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Factor framework for the evaluation of multichannel marketing mixes in 5* city hotels

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Abstract

The increasing international competition in the touristic sector as well as the particular conditions in the trade of touristic services have made it impelling for hotel enterprises, among other things, to focus on extroversion and on the mechanisms that are linked with the market, highlighting the catalytic role of tourism marketing channels. The decisions of marketing managers regarding the formulation of Multichannel Marketing Mixes acquire vital significance in the contemporary enterprising environment, since they are determinately conducive to hotels enterprises' succeeding or failing ventures. The quality of the marketing managers' decisions is interlinked with providing them with the appropriate information regarding the effectiveness of the diverse resources and procedures used.

In the current paper, through in depth personal interviews with sales and marketing decision makers an exploration is attempted of the factors as well as the criteria for the evaluation of the performance of channels used by 5* hotels in Attica (Greece) in order to reach decisions in reference to the formation of Multichannel Marketing Mixes. As a result, delimitation is obtained of an initial framework of financial and non-financial factors and criteria for evaluating the performance of touristic marketing channels in the Hotel sector, in order to efficiently support the decision making process. According to informants an eclectic approach in choosing a mix of factors and evaluation criteria, which responds to the various business targets, contributes to decreasing insecurity and improving the terms of decision making processes regarding the formulation of an overall Multichannel Marketing Mix.

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1. Introduction

Touristic enterprises such as hotels present significant peculiarities which are relevant with the conditions of production, formulation, promotion and sales of the touristic services (Supply) as well as with the consumption of these services by the tourists (Demand). Touristic Marketing is called in to answer issues which relate to the peculiarities of the production and promotion of touristic services so as to dull the increasing pressure that is put on producers and retailers of touristic services and at the same time improve their competitiveness. Thus, in a sector where sensitivity and space and time peculiarities of the services produced are great, the strategies used by marketing channels acquire a vital significance for the competitiveness and the sustainable development of hotel enterprises, since they constitute the commercial frontispiece for the totality of the managerial and operational procedures that are executed in every hotel unit (Cooper & Lewis, 2001). Especially for tourism, (Kotler, Bowen & Makens, 2013) support that a well managed distribution system can make a difference between a company with a leading part in the market and a company which is struggling to survive, in the sense that the channels of touristic marketing stress the vital importance of the bidirectional interconnection that exists between producers and consumers aiming at the sale of the produced and provided services. Often enough, high quality services that can derive from a adequate organization and running of a hotel can remain unconsumed or show signs of reduced performance, if the gap between potential consumers and the hotel cannot be bridged with the best possible conditions.

Over the past years the importance of Marketing Channels is becoming more and more acknowledged by most businesses as the main strategic variable of marketing mixes for obtaining a viable competitiveness advantage (Kotler & Armstrong, 2007), forcing thus the businesses to pay greater attention to their management in the broader sense of the term (Cespedes, 1998), since the new conditions render as inadequate the treatment and handling of marketing channels just as a mechanistic procedure only. The aforementioned attitude is becoming more and more established because of the radical rearrangements in the structure of the financial, producing and commercial arena (Freyer & Molina, 2008) (Coughlan et al., 2006). Developments and changes in the whole of the touristic and commercial circuit affect the total of the involved parts of the marketing channels such as hoteliers who look for innovating policies and practices for an efficient promotion and sale of their production by constantly redefining the role and function of marketing channels that they use (Gustalfsson & Johnson, 2003). During these past few years the total of hotel enterprises, following the general trend in the sales of services, has adopted multi-channel marketing strategies for the attainment of multiple objective goals, such as an expanded coverage of marketing goals, massive adaptation to distinctly different consumer habits, the letting go of the need for intermediaries, the diminishment of risk through danger dispersion to a greater number of channel associates et cetera. Moving from mono-channels to multi-channels marketing strategies burdens more the administrative marketing framework, which is now asked to make decisions and form matching channel marketing policies under very difficult circumstances.

Despite the recognition of the catalytic role of touristic marketing channels in the hotel sector, it seems that the necessary scientific as well as business attention has not been given yet, on matters that are relevant with efficient management. It is important to stress that the definitive factor for a successful business course of action is the “Efficient Making of Rational Decisions” by the management for the whole of the business operations.

Still, without dependable measurements, intelligent decisions cannot be made, which ensure a long term, lasting positive course of business. The above conclusion has led, over the last years, to a turning of interest of many business managements worldwide, towards notions such as measurement, monitoring, and consequently to the improvement of their performances in various business aspects. In particular, the measuring and evaluation of marketing activities present a rising interest for professionals and the international research community, something which nevertheless cannot be said about the touristic marketing channels in the field of hotels.

The lack of a complete framework of factors and criteria for the evaluation of the performances of touristic marketing channels deprives the decision makers of information of critical importance, giving thus way to insecurity which reinforces the levels of relevant risk during the making of relevant decisions. In order to construct a Framework of Support of Multi-channel Marketing Decisions in the hotel sector, this paper explores the factors and criteria used by decision makers for measuring and evaluating the performances which relate to touristic marketing channels in hotels.

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