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Discovering the best practices of Total Quality Management influencing performance in the Moroccan hospitality industry

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Abstract

The present study explores the link between Total Quality Management and hotel performance with a particular focus on identifying best practices from the European Foundation for Quality Management that can enhance business results in the hospitality sector. A quantitative confirmatory study was conducted using a five-point Likert scale questionnaire distributed to 93 Moroccan hotels, specifically targeting senior managers with expertise in quality management. The collected data were analyzed using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) technique. The results reveal that Total Quality Management (TQM) serves as a key driver of both financial and customer performance within hotels. Furthermore, strategy and processes emerged as the most influential enablers of enhanced hotel performance, as they guide decision-making and ensure that activities are aligned with organizational objectives. While leadership, people, and resources play a more supportive role, they remain essential for the successful implementation of strategic initiatives. Their contribution is realized through fostering employee motivation, promoting effective teamwork, and optimizing the use of financial and technological resources. This research offers a unique empirical contribution by examining how hotels embrace a key managerial approach to enhance their performance. Additionally, the study focuses on a widely recognized model for business excellence, offering a targeted and in-depth analysis of how specific practices within this framework can impact hotel performance.

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Keywords: Total quality management, performance, EFQM, hotel, PLS

Introduction

Over the recent years, the link between Total Quality Management (TQM) and performance has gained significant interest of researchers at both theoretical and empirical levels. TQM is a managerial approach that involves instilling a quality mindset as a concern and responsibility for everyone in the organization (Zairi and Youssef,1995).

By the early 1980s, hotels began to recognize the importance of embracing quality concepts and were subsequently influenced by the American hospitality industry programs. By the late 1980s, they realized that TQM was a more powerful process for improving their institutional image, which was strongly influenced by customers' perceptions of quality. Effective quality management became one of the key enablers for the hotel industry to attract more customers (Camison, 1996).

The Ritz-Carlton chain is a prime example of the positive impact of TQM in the hospitality industry. Recognized for its improved commitment to quality and customer satisfaction, the brand earned the prestigious Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award in 1991. The chain focuses on delivering exceptional, personalized service while prioritizing customer satisfaction and empowering employees. The leadership structure encourages teamwork and employee participation in the strategic planning process. Despite initial resistance to this approach, Ritz-Carlton refined its methods for fostering effective team dynamics, placing a strong emphasis on building relationships among team members and providing training to ensure collaboration. This transformation has positioned The Ritz-Carlton as a leader in the service industry. The internal impact of TQM requires significant changes, supported by senior management, in organizational structures, attitudes, and behaviors of all those involved.

While Ritz-Carlton is a luxury hotel chain with substantial resources, this fact doesn’t necessarily mean that other hotels can’t achieve similar results using TQM principles. However, the extent and manner in which TQM is implemented might differ based on resources, teams, and the hotel's context.

According to Sakarya and Çizel (2022), there is limited academic research on TQM impacting performance in the hospitality industry, with studies specifically focusing on the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM). The literature review reveals likewise inconclusive results.

Therefore, the present study follows this recommendation in the Moroccan context. The purpose is to investigate the impact of TQM practices

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on Hotel Performance (HP) and identify the best practices from EFQM that improve the performance levels.

The article is organized as follows. After the introduction, the hypotheses are formulated based on a literature review. Then, the methodology used for the analysis is presented, and the results are illustrated. Finally, the last section discusses the conclusions and the main implications for theory and practice.

Literature review and research hypothesis

The role of TQM in improving HP has been widely debated. Some authors firmly believe that TQM leads to superior performance and sustains business growth (Sohal, 2006; Olaleye et al., 2023) by influencing various aspects of hotel performance, including employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction, operational efficiency, and financial results (Claver-Cortés et al., 2008; Benavides Velasco, 2014; Milovanović, 2014; Muslim Amin et al., 2017; Bouranta et al., 2017; Hrgović, 2024). TQM emphasizes the effective coordination of activities across processes, fostering continuous improvement throughout the organization to meet or surpass customer expectations (Anderson et al., 1995). Others (Powell, 1995; Patiar, 2012; Wang, 2012) argue that TQM depends mainly on how practices are implemented within hotels. The impact is positive in departments where managers encourage the use of TQM, in contrast to departments where TQM practices are less encouraged.

