciation of human resources."

In the next section, focusing on various quality standards, rating systems, and certificates, I will present their operation and delineate the criteria that can appear together and measure the excellence of hotels. This is followed by the presentation of some frameworks that may be suitable for organizing the delineated criteria into a framework, including the Baldrige, the Balanced ScoreCard, as well as the EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) excellence models. I have chosen the EFQM model framework because it has previously proven its functionality in various sectors. Nabitz et al. (2000) and Moeller (2001) show that the model has previously been successfully used for self-evaluation of healthcare organizations in Germany and the Netherlands. With the successful application of the model in the hospitality industry, Alfirevic et al. (2013) and collected Spanish and Turkish good practices.

Using the analyzed standards, rating systems and excellence models as a framework, the most important areas for hotel excellence were determined, followed by the creation and presentation of the HQME (Hotel Quest Management Excellence) self-assessment framework and criteria. After mapping the theoretical background, the primary research is presented, the steps of which and the applied methods are detailed in chapters 5 and 6 of my dissertation.

3.1. Summary of the shortcomings of various guidelines, standards, and models

I found that the international guidelines and standards examined do not individually include all of the most important areas, which I believe are necessary for classifying hotel excellence, as revealed by the literature, for the following reasons:

- During the investigation , I found that although the ISO standard system is diverse and absolutely capable of helping businesses achieve excellence, it is too management-specific and places too much emphasis on management processes and strategy, while human factors (i.e. employees) are relegated to the background.

- Based on the models and methods that are basically used to measure guest satisfaction, I have determined that GAP and SERVQUAL focus heavily on services and service quality. In contrast to ISO systems, these methods also neglect management and strategy, and the importance of employees is not sufficiently emphasized (mostly only in the form of expectations). It is similar that “soft” factors are also neglected in these methods.
- The Hotelstars European harmonized hotel rating system consists of 247 criteria, 971 points can be obtained. If we examine the requirements of hotel categorization, we can see how few “soft” factors are included in the 247 requirements of the 7 areas listed, which are also stated in the introduction and general description of Hotelstars as determining the quality of a hotel together with the tangible assets (“hardware” factors). I believe that if Hotelstars focuses primarily on tangible conditions and only 2 aspects (worth a total of 6 points) in its criteria system apply to the so-called “soft” factors, then the guest will not know from the many (good) quality hotels whether they are truly excellent. The evaluation and the classification lack the human factors that support the full realization of excellence.
- Sustainable value creation is emerging as a new factor to which hotels must respond, and this aspect is increasingly appearing in various standards, rating systems, and in the detailed criteria systems of sustainability and eco-certifications .

4. HQME (Hotel Quest Management Excellence) framework

Based on the areas explored during the literature review and the new EFQM model of 2020, I created a framework to measure hotel excellence. The HQME framework, which forms the first part of the research model, is shown in Figure 1.

