Quality, Key Tool in Tourist Destinations. Implementation in Rural Accommodation

Qualidade, Ferramenta Fundamental nos Destinos Turísticos. Implementação em Alojamento Rural

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Abstract/ Resumo

The objective of this research is to analyze if one of the main components of rural tourism destinations, certified rural accommodation establishments in Spain, have appropriate levels of quality implementation to boost the birth and development of competitive rural tourism destinations at national and international level with other destinations. The empirical study was conducted in 221 rural accommodation establishments certified with a national quality standard, specific of the tourism sector. The results show that this standard allows establishments to implement the necessary mechanisms to manage the key areas of the organization adequately from a quality approach. The implementation level of each of the key areas is close to 70%, except for process management that does not exceed 50%. Furthermore, it was found that the way of managing key areas, positively influences the results on customers, employees, society and key results. However, the data show that rural establishments still have a long way to go in terms of quality, in order to be a support key component for the public administration, to boost the birth of Rural Tourism Destinations.

O objetivo desta pesquisa é analisar se um dos principais componentes de destinos de turismo rural, estabelecimentos certificados de alojamento rural em Espanha, têm níveis adequados de implementação de qualidade para impulsionar o nascimento e desenvolvimento de destinos turísticos rurais competitivos a nível nacional e internacional com outros destinos. O estudo empírico foi realizado em 221 estabelecimentos de alojamento rural certificados com uma norma nacional de qualidade, específica do sector do turismo. Os resultados mostram que esta norma permite que os estabelecimentos implementem os mecanismos necessários para gerir as áreas-chave da organização de forma adequada a partir de uma abordagem de qualidade. O nível de implementação de cada uma das áreas-chave está perto de 70%, exceto para a gestão de processos que não excede 50%. Além disso, verificou-se que o modo de gestão de áreas-chave influencia positivamente os resultados em clientes, colaboradores, sociedade e resultados chave. No entanto, os dados mostram que os estabelecimentos rurais ainda ainda têm um longo caminho a percorrer em termos de qualidade, a fim de serem um com-

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ponente-chave de suporte para a administração pública impulsionar o nascimento de Destinos de Turismo Rural.

Palavras-chave: Qualidade,Alojamento Rural, Espanha, destinos turísticos

Código JEL: M10, R11

1 INTRODUCTION

Currently, the configuration of new inland tourist destinations in Spain, based on rural tourism as a tourist product, is stimulated by growth from the sector. According to the data of the Ministry of Industry, Energy and Tourism, in 2014 rural tourism gained in importance in Spain, driven by the change in behavior and values of tourists; more demanding requirements in terms of quality, growing awareness of environmental issues, shorter breaks, search for experiences ... (Cantallops, 2002). This type of tourism has an infrastructure, when referring to major accommodation, 15,000 establishments (140,000 vacancies), in which 2.5 million tourists are accommodated and which represents 6.9 million overnight stays (2014 data).

However, this growth both in terms of demand and supply in the sector is not sufficient for the origin of a tourist destination; is a challenge that depends on the cooperation and coordination of different economic and social agents and public institutions. The birth of a rural tourism destination, definite "*a set of installations for tourist services made up of a number of multidimensional attributes that together determine the attractiveness of a destination to satisfy the visitor*" (Hu and Ritchie, 1993:27), involves combining different components that make up rural tourism which are: basic tourist services such as accommodation, transport, complementary tourist services (catering and information), tourism resources (nature, culture, routes and active tourism), complementary activities (sports and recreation, socio-cultural, participation in activities of rural areas) and other services.

In the case of Spain, the Central Administration through government policies have boosted the figure of "tourist destination", as a strategy for competitiveness in a globalized sector and constantly changing. The State is actively involved in this process, it should be taken into account that this type of tourism contributes to geographic diversification, which represents a new source of income for the rural economy, adds value to the natural and cultural heritage and generates more than 21,000 direct jobs. In short, it is a tool to achieve development in rural areas where there is great socio-economic imbalance.

On the other hand, an important aspect to consider is that in the development of rural tourist destinations, there is commitment to quality as a strategy to reach the differentiation of our tourist destinations and competitiveness in the sector. The concept of tourist destination quality comprises the quality of services provided by: (1) tourist establishments, (2) by public agents such as transport, tourist information, etc., and also includes the quality of infrastructure and public facilities and natural resources in the area.

In this sense, in Spain the central state administration has promoted over the last years a set of plans called "Plan in Destination". The Framework Plan for Spanish Tourism Competitiveness (Futures I and II) was carried out from 1991 to 1999, responsible for the recovery and regeneration of mature destinations (coastal, monumental cities ...), as well as the sustainability and revitalization of emerging destinations, small heritage towns and natural destinations. From 2000 to 2007 the Integral Plan for Spanish Tourism Quality (PICTE) was launched with two differentiated lines of action, sustainability and revitalization of established and emerging destinations and promotion of destinations (new markets). From 2007 the final Plan in force, "Spanish Tourism Plan Horizon 2020" was put into effect, which focuses all its efforts on destination management and public-private coordination for the development of tourism potential and international renown.

Within all these plans, quality as the core of the competitiveness strategy is present. In this sense, the various plans launched by the State

Administration include quality plans in tourist destinations; Futures I- "Futures-Excellence Plan", Future II - "Futures- Tourist Destinations", PICTE- "Quality of Tourist Destinations" and HORIZON 2020- "Creation of Mixed Management Entities". In this latter plan, the management approach has been prioritized, in order to improve competitiveness of Spanish destinations, whereas in former plans, the priority was on planning and implementation.