However, other researchers have questioned the effectiveness of TQM. Cortés (2008) argued that TQM has an insignificant impact on financial performance, suggesting that these practices are better known among managers than customers. Moreover, TQM has a negative impact on HP, as demonstrated by Fatchur and Solimun's (2014) study, due to intense competition, occupancy rates are low, affecting financial performance. Chaher (2024) found that TQM has no direct effect on financial performance, while it positively impacts non-financial performance. Beer (2003) argued that the failure of TQM to improve performance is often attributed to poor implementation rather than flaws in the theory itself. Rougan (2015) explained the reasons for TQM failure, including a lack of consensus on goals, insufficient employee accountability, inadequate planning, and, most importantly, poor communication.

Based on this, the following hypothesis is posited:

H_1: TQM impacts positively HP both the financial and the customer.

Best practice of EFQM impacting performance

The study focuses on EFQM to evaluate how TQM impacts HP. A literature review has been conducted to identify the most important EFQM

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criteria for improving HP. Politis et al. (2022) stated that hotels perform well in the processes criterion, reflecting well-defined procedures for service quality. Unlike the criterion of Partnerships and Resources, which has been found to show low-performance impact due to minimal involvement in strategic decisions, lack of supplier selection procedures, and poor human resources management, resulting from low staff participation in decisions, inadequate training, and poor inter-departmental communication. They added that leadership is a competitive advantage for hotels, particularly in setting and improving the hotels' mission, vision, and values towards quality (Claver-Cortés, 2008; Amin et al., 2017; Al Shourah and Al Shourah, 2020). Sozuer (2011) found that the leadership, strategy, and people criteria can lead to competitive advantages. Proper investment in people is crucial for enhancing performance in the service industry, a conclusion supported by previous studies. In the same vein, Constantinidou (2014) advanced that the leadership and people criteria emerged as the most significant for the five hotel general managers. Additionally, more important criteria identified are the definition and promotion of change in the organization, the policy and strategy based on the current and future needs and expectations of stakeholder groups, the planning management, and improvement of human resources, the management of buildings, equipment, and materials, and the design and development of processes.

Other researchers firmly stated that effective leadership requires not only setting a vision and direction but also actively engaging employees in the process of achieving organizational goals. The importance of linking leadership, employees, and customers in improving business results is highlighted by Cheung and Wong (2011). They confirmed that management commitment to service quality does not produce positive organizational outcomes unless it is linked with effective employee involvement in serving customers. Rani and Supinit (2015) demonstrated that when employees are involved, rewarded, and empowered, their satisfaction increases, leading to more effective TQM operations. Similarly, Hussain and Khan (2020) discussed the role of employee and organizational commitment, stressing that employee engagement is essential for delivering high-quality service and maintaining competitiveness. The study by Thuy (2023) concluded that employee involvement has the strongest impact on hotel business performance among the soft TQM practices. Similarly, Santos-Vijande and Alvarez-Gonzalez (2009) consider employees as recipients of benefits from TQM implementation. These improvements can, in turn, positively influence customer satisfaction and overall performance. Consequently, the second hypothesis is proposed:

$H_{2:}$ Leadership and people criteria have a stronger impact on hotel performance than other EFQM practices.

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Methods

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of TQM on HP and identify the most relevant practices to enhance business results. This section deals with research design, especially related to sampling and the data collection method.

Sampling and data collection

The study focuses on 4-star, 5-star, and luxury hotels affiliated with national and international chains located in Morocco. The selection of these hotels was carefully aligned with the research objectives and the findings of the exploratory qualitative research. We compiled a list of 200 hotels that met the defined criteria, the most relevant being the familiarity with the TQM approach. A total of 93 hotels agreed to participate in the study (46.5%).

An online questionnaire was distributed to senior management representatives of these hotels over 7 months. A pre-test was conducted with five managers to ensure the clarity of the questionnaire, the absence of bias, and an appropriate completion time. Through a multi-stage data collection process, a total of 93 completed questionnaires were received and accurately analyzed. The questionnaire consists of three sections: Section 1 provides the demographic details of the hotel respondents. Section 2 presents the EFQM model used to evaluate TQM, with an emphasis on the five enablers: Leadership, Strategy, People, Partnerships and Resources, and Processes, Products and Services. Participants provided their responses to this section using a five-point Likert scale, where a score of one indicates disagreement (TQM practice is not represented), and a score of five indicates agreement (TQM practice is represented). Section 3 presents HP, evaluated through indicators such as occupancy rate, turnover, market share, customer satisfaction, loyalty, and requirements compliance. Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement regarding the status of these indicators.