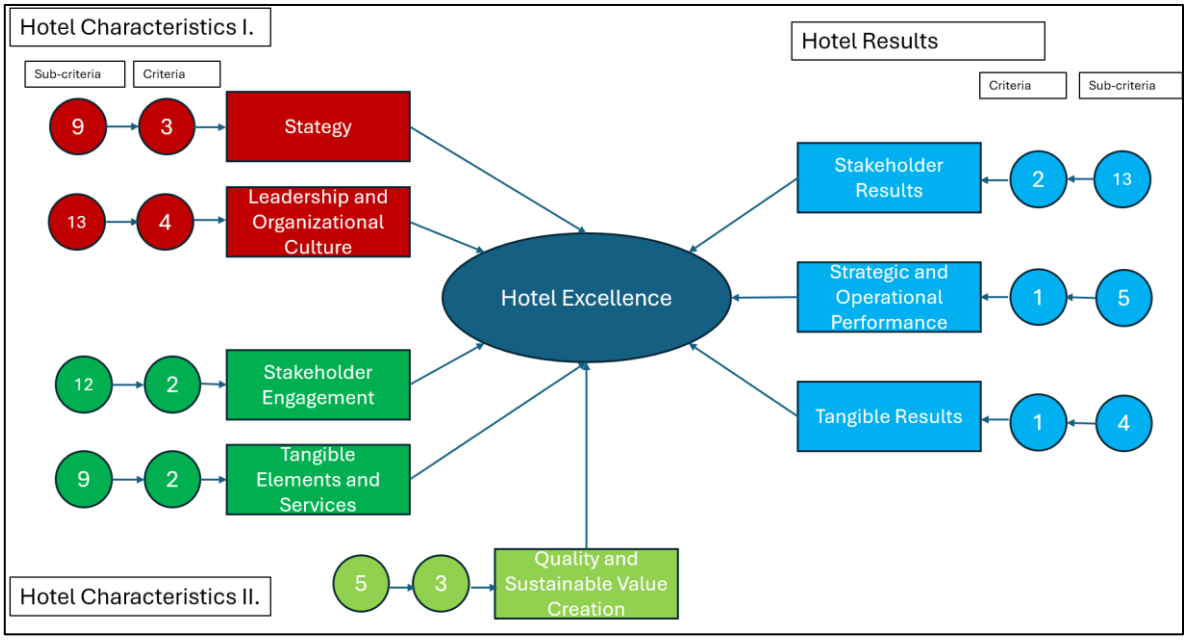


Figure 1: HQME – Part 1 of the research model

Source: own compilation, 2025

The main areas I worked with within the hotels' capabilities side are Strategy, Leadership and Organizational Culture, Stakeholder Engagement, Quality and Sustainable Value Creation and Material Elements and Services. The results side displays the Stakeholder Results, Strategic and Operational Results and Material Results.

FIGURE 1 shows that the HQME framework focuses on hotel excellence, the extent of which is determined by the total number of responses to 48 attributes and 22 outcome-related subcriteria during the self-assessment. The figure also shows that I have divided the hotel attribute factors into two parts, because while the “Hotel Characteristics I” area contains subcriteria related to operational activities (Strategy, Management), the “Hotel Characteristics II” area contains subcriteria related to stakeholders, tangible assets and services, performance indicators, and sustainable value creation. The arrows between the individual areas indicate the building of the levels on each other.

5. Applied testing methods

The goal was to create a framework that, unlike existing standards, certificates and rating systems, places more emphasis on the role of employees working in hotels (whether it is about employee satisfaction, appreciation, loyalty or competence development).

The various standards, certificates and guidelines contain in separate parts almost every area that can contribute to the measurement of hotel excellence (for example, strategy, management, objective factors, etc.), but not in a complex enough way, not integrated enough. Thus, based on the results revealed, it can be said that a guiding management tool for the conscious measurement and application of hotel excellence would be important. In order for this to be a practical framework that supports successful and sustainable corporate operations, I chose an excellence model that is already widely used by European companies – the EFQM – as a framework, which I transformed to specialize in hotels.

As a result of the processing of the literature, I also determined the areas and content elements of the concept of hotel excellence, based on which the criteria and sub-criteria were formulated in the criteria system. The HQME, as a management framework, was therefore developed as a result of exploratory research. Subsequently, the framework was validated through interviews, while the hotels in the sample were surveyed online by interpreting the sub-criteria of the HQME criteria system as questionnaire questions. It is important that I asked the hotels to have hotel directors and competent managers fill out the evaluation criteria system, as they have sufficient knowledge and information and statistics related to the full qualification of the hotel.

I validated the content elements of the HQME criteria system with the help of quantitative interviews, which means that since I conducted the interview based on the evaluation criteria system, i.e. along the structured questions compiled in advance, I had the opportunity to explore the information in more depth and to clarify the questions. During the research, I helped my interviewees identify the appropriate answers with explanations and additional information. The aim of the quantitative interview is to collect statistically evaluable, objective data using pre-set questions (Majoros, 2004). During the validation, we discussed the areas, statements and the corresponding answer options formulated in the HQME framework with the help of three hotel managers. My questions aimed to check the following:

- Are the statements understandable?
- Does the given area contain all the information that can describe the excellence of a hotel?

- Are the response options developed along the four levels appropriate?
- Can the evaluation criteria system be used in this form to measure quality excellence and its results?

The suggestions received from the hotel managers were mainly to provide explanations for the criteria, as a kind of information point, because when the criteria system is filled out independently, online, it is not certain that the evaluators will always have the information necessary to select the appropriate answer. To this end, based on the suggestions, I developed a total of 18 information points for the less easily interpreted sub-criteria / questions. After validating the criteria system, the query process started.

The statistical analyses were based on the processing of quantitative data from the evaluations. The data analysis was performed using the IBM SPSS Statistics software. During the study, I performed analysis of variance, cluster analysis, correlation and regression analysis, and cross-tabulation analysis.