In this context, rural tourist destination vs. quality, the objective of this research is to analyze if one of the main components of rural tourist destinations, rural accommodation establishments, denominated in Spain "Rural House", certified with UNE183001: 2009- Rural accommodation (Quality Management System), adequately manage key areas of the organization from a quality approach. Also, it raises identify what the strengths and weaknesses in each of the key areas of quality are.

If we consider that to boost the birth and development of rural tourism destinations in Spain, competitive at national level with other destinations and at international level, it is necessary for each of the different entities that make up the Tourist Destination to have adequate levels of quality implementation, it is important to do this type of studies that to date, considering the literature review conducted, there are no studies following this approach. This research is relevant to identify and provide information to both the central government and business entities about their current situation and initiate a process of continuous improvement that will allow them to increase the quality of services provided thereby increasing their customer satisfaction and therefore, ensuring business survival.

To meet these objectives, the work is divided into several sections. First, establishing the theoretical framework used to carry out the research. The second section describes the methodology used, while the third includes the analysis of results. The final section presents the main conclusions and implications of the work.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The tourism sector faces a number of challenges faced by today's markets. On the one hand, the need to differentiate, in order to compete in global markets, due to not being able to compete by prices as was traditional and being a sector made up mainly of micro-enterprises (Lee-Ross and Johns, 2001), on the other hand, the adaptation to new needs and characteristics of increasingly demanding customers, especially in terms of service quality. In this sense, Wang et al. (2012), state that orientation towards quality has become a key element in tourist behavior.

Therefore, to meet these challenges, the tourism industry supported by the Spanish Public Administration considers quality and its management as one of the key factors for achieving competitiveness. In this regard, numerous studies demonstrate the potential of quality management to improve competitiveness (Powell, 1995; Anderson and Sohal, 1999; Lee et al., 1999; Samson and Terziovski, 1999; Zhang, 2000). This improvement is achieved through the two dimensions in which quality operates; it generates customer value by meeting their expectations and in addition, improved internal efficiency through the standardization of activities necessary to maintain or achieve a competitive position (Claver et al., 2006:35; Hurtado et al. 2009:9). In this sense, the benefits obtained from the implementation of Quality Management Systems allow to obtain benefits related to all areas of the company: at customer level (Singels et al., 2001, Yahya and Goh, 2001), business performance (operational-organizational) level (Naveh and Marcus 2005; Sharma, 2005; Teerlak and King, 2006), economic-financial level (Wayhan et al., 2002; Casadesús and Karapetrovic, 2005; Dick et al, 2008).

These two dimensions or quality approaches lead to quality being measured from two different perspectives, taking into account the different dimensions of the concept of quality. On the one hand, internally by both managerial and operational staff, focusing on the technical aspects (internal dimension) and on the other hand, by the customer (external dimension). In the latter case, the service quality approach is emphasized from the external perspective, emerging the concept of "perceived quality of service" by the customer (Carman, 1990), defined as an overall judgement by the client concerning the superiority of the service (Parasuraman et al., 1988), resulting from the comparison made by customers between the expectations of the service to be received and the perceptions of the performance of the service provider organizations (Grönroos, 1994;

Parasuraman et al, 1985). Currently, the literature provides different tools to measure the quality of service considering this approach, being Servqual (Parasuraman et al., 1985, 1988) and Servperf (Cronin and Taylor, 1994) the most used, but sectoral scales have also appeared in this case applied to rural housing sector, called the Ruralqual scale (Loureiro et al., 2009), instrument of evaluation of the quality of the service.

Regarding the first approach, focusing on the technical aspects, this approach leads companies to implement quality, which is a complex and difficult process (Rad 2006); a process that relies on the critical factors that determine the success of the implementation of Total Quality Management (TMQ). These factors are defined by Kanji (1998) as key organizational areas, which, if properly managed, guarantee improvement in competitiveness and business excellence. Empirical research in recent years has shown that it is necessary to consider the critical factors to achieve successful quality implementation (Easton and Jarrell, 1998; Claver et al., 1999; Wilkinson et al., 1998; Zhang, 2000; Baidoun 2003; Sila and Ebrahimpour 2005; Soltani et al., 2005) and on the other hand, the positive influence of the factors on business performance has also been demonstrated (Ebrahimi and Sadeghi, 2013 makes a compilation of these studies).

Nevertheless, there is a lack of consensus as to what these critical factors actually are (Salaheldin 2009). Hietschold et al. (2014) determined that the critical factors to consider come from four different theoretical areas that correspond to different moments in time: ideas contributed by quality gurus in the 80s, research with a descriptive approach until the decade of the 90´s, empirical research from the 90´s onwards (sector of industry and services: Saraph et al., 1989; Flynn et al., 1994; Ahire et al., 1996; Black and Porter, 1996; Grandzol and Gershon, 1998; Anthony et al., 2004; and studies in the hotel industry: Camisón, 1996; Harrington and Akehurst, 1996; Breiter and Bloomquist, 1998; Arasli, 2002) and nowadays, the empirical studies conducted by researchers use critical factors provided by models of Total Quality Management associated with quality awards, which originated in the 80s (Claver et al., 2003; Tarí, 2005). There are several studies that were implemented in order to perform a literature review and identify critical factors. We can mention studies by Mehra et al. (2001), Sila and Ebrahimpour (2003), Claver et al. (2003), Camisón et al. (2007), Hietschold et al. (2014) and Magd (2014).

