

International Journal of Management and Technology, Vol. 1 No. 1 (January, 2011)

Copyright © Mind Reader Publications

ISSN No. 0976-0924

www.ijmt.yolasite.com

An Investigation of the Internal Marketing Practices of International Tourism Hotels for Elderly Service

Dr. Chung-Chieh Lee¹ and Dr. Chih-Jen Chen^{2,3}

¹ Dept. of Senior Citizen Service Management, Chia Nan University of Pharmacy & Science, No.56 Shinghua Street, Kaohsiung, 803, Taiwan, ROC
Telephone: 886-6-229-5169; Fax: 886-6-266-2038; E-mail: supralee@hotmail.com

² Dept. of Senior Citizen Service Management, Chia Nan University of Pharmacy & Science, 60, Erh-Jen RD., Sec.1, Jen-Te, Tainan, Taiwan, ROC
Telephone: 886-6-266-4911/3706; Fax: 886-6-2664931; E-mail: icechen0829@yahoo.com.tw

³Corresponding author

Abstract

The main objective of the internal marketing practices of international tourism hotels is to meet the desires and needs of guests. This study seeks to illuminate the customer-specific internal marketing activities of hotels designed to improve service to the elderly tourists. The elderly tourist in this research is identified as a person who is at least 65 years old and who travels for leisure. This research also seeks to determine the extent to which hotels hire, train, and motivate staff to adopt marketing practices that would appeal to elderly tourists.

Keywords: Internal Marketing; International Tourism Hotel; Elderly Service

1. Introduction

In hotel management, internal marketing practices – the dissemination of promotion information to employees, the implementation of recognition and reward systems, and the establishment of an employee service culture – are seen as prerequisites for business success. The main objective of such hotel practices is to meet the desires and needs of guests. In this research, these guests are identified as men and women of more than 65 years of age and who travel for leisure. This research seeks to determine if hotels recognize the importance of hiring, training, and motivating employees to meet the hospitality needs of such elderly tourists. It specifically attempts to answer the two questions: (1) Do hotels and other actors in the hospitality industry adopt internal marketing practices with the particular aim of serving the elderly tourists well? (2) Do the elderly tourists represent a large enough percentage of visitors to warrant special attention from hotels?

2. Hypothesis

The two hypotheses for the research question are in the affirmative:

H1: Hotels make considerable efforts to hire, train, and retain staff that can provide exceptional service to the elderly tourism market.

H2: Although not as large as the 30–55 age groups, the elderly tourist population still represents a big enough percentage of tourist market to warrant the special attention of tourist hotel management.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research purpose

This research is conducted for exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory purposes. The exploratory aspect is carried out when the research problem does not fall within specific definitions. The descriptive research defines the questions to be used in a survey and describes the survey sample. The analysis takes place prior to data collection. The explanatory research identifies the relationships between variable causes and effects.

3.2 Research strategy

The intention of this research is to analyze the role of internal marketing practices and its effects on elderly tourists. It measures the latter by evaluating the internal marketing practices that hotels have adopted to cater well to such tourists. In addition, the availability of age-related leisure activities is used as a gauge of a hotel's ability to receive, accommodate, and entertain this population.

The research is based on a set of questionnaires to which the managements of 10, three, four, and five star hotels in New York City, U.S.A. were requested to respond. The selection of this sample was based on the service that these hotels provide to international tourists. In fact, elderly tourists made up 20% of these hotels guests each year. Moreover, since elderly tourists are more likely to stay longer while traveling, they prefer facility hotels of three or more stars, since such establishments provide the comfort and services suitable for longer vacations. All the hotels stated that the elderly tourists prolong their bookings more than any other age-based segments.