Following the evaluation of the research results, the results were interpreted with the assistance of two hotel auditors, also to access how or whether the result provide a fair depiction of the Hungarian hotel environment.

5.1. The research model

The research model illustrates the steps of the research process. Since my goal is to develop a management tool that helps integrate excellence augmented by human factors into hotel operations, as a first step I processed the literature and the definitions, guidelines and standards related to the topic. Based on this, as a second step I defined the concept of hotel excellence. As the third step of the research, I selected EFQM from among the excellence models and used it as a framework to continue developing the areas of the framework I was to create. The next step (4.) is the presentation of the framework I developed (HQME), which was developed with unique criteria and sub-criteria. I detailed the content elements of the HQME framework in Chapter 5. The fifth, sixth and seventh steps illustrated in the research model are based on the analysis of measurements made during practical application. The fifth step determines hotel excellence using measurements based on the criteria, while the sum of these gives the intensity. The model also illustrates the hypotheses affected by the content elements, which are presented in the sequel.

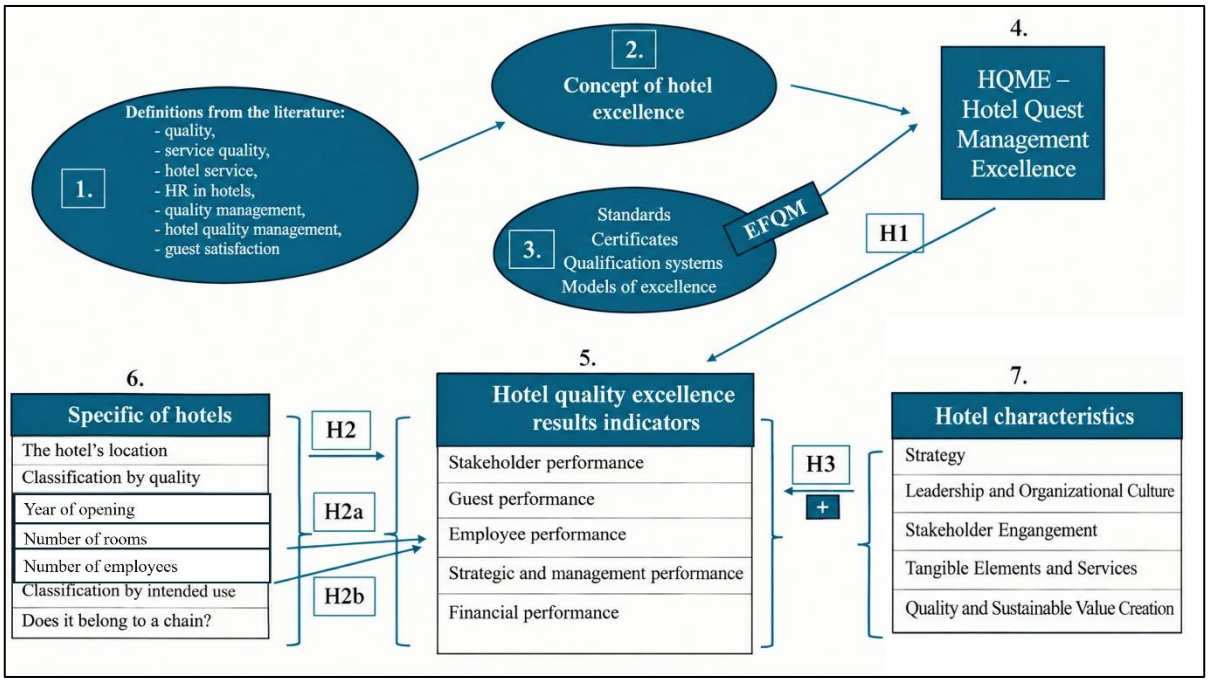


Figure 21: The research model

Source: own compilation, 2025

6. Research hypotheses

During my research, I attempted to draft a comprehensive definition of hotel excellence, for which I examined the content elements of the ISO, SERVQUAL and Hotelstars concepts, recommendations, standards and rating systems related to quality, hotel service quality and quality management, as well as the TQM logic. I consider it important to emphasize that each concept, recommendation, standard and rating system is useful and essential in itself in terms of defining the above concepts, however, I found it necessary to define a concept in which the areas / sub-areas of the factors mentioned above appear in a complex way. The most important element of the hotel excellence concept is that employee-related aspects ("soft" factors) appear more prominently compared to the content elements of the aforementioned theoretical and practical tools.