In this context, in this empirical investigation, following the current approach to take into account the critical factors provided by Quality Awards, the following are considered: leadership, quality policy/planning, alliances and resources, employee management, learning, process management. We have also considered the results to be obtained from efficient management of critical factors: customer results, employee results, social impact and key results. Leadership refers to management commitment to the implementation and development of the quality management system, quality policy/planning refers to how the organization implements its mission and vision through a strategy focused on all stakeholders and alliances and resources, employee management refers to how external alliances and their internal resources are planned and managed, how human capital is managed within the organization to support its policy and strategy and the effective operation of its processes. Finally, process management refers to how the organization manages and improves its processes to support its policy and strategy.

3 METHOD

3.1 Sample

This research is performed in "rural accommodation houses" in Spain, which are part of the tourist accommodation sector and are certified according to the Spanish quality standard UNE183001: 2009- Rural Accommodation (Quality Management System), whose visible image is the brand "Q Tourism Quality". The UNE183001: 2009 is a technical standard with national legislation (Spain), in which process and service standards are defined, as well as the requirements of the quality management system, that ensure that quality standards are never going to be less than those established in the standards and transmitted to clients. This standard not only applies to the installations and the level of the final service, but also includes organized processes such as work systems, procedures, instructions, etc.

The target population was composed of 227 Rural Accommodation houses contained in the web (www.icte.es) of the Institute for Spanish Tourism Quality (ICTE). The questionnaire

was sent by mail to managers and / or quality managers, obtaining 95 completed questionnaires and 8 incompletes, which were sent back. Once completed the process of collection, the sample was composed of 100 valid questionnaires and 3 incompletes, representing a response rate of 44.05% for a confidence level of 95% (Z = 1.96 p = q = 0.5) and a margin of error of 7.48%.

Regarding the profile of the sample, taking into account the classification of enterprises into micro-enterprises, small, medium and large enterprises based on the criterion of number of employees, as established by the European Commission, 95% of rural accommodation is micro (0-9 employees) and the remaining 5% is small-scale accommodation (10-49 employees). 42% of the accommodation has a dimension of 1-5 rooms and 58% more than 5 rooms, and 67 accommodations have had 0-3 years of quality standard certification and 33 more than 3 years, which reveals that implementation is recent in most establishments.

3.2 Questionnaire and Measures

A questionnaire in order to collect data that would meet the fixed objective was developed. It is divided into two sections; in the first one, data on the profile of the sample was collected and in the second section, the measurement scales are presented to assess the implementation of each of the critical factors (leadership, quality policy / planning, alliances and resources, employee management, learning and process management) in establishments and the results achieved (customer, employee, social impact and key results). For its preparation, scales already validated and used in studies by Saraph et al. (1989), Black and Porter (1995, 1996), Powell (1995), Ahire et al. (1996), Grandzol and Gershon (1998), EFQM Model (1999) are taken into account.

The result of this process was to obtain a questionnaire in which the critical factors are measured by 57 items and 35 items for the results (see Appendix). A 7-point Likert scale was used, ranging from 1 = not implemented (0%); 7 = implemented 100% for the critical factors and 1 = totally disagree; 7 = totally agree, in the case of the results.

3.3. Analysis of measurement scales' reliability

To analyse the reliability of the measurement scales used to measure critical factors and results, the recommendations of Anderson and Gerbing (1988) are followed; the psychometric properties of the scales are evaluated, ie., their reliability, validity and unidimensionality. We applied exploratory factor analysis (SPSS v.17).

Firstly, we examined the internal consistency of each of the scales (reliability), which evaluates whether the proposed scale for each one of the critical factors and results perform the measurement in a consistent and stable way, and are free of systematic and random errors. For the reliability analysis, we used the method of Kunder Richardson: (1) item-total correlation (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988), eliminating those items that do not reach the minimum accepted value of .3 (Nurosis, 1993), (2) estimation of Cronbach's alpha, which evaluates the internal consistency of the scale through the mean correlation of each of the items with the rest (recommended minimum value of .7 by Nunnally, 1979). By the analysis, we verified that in the case of the employee results scale, there are two items with an item-total correlation below the recommended minimum of .3 (ER4- absenteeism is low and ER5- staff rotation is low) and in the key results scale, the items KR6- our quality program has had a negative impact on our profitability and KR7- we could have had better results without a quality program, which are eliminated (table 3 and 5).

To confirm unidimensionality of the scales, an exploratory factor analysis to determine the percentage of explained variance and factor loading of each item is carried out (those items that have a lower factor loading of .5 are removed, value recommended by Hair et al., 1999) or load onto more than one factor. As a preliminary step to applying the statistical technique, it was checked whether the data are suitable for analysis, by examining the correlation matrix and Bartlett´s Test of Sphericity, measure of sampling adequacy Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and MSA index were performed. After analyzing these indicators, it can be stated that the Factor Analysis can be performed (table 3 and 5). The results of the analysis did not lead to the removal of any item, in all cases the factor loadings are higher than the recommended .5 minimum, the cumulative percentage of variance explained is greater than the 50% recommended.

In summary, we can say that after removing

the ER4 and ER5 items of the scale employee results and KR6, KR7 of key results, the scales are reliable, free from random errors and able to provide consistent results, plus all being unidimensional scales measures.

4 DATA ANALYSIS

In order to analyze the degree of implementation of the critical factors and results obtained, firstly we performed a descriptive analysis of the data, presenting the overall results. For a better understanding in the case of the critical factors, in addition to the mean score obtained on a 7-point Likert scale, in the last column (% degree of implementation), each of the criteria is expressed in a percentage scale of 0-100%, which shows a higher or lower quality level (table 1).