Data Analysis

The collected data were coded in SPSS 20 for statistical analysis before performing the PLS-SEM analysis. PLS was preferred due to the limited data size, its suitability for Likert-type scale data, and its primary purpose in testing structural associations in this research. The sample size of 93 hotels is considered adequate for the PLS-SEM analysis, as it adheres to the general recommendations for this method. According to Hair et al. (2017), a minimum sample size of 100 is often suggested for PLS-SEM, though it can be reduced to 50 or even 30 in cases of simple models with fewer constructs.

PLS SEM method can simultaneously depict relationships among all latent variables (Figure 1) while addressing measurement errors in the

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structural model. The analysis consists of two steps: first, evaluating the measurement model to ensure the precise identification of constructs; second, examining the structural model for hypothesis testing. The analysis will be conducted using SmartPLS 4 software, which ensures comprehensive and reliable results. This choice allows the study to effectively manage and analyze the relationships between variables, providing significant insights into the model's structure.

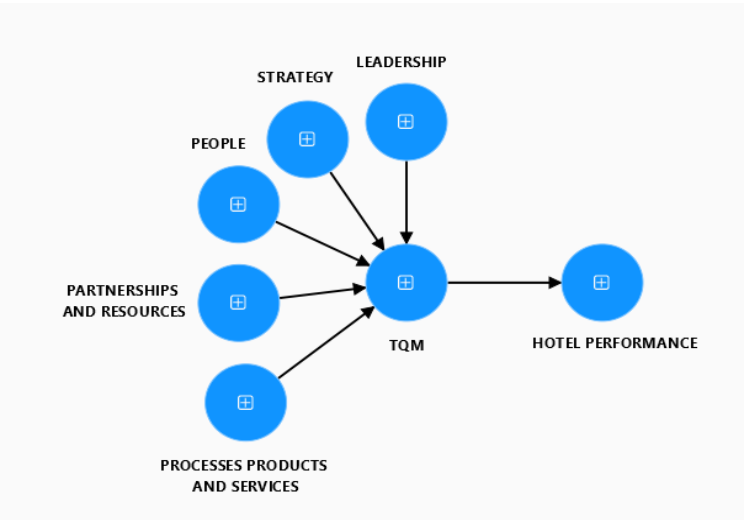

Figure 1: Research model

Main results

Measurement model assessment

Following the guidelines for PLS-SEM application by Hair et al. (2023), the first step in evaluating the measurement model is to assess indicator reliability by examining the indicator loadings. These loadings represent the correlation between each indicator and its corresponding construct, and their squared values indicate the proportion of variance explained by the construct. All loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.708 (Figure 2), indicating that each indicator's variance is explained by more than 50% of the construct, suggesting acceptable reliability.

We then explored the internal consistency, reliability, and convergent validity of the measurement model. To evaluate internal consistency reliability, both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) were used. Table 1 shows that Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.71 to 0.94, and the CR values for each construct were greater than 0.7, suggesting that the scales are internally consistent and reliable.

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Table 1. Internal consistency, reliabilit,y and convergent validity

Condition	Cronbach's alpha ≥0.7 and ≤0.95	CR>0.7	AVE ≥ 0.5
HP	0.868	0.904	0.654
Leadership	0.869	0.921	0.796
Partnerships and resources	0.627	0.842	0.727
People	0.692	0.829	0.617
Processes, Products, and services	0.944	0.964	0.899
Strategy	0.896	0.927	0.762

The third step is to assess the convergent validity of each construct. The average variance extracted (AVE) for each measure ranged from 0.42 to 0.89, supporting convergent validity, as the values exceed the recommended threshold of 0.50. This suggests that the constructs explain a substantial proportion of the variance in their respective items, indicating good convergent validity.