H-1: During the measurement carried out using the HQME framework, the hotels examined can be classified into clearly distinguishable groups based on the excellence results (intensity).

H-2: A correlation can be demonstrated between the size, category, number of employees, operating form (belonging to a chain), location, classification according to purpose and the results achieved in certain areas of excellence.

H2a: Hotel size has a negative impact on employee outcomes on the outcome side of the framework.

H2b: Higher employee headcount is associated with worse employee outcomes on the results side of the framework.

H-3: A positive relationship can be demonstrated between the results of the areas measured on the endowment side of hotels and the overall result of excellence, and of these, the result of stakeholder involvement is the strongest.

7. Results of the research I.

In the first part of the measurement results, I presented the general characteristics of the hotels and the comparison of the hotels examined. The 45 hotels in the sample are quite scattered geographically. A larger clustering can only be observed in the areas of Budapest and Pest counties, and in the case of hotels in Zala county. In addition, 4 completions were received from Somogy and Veszprém counties each, and I worked with two or less completions from several counties. It is also worth mentioning that I also received one completion from each of six counties in Eastern Hungary, which, supplemented by the number of elements from Budapest, proved to be extremely useful in terms of the size of the sample.

The classification of hotels according to quality was the next aspect, which I examined in the 3*, 3* superior , 4*, 4* superior and 5* categories, and the majority of the hotels in the sample (29) belong to the 4-star category, which accounts for nearly two-thirds of the entries (64%). In addition to these factors, in the dissertation draft I also analyzed the opening year of the hotels in the sample, their distribution by number of rooms, their distribution by number of employees and whether the hotels in the sample belong to a chain or operate independently.

7.1. Hotels' performance in excellence

One of the goals of the research was to determine and examine whether the HQME framework can be used to measure the excellence of hotels and obtain valid values that can be evaluated and used as the basis for further statistical calculations. The main result of the research is therefore the demonstration of the applicability of the created framework, which I present through the results of the main areas of the HQME framework.

The first such result concerns the overall score of the hotels in the sample, i.e. their excellence score, which is determined by the total points obtained on the endowment and results side. In the case of the HQME framework, a maximum of 177 points can be achieved by meeting the 14 criteria on the endowment side, while a maximum of 66 points can be achieved by meeting the 4 criteria on the results side, for a total of 243 points. The following figures therefore present the most important findings of the research based on the intensity of excellence and the results achieved in other areas of excellence.

- In the case of the 10 hotels in my sample that achieved the best results based on the intensity of excellence, the excellence results do not show a uniform picture in terms of the various general hotel characteristics/variables, which in my opinion should be evaluated positively, as this means that a hotel can achieve high excellence results

regardless of the year of opening, the classification according to quality or purpose, or the number of employees.

- In the case of the 10 hotels in my sample that achieved the worst results – based on the intensity of excellence – the general hotel characteristics / variables show greater homogeneity in the results than in the hotels with the best results, because here, for example, the ratio of 3 and 4 star hotels is 50:50 according to the quality classification. In terms of the number of rooms, worse excellence result is also characteristic of hotels with a smaller number of rooms, and at the same time the number of employees is also low. Surprisingly, the classification according to purpose also points in a similar direction, i.e. in general, the weaker excellence result is characteristic of city hotels.

7.2. Hotels' performance in terms of assets and results

On the endowment side, it can generally be said that the hotels achieved much higher results in their self-assessment than they achieved by implementing the sub-criteria on the results side.

- The best hotel responded to the 48 sub-criteria of 14 criteria in 5 areas on the attributes page with almost 100% efficiency, while only the hotel with the best performance on the results page was able to meet the 22 sub-criteria of 4 criteria in 3 areas with 86% efficiency (the best performing hotel on the attributes and the results page are not the same).
- A common point among the best-performing hotels on both sides is that their quality classification is high (there are hardly any 3* hotels), but similarly to the hotels that perform best in terms of intensity of excellence, other general hotel characteristics show heterogeneity (small and large hotels, mixed staffing levels and classification by purpose).
- In terms of the excellence level of the endowment side, the average of the 45 hotels in my sample is 77%, while the average of the excellence level of the results side is 59% for the sample examined. I believe that this is partly due to the fact that as long as it is about the endowment side and the hotels treat the realization of the sub-criteria as just an assumption, they dare to make more positive statements, while moving on to the results side, when these endowment factors are realized (proven) directly or through indirect means, they are forced to indicate the answer leading to a worse / weaker result (if the self-assessment is honest).