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation of critical factors and results

Scales	Mean[a,b]	(s.d.)	% Degree of implementation
Leadership	5.72	1.42	81.73
Quality Policy/Planning	5.49	1.42	78.45
Alliances and resources	5.33	1.45	76.20
Process management	5.20	1.19	74.38
Employee management	5.18	1.57	74.03
Learning	4.78	1.62	68.38
Customer results	6.05	0.93	--
Employee results	4.66	1.35	--
Social impact	5.30	1.24	--
Key results	4.59	0.86	--

[a] Critical factors: mean score between 6 and 7 (strongly implemented); mean score between 5 and 6 (with a high score); mean score between 4 and 5 (average implementation); mean score below 4 (low implementation).
[c] Results: mean score between 6 and 7 (totally agree); mean score between 5 and 6 (strongly agree); mean score between 4 and 5 (agree); mean score below 4 (indifferent).
Source**:** Authors' own data

It is observed that leadership is the best managed factor with a mean score of 5.72 and a percentage of implementation of 81.73%, followed by Quality policy / planning with a mean score of 5.49. Learning and employee with a mean score of 4.78 and 5.18 respectively, having a lower score. The level of implementation for all of them is higher than 68%. Regarding results, customer results show a higher average score with 6.05, followed by social impact (5.30). The worst score is key results with an average of 4.59.

We also analyzed correlations between critical factors and results (what are the achievements of rural accommodation establishments regarding their customer, employee, social impact and key results). We used the correlation matrix to perform this analysis (Table 2).

Table 2. Pearson correlation between quality and performance elements

		Leadership	Quality policy/planning	Alliances and resources	Employee management	Learning	Process management	Continuous Improvement
Customer results	r	.376*	.418	.374*	.608	.565	.510	.610
	Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Employee results	r	.571	.591	.436	.693	.589	.545	.415
	Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Social impact	r	.571	.654	.562	.636	.586	.610	.601
	Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Key results	r	.520	.483	.517	.459	.371*	.435	.428
	Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

r = Pearson correlation; correlation significant at .01; * correlation significant at .01 but r is less than .400, therefore it is weak.
Source: Authors' own data

The examination of the correlation matrix allows us to observe that in all cases there is correlation between the critical factors and results, meaning that effective leadership, good quality planning, proper management of human resources and approach towards learning, establishing mutually beneficial alliances with suppliers, and proper management of processes within the organization will generate positive results in terms of achievements reached by the company, as it leads to implement mechanisms to improve results. Therefore, taking into ac-

count the data, we can state that the critical quality factors are related and the way they are managed, positively influences the results.

The next step to meet the proposed objective is to identify identity the strengths and weaknesses of each critical factor to help firms improve. We analyze separately each of the items with which we measure each criterion (table 3).

Table 3. Descriptive findings and exploratory factor analysis (reliability and validity of scales)

Scales	Scale items[A]	Mean	(s.d.)[B]	item-total correlation	Exploratory Factor Analysis	
					Loadings	Bartlett´s test of sphericity Kaiser-Meyer_oklin index
Leadership (∞ Cronbach: .948)	LE1	6.01	1.59	> 3	.807	χ^2(sig.): 823.072 (.000) KMO:.899 Measure of simple adequacy: (.910-.879) % Variance: 74.22 Own value: 5.938
	LE2	5.76	1.62		.895	
	LE3	5.75	1.72		.890	
	LE4	5.29	1.88		.728	
	LE5	5.74	1.64		.927	
	LE6	5.62	1.65		.923	
	LE7	5.83	1.65		.818	
	LE8	5.77	1.54		.884	
Quality policy/planning (∞ Cronbach: .933)	QP1	5.73	1.42		.730	χ^2(sig.): 614.352 (.000) KMO:.889 Measure of simple adequacy: (.889-.899) % Variance: 72.27 Own value: 5.059
	QP2	5.79	1.60		.913	
	QP3	5.70	1.72		.902	
	QP4	4.53	1.88		.703	
	QP5	5.70	1.62		.895	
	QP6	5.32	1.75		.882	
	QP7	5.67	1.76		.899	
Alliances and resources (∞ Cronbach: .930)	AR1	4.86	2.03		.823	χ^2(sig.): 633.434 (.000) KMO:.855 Measure of simple adequacy: (.812-.851) % Variance: 71.50 Own value: 5.005
	AR2	4.99	1.88		.802	
	AR3	5.52	1.56		.727	
	AR4	5.57	1.65		.843	
	AR5	5.54	1.64		.896	
	AR6	5.56	1.61		.883	
	AR7	5.30	1.65		.928	
Employee management (∞ Cronbach: .960)	EM1	5.56	1.84		.901	χ2(sig.): 1350.882 (.000) KMO: .915 Measure of simple adequacy: (.938-.933) % Variance: 74.02 Own value: 8.142
	EM2	5.66	1.73		.866	
	EM3	5.55	1.79		.957	
	EM4	5.41	1.73		.942	
	EM5	5.29	1.87		.903	
	EM6	5.12	1.62		.875	
	EM7	5.43	1.75		.916	
	EM8	3.74	2.26		.567	
	EM9	5.43	1.87		.818	
	EM10	4.66	1.81		.843	
	EM11	5.17	2.06		.810	
Learning (∞ Cronbach: .937)	L1	5.04	1.85		.888	χ^2(sig.): 963.084 (.000) KMO: .859 Measure of simple adequacy: (.884-.765) % Variance: 67.21 Own value: 6.050
	L2	5.22	1.78		.787	
	L3	5.24	1.78		.785	
	L4	4.84	2.04		.866	
	L5	4.25	2.01		.869	
	L6	4.45	1.94		.862	
	L7	4.10	2.25		.836	
	L8	4.79	2.14		.759	
	L9	5.15	2.03		.709	
Process management (∞ Cronbach: .854)	PM1	5.36	1.56		.692	χ^2(sig.): 348.840 (.000) KMO: .743 Measure of simple adequacy: (.754-.763) % Variance: 58.56 Own value: 3.508
	PM2	5.57	1.55		.746	
	PM3	5.73	1.38		.829	
	PM4	5.19	1.82		.770	
	PM5	5.37	1.64		.755	
	PM6	5.53	1.59		.789	
Continuous improvement (∞ Cronbach: .896)	CI1	6.08	1.30		.641	χ^2(sig.): 750.378 (.000) KMO: .765 Measure of simple adequacy: (.761-.661) % Variance: 56.86 Own value: 5.118
	CI2	3.59	2.27		.700	
	CI3	4.43	1.90		.771	
	CI4	3.92	2.25		.666	
	CI5	5.09	1.57		.847	
	CI6	4.88	1.77		.806	
	CI7	5.58	1.57		.787	
	CI8	5.80	1.52		.776	
	CI9	5.98	1.41		.768	