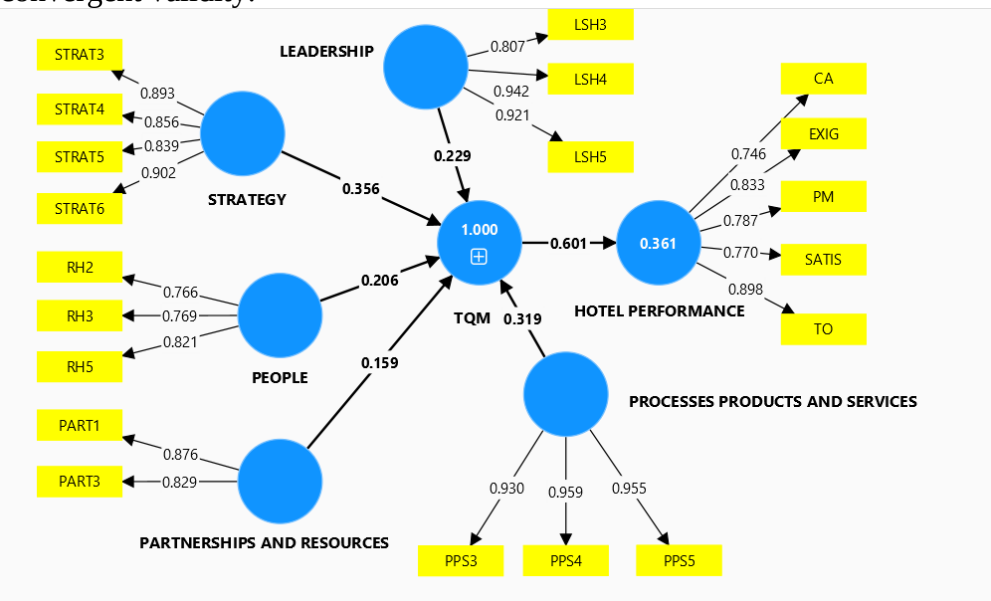

Figure 2: Research model on Smart PLS 4

Table 2. Discriminant validity

Condition	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
(1) Hotel Performance	**0.809**					
(2) Leadership	0.392	**0.892**				
(3) Partnerships and resources	0.413	0.494	**0.853**			
(4) People	0.501	0.378	0.465	**0.786**		
(5) Processes	0.535	0.523	0.664	0.452	**0.948**	
(6) Strategy	0.479	0.425	0.563	0.701	0.484	**0.873**

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Table 2 presents the discriminant validity matrix. Fornell and Larcker (1981) introduced a traditional metric indicating that the AVE (average variance extracted) of each construct should be compared to the squared inter-construct correlations (which measure shared variance) with all other constructs in the structural model. Specifically, the shared variance among the constructs should not exceed their respective AVEs.

Structural model assessment

After assessing the measurement model, the next step is to evaluate the relevance and predictive capability of the structural model, with *p*-values below 0.05 and the t-statistics > 1.96. The results (Table 3) revealed that all paths were significant, with f^2 effect sizes large (f^2 = 0.556). Overall, the illustrative model explained approximately 36% of the variance in performance (R^2 = 0.354), indicating moderate in-sample predictive capability.

Table 3. Validation of hypotheses

Condition	95%CI			
	Original sample (O) > 0	t-statistics > 2.3	p-values < 0.05	Validity
H_1: TQM =»HP	**0.601**	**8.414**	**0.000**	**confirmed**
$H_{1;1}$ *Leadership =»HP*	0.137	4.994	0.000	confirmed
$H_{1;2}$ *Strategy =» HP*	0.214	7.299	0.000	confirmed
$H_{1;3}$ *People =» HP*	0.124	7.870	0.000	confirmed
$H_{1;4}$ *PR=» HP*	0.096	6.764	0.000	confirmed
$H_{1;5}$ *Processes =» HP*	0.192	7.379	0.000	confirmed

Discussion

The direct effect of TQM on HP is significant in the Moroccan hospitality context, with a coefficient of 0.601, indicating a strong positive relationship. The t-value of 8.414 and the p-value of 0.000 confirm that this relationship is statistically significant, meaning that improvements in TQM practices are likely to enhance hotel performance at both the financial and customer levels, ultimately contributing to the pursuit of business excellence (Cortes et al., 2008; Bouranta et al., 2017; Shourah and Shourah, 2020; Sin et al., 2022). Hypothesis 1 is confirmed. Hotels with higher levels of implemented TQM practices tend to have higher occupancy rates, revenue, market share, guest satisfaction, and adherence to standards.