During the analysis, I took into account another factor, the opinions given by the guests. I created this variable by examining the guest ratings of the hotels in the sample on Booking.com, Szállás.hu and Tripadvisor, and then averaging them. Since there was a hotel in the sample that was not found on all three platforms, I calculated the available ratings in these cases. Guest ratings should be treated with some caution, because different hotels do not have the same number of ratings. Obviously, the value is different if 3,200 people rated one hotel at 7.8, while another hotel was rated at 9.6 by 250 people. Based on both the intensity of excellence and the results of the endowment and results side, it can be said that guest ratings have no significant impact on these. The tables also show that there is a hotel that, with a guest rating of 8.2, is ahead of the hotel rated at 9.7.

7.3. Employee related (“soft”) results

In terms of employee opinions/results, I examined the improvement of communication within the hotel, the number of employees participating in various training courses, the number of employees receiving recognition, the number of interns retained, the level of employee satisfaction, the level of wages, fringe benefits and welfare and training benefits provided to employees, and whether the work-life balance is optimal. These factors were formulated as sub-criteria. Since the questionnaires were filled out by hotel managers, I can evaluate these questions from their perspective; no other stakeholder inquiries were made during the research.

- What is noteworthy is that the hotel with the best performance in terms of employee - "soft" results was able to meet the sub-criteria at a level of 83%, while several of the other members of the top 10 only achieved 71%, while the hotel with the 10th best employee results achieved 63%. The difference between the first and the tenth best performing hotel is therefore 20%, which can be considered significant.
- If we separate the results of the responses to the employee results criterion from the stakeholder results, we get the area with the worst indicators. None of the ten hotels with the worst employee results even reach the 50% level in this area. Another lesson can be learned from this area of study, even though a hotel receives a guest rating of 9.47, it is not at all certain that it performs so well in some areas of excellence. In any case, it may be thought-provoking why a new wellness hotel with a 4* superior rating only meets the employee opinions/results sub-criteria at a level of 38%.

7.4. The results of the framework interpreted at the level of sub-criteria

In addition to the main results presented in the previous subsections during the measurement carried out using the HQME framework, it is also worth examining the frequencies of the hotels' responses to each sub-criteria separately.

On the endowment side, in the Strategy area, hotel managers gave positive answers to almost all sub-criteria, while the most negative answers were received regarding the existence of an employee reporting system that provides employees with information about the hotel's business activities. In the Management and Organizational Culture area, the sub-criteria with the weakest results were the inclusion of initiatives to strengthen environmental awareness, employee involvement in measures aimed at managing changes affecting the hotel, and the comprehensive performance evaluation provided to employees. In the Stakeholder Involvement area, positive answers were received almost without exception regarding guests' expectations, however, among the employee aspects, the tool to measure their satisfaction, the incentive and motivation system, and the provision of appropriate training benefits are not provided at all hotels. In the Quality and Sustainable Value Creation area, the most specific sustainability-related factors (green procurement, wastewater treatment) are mostly lacking, which in many cases do not reach the maximum level of excellence.

On the results page, among the results related to Customer Opinions, several hotels failed to reduce the number of guest complaints/claims, which of course does not mean that these complaints are not handled properly. However, it would be important to strive for excellence and provide quality service in such a way as to prevent these complaints. Regarding Employee Opinions, the number of employees participating in training and receiving recognition did not increase in a significant number of hotels, and the number of interns retained is not even among the positive factors. Employee satisfaction and the welfare and training benefits provided to employees did not change significantly either, which is also somewhat negative in terms of the hotel excellence I have defined. Among the sub-criteria of Strategic and operational performance and Objective results, there is a decrease in tenders and investments.

8. Results of the research II.

8.1. Theses

The guidelines, standards and rating systems related to quality, service quality, hotel service quality and quality management approach (such as ISO 9004:2018, the SERVQUAL model or Hotelstars), and then I determined the areas of the hotel excellence concept, which are Strategy, Leadership and organizational culture, Stakeholder involvement, Quality and sustainable value creation, Material elements influencing hotel performance, Stakeholder opinions, Strategic and operational performance and Material results - and their criteria and sub-criteria, which constitute the main areas of the HQME framework.