[A] The items listed in this table have been summarized for ease of presentation and comprehension; [B] s.d.: Standard deviation

Source: Authors' own data

The analysis of the mean scores on each of the items allows to observe the main weaknesses and major strengths. A summary can be seen in Table 4. The weaknesses are the main areas for improvement in rural accommodation establishments.

Table 4. Weaknesses and strengths in the critical factors

Leadership	*Strength:* top management actively manages our quality program and reviews its effectiveness once implemented *Weakness:* the Management Team should promote employees´ own decision-making and appreciate the efforts and improvements made by staff
Quality policy/planning	*Strength:* the management displays the policy establishing realistic targets for all its staff (managers and employees) *Weakness:* communication of company strategy and objectives by management to customers, suppliers and other external agents for them to know them and identify and develop key processes from the business strategies or plans
Alliances and resources	*Strength:* a management plan for buildings, equipment and other materials is formulated (form of use, maintenance, insurance, renovations etc.) to improve the overall performance of the organization *Weakness:* to establish a closer relationship with suppliers and provide them with service quality requirements
Employee management	*Strength:* management of human resources in line with the strategy and / or business plans is performed and the management is trained in quality principles *Weakness:* the need to improve or implement a transparent system to reward staff achievements and improvements, as well as a system of social benefits such as pension plans, kindergarten, etc. and the need to measure performance and recognize it, in order to motivate them and improve their work performance
Learning	*Strength:* most employees understand the basic processes used to create the products / services offered and have sufficient knowledge about the basics of the sector *Weakness*: rural accommodation should seek funding or resources for staff training, in particular train them in basic statistical tools that help solve problems and search for improvements
Process management	*Strength:* service improvements as a result of customer satisfaction surveys, complaints and claims, etc. are introduced *Weakness:* to implement a program to find the loss of time and costs in all processes and implement specific organizational structures to support quality improvement

Source: Authors' own data

Table 5. Descriptive findings and exploratory factor analysis (reliability and validity of scales)

Scales	**Scale items[A]**	**Mean**	**(s.d.)[B]**	**item-total correlation**	**Exploratory Factor Analysis**	
					Loadings	**Bartlett´s test of sphericity Kaiser-Meyer_oklin index**
Customer Results (∞ Cronbach: .827)	CR1	6.62	1.80	> .3	.531	χ^2(sig.): 366.968 (.000) KMO: .725 Measure of simple adequacy: (.726-.689) % Variance: 52.96 Own value: 3.707
	CR2	6.35	1.02		.613	
	CR3	6.40	1.19		.800	
	CR4	6.36	1.17		.895	
	CR5	6.04	1.39		.847	
	CR6	5.82	1.53		.752	
	CR7	4.76	1.92		.571	
Employee Results (∞ Cronbach: .931)	ER1	5.36	1.82	> .3 except ER4, ER5.	.884	χ^2(sig.): 765.792 (.000) KMO: .837 Measure of simple adequacy: (.853-.808) % Variance: 71.19 Own value: 4.983
	ER2	5.39	1.75		.831	
	ER3	5.39	1.76		.850	
	ER4	2.22	2.02		--	
	ER5	4.78	2.06		--	
	ER6	4.78	1.76		.862	
	ER7	5.01	1.75		.891	
	ER8	4.81	1.90		.856	
	ER9	4.26	1.93		.721	
Social Impact (∞ Cronbach: .892)	SI1	5.60	1.60	> .3	.602	χ^2(sig.): 575.145 (.000) KMO: .836 Measure of simple adequacy: (.813-.907) % Variance: 57.67 Own value: 4.614
	SI2	6.21	1.20		.488	
	SI3	5.56	1.52		.650	
	SI4	4.62	1.92		.783	
	SI5	5.36	1.72		.872	
	SI6	5.26	1.75		.892	
	SI7	5.36	1.71		.895	
	SI8	4.48	1.64		.788	
Key Results (∞ Cronbach: .852)	KR1	3.91	1.53	item-total correlation > .3 except KR6, KR7	.497	χ^2(sig.): 541.474 (.000) KMO: .705 Measure of simple adequacy: (.802-.745) % Variance: 57.67 Own value: 4.182
	KR2	3.82	1.69		.713	
	KR3	4.26	1.67		.650	
	KR4	5.22	1.83		.781	
	KR5	5.43	1.60		.776	
	KR6	3.12	1.67		--	
	KR7	3.27	1.53		--	
	KR8	5.47	1.45		.615	
	KR9	5.10	1.38		.759	
	KR10	5.65	1.31		.680	
	KR11	5.29	1.37		.611	

[A] The items listed in this table have been summarized for ease of presentation and comprehension; [B]s.d.: Standard deviation
Source: Authors' own data

The following figures separately illustrate scores for each item of each performance dimension (table 5).