According to the SEM results, all the effects are statistically significant, larger, and have greater explanatory power. However, Strategy is the most important variable in the TQM implementation process, impacting hotel performance, with a coefficient of 0.214. In other words, managers prioritize strategic alignment as a cornerstone of their TQM efforts. Strategy facilitates better decision-making and resource allocation, as it emphasizes key

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performance indicators that align with organizational goals. The second most important criterion of the EFQM is processes, products, and services (0.192). Continuous improvement helps identify inefficiencies and implement proactive changes to optimize operations. This ensures consistent quality in the services offered and enables them to dynamically meet customer expectations. Continuous improvement also fosters a culture of innovation, where employees are encouraged to share ideas and propose solutions. Hotels can adapt to market changes and customer feedback, which is essential in such a competitive industry. Consequently, Hypothesis 2, which states that leadership and people have a stronger impact on hotel performance than other practices, is rejected.

The study suggests that Leadership (0.137) and People (0.124) play a supportive role rather than serving as primary drivers of performance. This can be attributed to several factors. First, leadership practices may be well-established within Moroccan hotels, potentially limiting their perceived direct impact on performance metrics. While leadership is crucial for setting the vision and shaping organizational culture, its influence may manifest indirectly through other factors such as strategy and processes. Leaders guide the strategic direction of the organization by making informed decisions that ensure appropriate resource allocation to achieve desired outcomes. They foster a culture of continuous improvement and motivate employees to innovate and enhance products and services. By demonstrating a strong commitment to quality, leaders inspire their teams to adopt best practices in daily operations, thereby improving overall service delivery (Rivaldo, 2021).

Employees also play a critical role in supporting strategic initiatives and improving products, processes, and services by fostering engagement and aligning their efforts with organizational goals. Effective collaboration encourages the exchange of innovative ideas, enhancing the guest experience. Through continuous training and skill development, employees are empowered to optimize service delivery and adapt to evolving customer needs. Constructive feedback allows them to identify areas for improvement in operations and offerings. A customer-centric mindset ensures that services consistently exceed expectations, and when employees take ownership of their roles, they become key contributors to the hotel's overall effectiveness and strategic success.

Calvo-Mora et al. (2014) emphasized that for an organization to improve key business results, leadership and human resource management must be oriented toward a culture of quality, learning, and continuous improvement. Similarly, Ali et al. (2010) argued that the commitment of both top management and employees significantly influences strategic planning, supplier management, information and analysis, continuous improvement, process management, and employee development.

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Finally, the Partnerships and Resources criterion (0.096) has positive effects, but comparatively lower (Politis et al., 2022). Partnerships with suppliers and access to resources can directly enhance service delivery, provide innovative solutions, and improve the customer experience, all of which, in turn, indirectly impact performance. Moreover, effective resource management—including financial, human, and technological resources—is vital for optimizing operations and ensuring sustainability. In this way, strong partnerships and efficient resource management complement strategy, people, and processes to drive overall performance.

Conclusions

Managerial implications

The current study aims to assess the relationship between Total Quality Management (TQM) and both financial and customer-related hotel performance, as well as to identify the best practices that drive these outcomes. From a practical perspective, this connection can be leveraged to propose further applications of the model. The study shows two categories of TQM enablers: those with a direct impact on performance, namely strategy and processes; and supportive enablers, such as leadership and people, along with partnerships and resources.

Hotel managers are encouraged to adopt a balanced approach that prioritizes direct enablers while reinforcing leadership, employee involvement, and effective resource management. By doing so, managers can enhance hotel performance and create a sustainable competitive advantage in the hospitality industry. Specifically, they should clearly define organizational objectives, communicate them across departments, and align all quality initiatives with these goals. To support this effort, AI-powered tools such as predictive analytics, performance dashboards, can be leveraged to monitor key performance indicators (KPIs), identify trends, and facilitate data-driven decision-making at all operational levels.

Limitations and future research directions

The limitations of this study are related to several factors. Firstly, the study uses a cross-sectional design, meaning it observes the causal relationships between TQM practices and HP data at a single point in time. Longitudinal studies would be necessary to observe the long-term effects to track changes in performance over time and observe the enduring impact of TQM practices. Future studies could also adopt the new EFQM model.

With the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) tools, future studies could explore the impact of technology on TQM in hotels, including the investigation of how digital tools and systems, such as customer relationship management (CRM) software, AI-driven automated service processes, and

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machine learning algorithms, contribute to the implementation of TQM practices to enhance hotel performance.

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Declaration for Human Participants: This study has been approved by the Ecole Nationale de Commerce et de Gestion of Hassan First University, and the principles of the Helsinki Declaration were followed.

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