Hotel excellence can be interpreted as a complex concept that, in addition to the fulfillment of objectively measurable service parameters and the economic effectiveness of operations, also includes hotel self-evaluation, the ability to continuously learn and adapt. It is a dynamic development process that integrates strategic thinking, adaptation to changing market and consumer needs, and the conscious development and appreciation of human resources.

The management tool (HQME), developed based on the content elements of the EFQM excellence model and the hotel quality excellence concept, is suitable for evaluating the complex excellence of hotels, regardless of the size and classification of the hotels according to purpose.

Thesis 1:

Based on the measurement results performed by the HQME framework, hotels form three distinct groups according to the intensity level of their excellence:

- Diversified hotels (Medium excellence intensity) (n=13)
- Efficiency-oriented hotels (Low excellence intensity) (n=22)
- Excellence-oriented hotels (High excellence intensity) (n=10)

Thesis 2: There is no statistically demonstrable correlation between the basic characteristics of hotels (size, category, number of employees, form of operation (belonging to a chain), location, classification by purpose) and their results in the field of excellence intensity , because the variables are not significant. The level of two explanatory variables approximates this, which, when plotted, show relatively visible differences, but according to their significance

level, there is no correlation between the basic factors of hotels and the levels of excellence intensity.

T2 $_a$: There is no statistically significant relationship between the size of the hotel and the intensity of employee outcomes .

T2 $_b$: There is a positive relationship between the number of employees in a hotel and the intensity of employee results, so the higher the number of employees in a hotel, the more effective the intensity of employee results.

Thesis 3: A strong positive relationship can be demonstrated between the results of all areas of the hotel measured on the endowment side and the intensity of excellence. The Pearson correlation was the strongest between Leadership and organizational culture and the intensity of excellence, followed by the relationship between Strategy and the intensity of excellence, then Stakeholder Involvement, Quality and Sustainable Value Creation and Objective Factors.

8.2. Independent, novel results and practical applicability

The significance of my research lay in expanding the quality management approach to human factors and in proving the applicability of the EFQM model to hotels. In the framework of the dissertation, a further goal of my research was to develop a practical tool that could help Hungarian hotel managers understand the quality-oriented approach and apply it consciously at the company level.

I also set a goal for the framework to develop a unified evaluation criteria system that measures the excellence of hotels, allows for the definition of areas for development and is able to evaluate the same attributes and performance criteria regardless of the size and classification of the hotels. A further goal of my research is for hotel managers to consider, recognize and understand that much more energy should be spent on human resource management, thereby helping, encouraging and appreciating employees, who will thus also be able to provide high-quality work and, incidentally, will also feel good at the given company.

I defined the concept of hotel excellence in line with the preliminary goals of the research.

I created the HQME framework (Hotel Quest Management Excellence), which is designed to measure the level of excellence of hotels in the following areas: Strategy, Leadership and organizational culture, Stakeholder involvement, Quality and sustainable value creation, Material elements influencing hotel performance, Stakeholder opinions, Strategic and operational performance and Material results. I assigned a total of 18 criteria and 70 sub-criteria

to the areas, which I supplemented with information points after validation with the three hotel directors .

The HQME framework and assessment system were successfully developed in such a way that employee (human resource) aspects were incorporated into the various measurement areas and the assessment yielded useful and instructive results. The assessments and the feedback from hotel managers and hotel auditors confirmed the practical applicability of the method.

With the help of measurements conducted with the HQME framework, I was able to group the 45 hotels in my sample into clusters and correlate the results achieved in certain areas of excellence and the framework with the basic characteristics of the hotel (hotel size, category, number of employees, form of operation (belonging to a chain), its location, and its classification according to purpose).

8.3. Limitations of the research and possibilities for its continuation

During my research, the questionnaire designed on the basis of the sub-criteria of the criteria system was filled out by only 45 hotel managers, so the results can only be interpreted for this sample. Due to the small number of elements in the sample, it will be worthwhile to further expand the circle of respondents, and my plans include making it possible to collect samples internationally.

Regarding measurements using the HQME framework, I focused primarily on the results of the main areas and criteria, so it would be worthwhile to examine in more detail (also at the sub-criterion level) what has the highest impact on each area or the intensity of excellence.

In addition, since the questionnaire was filled out by hoteliers, it would be worthwhile to conduct an employee survey at the hotels in the sample regarding the hotels they manage, for example, how they feel in the given hotel, how satisfied they are with their salary, what they think the quality of communication is, etc. Also, since the research examined only employees and partly guests among the hotel stakeholders, it would be worthwhile to extend the measurement of excellence to other stakeholders (e.g. suppliers).