The ANOVA statistical test was considered in order to check for significant differences in the level of implementation in Quality Management, depending on two criteria; establishment size, which was measured by the number of rooms and length of certification. To apply this test, first we check the equality of variances using Levene´s statistic, since the groups are different in size, and carry out normality tests (Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk). In the analysis of normality shows that there is lack thereof (sig. <. 05), however although not it complies strictly speaking is no reason not to include these variables in the graphical analysis no major changes in the assumption normality (normality can be assumed if the number of cases is greater than 30). The results show that there are significant differences in Leadership and Alliances and Resources (sig. .046, sig. .008) and no significant difference relating to results (Table 7).

Table 6. Strengths and weaknesses in results

Customer satisfaction	*Strength:* the company is concerned about collecting information from its customers to measure their satisfaction through surveys, complaints etc. *Weakness:* the need for conducting comparative results of clients with those of main competitors, to determine whether the comparison is favorable, providing valuable information, enabling to learn from them and customer results should cover the most relevant areas of the organization
Employee satisfaction	*Strength:* employee satisfaction shows improvement over time and indirect indicators of satisfaction like the level of absenteeism, complaints, involvement in improvement programs, staff turnover, etc. are evaluated *Weakness:* the need to compare employee results with those of main competitors to determine whether the comparison is favorable or otherwise learn from them
Social impacts	*Strength:* environmental protection policies are developed *Weakness:* comparing its results with those of the main competitors to determine whether the comparison is favorable or otherwise learn from them and the feeling that the community has, should be evaluated through surveys, meetings, authorities, etc.
Key results	*Strength:* the causes of these key results are analyzed and plans or actions for improvement are implemented *Weakness:* increasing financial results and increasing incomes

Source: Authors' own data

Table 7. Statistical tests for comparison of mean critical factors according to size- no of places in rural accommodation

Critical factors		Kolmogorov-Smirnov		Shapiro-Wilk		Levene Test		ANOVA		Sig.
		Estatistic	Sig.	Estatistic	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	
LE	Leadership	.187	.000	.804	.000	2.870	.062	3.188	.046	<.05
QP	Quality policy/planning	.193	.000	.839	.000	5.475	.006*	.125	.939	>.05
AR	Aliances and resources	.126	.001	.912	.000	2.282	.108	5.046	.008	<.05
EM	Employee management	.194	.000	.857	.000	4.646	.012*	1.371	.504	>.05
L	Learning	.134	.000	.933	.000	4.133	.019*	2.282	.319	>.05
PM	Process management	.099	.017	.961	.005	3.891	.024*	1.139	.566	>.05
CI	Continuous improvement	.112	.000	.844	.000	2.797	.022*	1.218	.534	>.05
CR	Customer results	.160	.000	.852	.000	1,171	0,314	0,189	0,828	>.05
ER	Employee results	.111	.004	.957	.003	4,634	0,012*	0,035	0,982	>.05
IS	Social impact	.134	.000	.913	.000	9,862	0,000*	0,669	0,716	>.05
KR	Key results	.079	.124	.975	.058	1,451	0,239	0,564	0,571	>.05

* As there are differences of variances, we used the Kruskal-Wallis test (Chi-square statistic).
Size Groups: 67 of the accommodation has a dimension of 1-10 rooms, 24 of 11-20 rooms and 9 more than 20 rooms.
Sig. <.05 significant difference.
Sig.> .05 no significant difference.
Source: Authors' own data

Since there are significant differences and we have three samples, Scheffé is applied (table 8), to analyze which group/s differ in terms of mean scores on the dependent variable. It is found that there are significant differences in the mean score in establishments with 0-10 rooms with the other two groups, in the case of alliances and resources. Analyzing the mean score, we observe that the establishments with 0-10 rooms have a higher level of implementation of the criterion alliances and resources with a mean score of 5.88 versus establishments with 11-20 places and > 20 places with an average of 5.04 and 4.87 respectively.

Table 8. Scheffé Test by size: No. places in rural accommodation

Dependent variable	I Size: no. places	J Size: no. places	Mean Differences (I-J)	Standard error	Sig.	Confidence interval 95%	
						lower limit	upper limit
(LE) Leadership	0 to10 places	11 to 20 places	.64103	.31667	.134	-.1462	1.4283
		> 20 places	.82998	.37287	.089	-.0970	1.7569
	11 to 20 places	0 to 10 places	-.64103	.31667	.134	-1.4283	.1462
		> 20 places	.18896	.37287	.880	-.7380	1.1159
	> 20 places	0 to 10 places	-.82998	.37287	.089	-1.7569	.0970
		11 to 20 places	-.18896	.37287	.880	-1.1159	.7380
(AR) Alliances and resources	0 to 10 places	11 to 20 places	.83516*	.31623	.034	.0490	1.6213
		> 20 places	1.01265*	.37234	.028	.0870	1.9383
	11 to 20 places	0 to 10 places	-.83516*	.31623	.034	-1.6213	-.0490
		> 20 places	.17749	.37234	.893	-.7482	1.1031
	> 20 places	0 to 10 places	-1.01265*	.37234	.028	-1.9383	-.0870
		11 to 20 places	-.17749	.37234	.893	-1.1031	.7482

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level
Source: Authors' own data

We performed the same analysis for the second criterion, length of certification, applying in this case the Student T test. It is observed that there are significant differences in 3 critical factors (employee management, learning and process management) and key results. Analyzing the mean scores, we observed that for all of them, the implementation level is higher in establishments with > 3 years in certification.