As for the limitations of the research results, it is important to note the subjectivity of the HQME framework. Although the auditor experts also confirmed the timeliness and relevance of the developed framework, they pointed out the difficulties inherent in unifying the aspects related to the objective and human factors, as well as the high degree of subjectivity in the case of the examination of human factors. At the same time, they also confirmed that it can be an important

management tool in the domestic hotel industry in shaping the approach to striving for excellence. Since the HQME is not used for auditing by an external authority, but as a management tool, subjectivity can also be reduced, since the hotel thus holds up a mirror to itself, and does not try to convince an external actor of its excellence.

9. List of related publications of the author

2026

1. Jakab, B., Raffay -Danyi, Á. N. (2026). Analysis and classification of hotel online guest reviews using the SERVQUAL method. In: Zsuzsanna Szalkai, Szilvia Bíró-Szigeti, Tamás Iványi, Anikó Kelemen-Erdős: KALEIDOSCOPE OF SCIENCES – MARKETING AS A TRANSDISCIPLINARY FIELD Abstracts and Proceedings of the XXXI International Conference of the Association for Marketing Education and Research, 2026. pp. 115-124. ISBN 978-615-112-035-4. DOI: 10.62561/EMOK-2025
2. Kaszás, N., Keller, K. Kaszás, N. (2026). Rethinking Tourism Sustainability Certification : a Circular Economy Approach - Analysis of the Circular Economy Criteria for Sustainability Certificates in Tourism . Circular Economy and Sustainability (2026) 6:7. https://doi.org/10.1007/s43615-026-00789-3

2024

1. Kaszás, N., Keller, K., Jakab, B. (2024). The appearance of circular economy aspects in international tourism certificates. Beáta Fehérvölgyi, Katalin Lőrincz, Gábor Michalkó : CIRCULAR PATH: The circular economy from the perspective of the tourism sector. (2025). ISBN 978 963 664 143 6
2. Jakab, B., Rodek , N., Raffay -Danyi, Á. (2024). Application of the circular economy model in the hotel industry VIII. INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE ON TOURISM AND SAFETY STUDY VOLUME. pp. 283-303 (2024) ISBN: 978-963-396-286-2.

2023

1. Jakab, B., Kaszás, N. (2023). The emergence of green certifications and their use for marketing purposes through the example of hotels. Included work: László Kovács: Green business thinking and green marketing opportunities and challenges. (2023), pp. 207-228 ISBN:978-615-6489-23-4. ISSN: 2631-133X.
2. Jakab, B., Rodek , N., Raffay -Danyi, Á. (2023). Winning and using the green hotel award VII. INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE ON TOURISM AND SAFETY PROCEEDINGS. pp. 281-295 (2023). ISBN: 978-963-396-255-8.

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2. Jakab, B., Rodek , N., Raffay -Danyi, Á. (2022). Hotel operations in the light of the energy crisis VII. INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE ON TOURISM AND SECURITY ABSTRACT VOLUME. p. 50 (2022). ISBN: 978-963-396-254-1

2021

1. Rodek , N., Jakab, B., Máhr , T., Fehérvári, D. (2021). The impact of COVID-19 on Sustainable Tourism ENTRENOVA '21 - ENTerprise Research InNOVATION Conference 2021, Zagreb , Croatia Proceedings of the ENTRENOVA - ENTerprise Research InNOVATION Conference , Vol . 7, No. 1, pp. 529-237. ISSN: 1849-7950
2. Jakab, B., Rodek , N., Raffay -Danyi, Á. (2021). The emergence of the new EFQM model and the connections between hotel excellence. VI. INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE ON TOURISM AND SAFETY PROCEEDINGS (2022). pp. 128-138. ISBN: 978-963-396-223-7.

2020

1. Jakab, B., Rodek , N. (2020). HQME - Hotel Quality Excellence Measurement and Evaluation Model V. INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE ON TOURISM AND SAFETY PROCEEDINGS. pp. 166-177 (2021) ISBN: 978-963-396-172-8

2019

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2. Jakab, B., Harshavardhan , RK, Rodek , N. (2019). Quality rating systems for quality hotels. IV. INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE ON TOURISM AND SAFETY PROCEEDINGS. pp 249-256 (2020) ISBN: 978-963-396-132-2

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