Table 9. Statistical tests for comparison of mean Critical factors and results according to length of the certification Q for Tourist Quality rural accommodation

Critical Factors and results		Levene test		Student T test		Sig.
		F	Sig.	t	Sig.	
LE	Leadership	13.950	.000*	.686	.408	>.05
QP	Quality Policy/planning	13.748	.000*	.440	.507	>.05
AR	Alliances and resources	7.714	.007*	.335	.563	>.05
EM	Employee management	17.589	.000*	4.397	.036	<.05
L	Learning	6.227	.014*	7.065	.008	<.05
PM	Process management	2.720	.102	-2.672	.009	<.05
CI	Continuous improvement	5.891	.018*	.2035	.063	>.05
CR	Customer results	4.283	.041*	2.977	.084	>.05
ER	Employee results	2.118	.149	-1.548	.125	>.05
IS	Social impact	2.580	.111	-.985	.327	>.05
KR	Key results	2.591	.111	-1.998	.049*	<.05

*As there are differences of variances, we used the Kruskal-Wallis test (Chi-square statistic).
Size groups: 67 accommodations have had 0-3 years of quality standard certification and 33 more the 3 years.
Sig. <.05 significant difference.
Sig.> .05 no significant difference.
Source: Authors' own data

5 CONCLUSIONS AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

In this study, we performed a detailed diagnosis of the degree of implementation of critical factors in rural accommodation establishments certified with the Quality Tourism Q brand based on the standard UNE183001: 2009 rural accommodation, sectorial Quality Management System at national level (Spain). The results obtained show that establishments reached quality levels close to 70% implementation in three critical factors, which are leadership, quality policy, employee management and alliances and resources and lower levels, close to 50% in process management. We also note that there is a positive correlation between the effective management of these critical factors and results in customers, employees, social impact and key results, understood as those processes implemented to improve the satisfaction of stakeholders and improvement of their key results, which it is corroborated by other studies such as Tari and Pereira (2012) performed in the hotel industry.

With respect to practical applications for managing directors, as they provide the strengths and areas for improvement in the area of quality, detecting the need for improvement in certain aspects. It is observed that the management is highly involved in the implementation process, managing and revis-

ing its efficacy. Although it had adequate levels of implementation in all critical factors except in process management, there is still plenty more scope for improvement, so in Table 4 and 6 the weakest points on which the management should perform are provided. On the other hand, process management is the critical factor on which the management of rural establishments should focus their efforts, so they should focus their efforts on standardizing processes.

The major contribution of the study is that the results show that establishments certified with the Spanish quality standard, have implemented the necessary mechanisms for effective management of critical quality factors considered in the relevant scientific literature, factors that guarantee improvement in competitiveness and business excellence.

In conclusion, we can see that the sectorial Spanish standard ensures that establishments properly manage key areas of their business. However, these establishments represent only about 1% of rural accommodation in Spain, so the public administration should continue working on the promotion of the implementation thereof. Nobody today doubts that for proper planning of rural tourism destinations, it is necessary to have establishments that carry out adequate management of the quality of tourism services offered, so that once the customer visits the destination, adequate levels of satisfaction are reached. The quality of tourist destinations is one of the cornerstones to achieve better competitiveness.

The limitations of the study are: the conclusions cannot be generalized to other tourism subsectors and the data were self-report data from quality managers based on their perceptions and a second limitation relates to the cross-sectional nature of the study, namely that this study analyses relationships at one specific moment. Our proposal for future research is to rigorously analyze both critical factor and obtain data from all company personnel and management and personnel and analyze whether there are differences in the perception between the two groups.

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APPENDIX

Leadership: refers to management commitment to the implementation and development of the quality management system
LE1-Top management actively manages our quality program and reviews its effectiveness once implemented LE2-Administrators actively communicate a quality commitment to employees LE3-Employees are encouraged to help implement changes in the organization LE4-The Management Team allows employees to make their own decisions LE5-The management team motivates its employees and helps them to fulfill their work at a high level LE6-The Management appreciates the efforts and improvements made by the staff LE7-The Management maintains contacts with customers, suppliers and other external agents and is involved with them in the promotion and participation of alliances and improvement actions LE8-The changes that should be carried out for improvement are identified and boosted by the Management and their effectiveness is reviewed once implemented
Quality Policy/Planning: refers to how the organization implements its mission and vision through a strategy focused on all stakeholders
QP1-Strategies and business plans based on the information about customer requirements and business capabilities are developed and implemented. QP2-The management displays the policy establishing realistic targets for all its staff (managers and employees) QP3-The management communicates its strategy and objectives to all staff QP4-The management communicates its strategy and objectives to customers, suppliers and other external agents in order for them to know them QP5-Staff is involved in setting objectives and plans QP6-Key processes are identified and developed from the business strategies or plans QP7-The results are evaluated by performing a comparison with those planned, with the aim of improvement
Alliances and Resources: refers to how external and their internal resources are planned
AR1-There is a close working relationship with suppliers AR2-The suppliers are provided with the necessary requirements (quality) of the goods or services AR3-The management encourages the use of a few suppliers, with quality rather than price as the first selection criterion AR4-A management plan for buildings, equipment and other materials is formulated (form of use, maintenance, insurance, renovations etc.) to improve the overall performance of the organization AR5-Economic and financial resources are assigned and used adequately so as to ensure the success of the strategy AR6-All important information and the knowledge generated is collected and managed, being such information reliable and easy to use by the relevant personnel AR7-In general, management of alliances and resources is carried out according to the strategy
Employee Management: refers to how human capital is managed within the organization to support its policy and strategy and the effective operation of its processes
EM1-Management of human resources in line with the strategy and / or business plans is performed EM2-The management is trained in quality principles EM3-Employees are trained in quality principles EM4-Employees are trained in problem-solving skills EM5-Employees are trained in teamwork EM6-Experience and training of people is adjusted to current and future needs or specific training plans are developed EM7-People are encouraged and supported to take responsibility and make decisions without risk for the organization, to be involved in improvement activities, team work, etc. EM8-There is a transparent system to reward staff achievements and improvements, as well as a social benefits system (pension plan, kindergarten ... etc.) EM9-Employee performance is measured and recognized in order to motivate them and improve their work performance EM10-Communication between all personnel is ascending, descending and horizontal, so that employees are considered to be well-informed and that their opinions are valued EM11-Improvements in human resource management are introduced by using staff satisfaction surveys, regular meetings with employees, performance analysis, etc..
Learning: **i**t is the process through which they acquire new skills, abilities, knowledge, behaviours or values as a result of the study, experience, training, reasoning and observation
L1-Managers and supervisors ensure that all employees receive training in order to help them understand how and why the organization performs L2-Most employees of this company have sufficient knowledge about the basics of the sector L3-Most employees of this organization understand the basic processes used to create our products / services L4-All company employees are trained in the concepts of total quality L5-The company employees are trained in basic statistical tools L6-Employees receive training to develop teamwork L7-Availability of resources for staff training within the organization L8-Top management has established an environment that encourages continuous training L9-Managers and supervisors participate in specialized training
Process Management: refers to how the organization manages and improves its processes to support its policy and strategy
PM1-Control and continuous improvement of key processes PM2-Prevention of defective services is a strong attitude in this organization PM3-The processes used in this organization includes measures to ensure that development of services are consistent with the previous design and subsequent execution (quality measures) PM4-Employees involved in different processes know how to evaluate them PM5-New services in an attempt to access other markets are developed, anticipate the needs of today's market or try to be better than the main competitors PM6-The development of products / services in line with previous designs and later developments is guaranteed
Continuous Improvement: dynamic process that involves carrying out gradual changes, but very common, standardizing the results

obtained after each improvement achieved "You can always do better"
CI1-Service improvements as a result of customer satisfaction surveys, complaints and claims, etc. are introduced CI2-A program to find losses of time and costs in all processes is implemented CI3-Market research is conducted to understand current and future customer needs and as a result improvement in its products, services and processes are introduced CI4-Specific organizational structures are implemented (quality committee, work teams) to support quality improvement CI5-Areas for improvement are identified CI6-Information is managed to support quality improvement (analysis of business information, cost and financial aspects to support the development of priorities for improvement) CI7-Increase in direct personal contacts of the organization with customers CI8-Use of customer requirements as the basis for quality CI9-Managers and supervisors support activities that improve customer satisfaction
Customer Results: it refers to what getting the organization in relation to its external customers
CR1-The company is concerned about collecting information from its customers to measure their satisfaction through surveys, complaints etc. CR2-Customer satisfaction shows improvement over time CR3-It has a mechanism to hear and resolve customer complaints CR4-Objectives in this context are established and the customer results achieved meet the objectives CR5-The causes of these customer results are analyzed and improvement plans or actions are implemented CR6-All these customer results cover the most relevant areas of the organization CR7-These customer results are compared with those of the main competitors being such comparative favorable or otherwise learning from them
Employee results: it refers to what getting the organization in relation to its employee
ER1-The company collects relevant information to measure employee satisfaction (surveys, meetings, motivation, training, promotion, etc.) ER2-Other indirect indicators of satisfaction like the level of absenteeism, complaints, involvement in improvement programs, staff turnover, etc. are evaluated ER3-Employee satisfaction shows improvement over time ER4-Absenteeism is low ER5-Staff rotation is low ER6-Objectives in this context are established and the results achieved meet the objectives set by the organization ER7-The causes of these results in people are analyzed and plans or actions for improvement are implemented ER8-These employee results cover the most relevant areas of the organization ER9-These employee results are compared with those of the main competitors being such comparative favorable or otherwise learning from them
Social Impact: as what the organization is achieving socially at local, national or international level
SI1-Policies to reduce and prevent risks to health and safety are developed SI2-Environmental protection policies are developed SI3-The company participates in many community activities SI4-The feeling the community has is evaluated through surveys, meetings authorities, etc. SI5-The results in society show improvements over time SI6-Objectives in this context are established and the results achieved meet the objectives set by the organization SI7-The causes of these results in society are analyzed and plans or actions for improvement are implemented SI8-These results in society are compared with the company's main competitors, being such comparative favorable or otherwise learning from them
Key results: what the organization achieves in regard to its planned final performance
KR1-Our financial results have been excellent KR2-Our quality program has increased our incomes KR3-Our quality program has increased our productivity KR4-Our quality program has improved our competitive position KR5-Our quality program has improved our performance as a whole KR6-Our quality program has had a negative impact on our profitability KR7-We could have had better results without a quality program KR8-Both economic and non-economic key results are evaluated, as well as financial and non-financial KR9-Objectives in this context are established and these are met by the key results achieved KR10-The causes of these key results are analyzed and plans or actions for improvement are implemented KR11-All these key results cover the most relevant areas of the organization