These hotels were also provided with 100 questionnaires to distribute to elderly tourists. Their evaluations of services and activities in the hotels were then used to weigh the success of the respective internal marketing activities adopted by the hotels. Of the 10 selected hotels, one of them did not participate. Of the remainder, none registered a 100% return of the elderly tourists' questionnaires. The response rate was 8 questionnaires per participant; therefore, the research ended up with 72 elderly tourist responses. The internal marketing practices were evaluated by the locations of the hotels, the comfort of their rooms, as well as their cleanliness, service, and elderly-sensitive activities.

An Investigation of the Internal Marketing Practices...

3.3 Validity & Reliability

To enhance the validity of this research, the researchers carefully selected the hotel sample, in order to ensure that the tourist population was well-diversified. The hotels were contacted well in advance, giving them plenty of time to respond to the questionnaires.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Internal marketing initiatives

Of the nine respondent hotels, all said that they recognized that focusing on employee management practices is the best way of attaining the goals of internal marketing strategies for elderly tourists. All respondent hotels confirmed that they believed motivating their employees played a vital role in the reception and service afforded by the former to elderly tourists. Seven out of the nine respondents stated that they encouraged their employees to express any feelings, concerns, or issues that arose when attending to this population. In fact, they actually sought their views.

The survey revealed that hotels with internal marketing strategies anticipated that inspiring and rewarding staff would lead to better service provision to the elderly tourists. Remarkably, all the hotels that adopted such practices stated that the ability to relate well to tourists from different cultures and backgrounds was a pre-requisite for hiring. Good communication skills were also considered important in selecting personnel.

4.2 Effects of the internal marketing initiatives on the elderly tourists

Of the 72 responses from the elderly tourists, four questionnaires were deemed not fit for analysis because of the incompleteness. The remaining 68 questionnaires formed the empirical basis for the study. Statistically, 20% of all respondents rated the service provisions in the respective hotels as excellent 68% as good, and 12% as in need of improvement. An astounding 85% of the respondents affirmed that they would consider staying in the same hotel on a return visit or recommend the hotel to others.

Furthermore, 72% of all respondents mentioned the service attitude of hotel staff as the main reason for their opinions. Moreover, 18% of them cited the combination of activities, food and dining, service, and rooms as the reason for their returning. While 54% agreed that age was a factor in determining their treatment, 20% were not sure. The remaining 26% did not believe that age played this role.

5. Discussion

The recruitment, training, motivation, communication, and retention of employees are all internal marketing strategies. Hotels that specifically trained their staff to cater to elderly tourists were better evaluated by the latter. Evidently, the quality of service was a major factor determining the decisions of elderly tourists to repeat their stay at hotels and recommend them to others.

Service organizations need to succeed in their internal marketing before they can appeal to the external market. As this research indicates, tourist hotels targeting the elderly tourism market need not only to design packages, activities, or accommodations for seniors, but also to recruit, train, motivate, and retain staff members who provide quality services for this segment of their guests. Employees must have all the necessary information to make elderly tourists comfortable and happy. The empirical data collected during this research shows that all the hotel respondents support efforts that lead to this end, suggesting that Hypothesis 1 is correct. The longer stay of elderly tourists indicates that the hotels value this population, even though they only represent a small percentage of total guests, proving the validity of hypothesis 2.

6. Conclusion

With the fierce competition in the hotel industry, hotel owners must build customer loyalty through customer satisfaction. This can only be obtained through exceptional service delivery, which is the responsibility of the hotel staff. Loyalty schemes for elderly tourists are one of the strategies that international tourism hotels can use to their advantage, especially because such guests are less adventurous than others and are more outspoken about their needs and interests. Therefore, hotel management must train their staff to employ strategies that most appeal to elderly tourists when attending to their needs and interests.

References

- Arnett, D.B., Laverie, D. A. & McLane, C. (2002). Using Job Satisfaction and pride as internal marketing tools. (Human Resources). *Business Journals: Cornell Hotel & Restaurant Administration Quarterly* 1-4.
- Avcikurt, C. (2007). *The mature age market in Europe and its Influence on tourism*. 140-145. Retrieved April 1, 2010 from: <http://sbe.balikesir.edu.tr/dergi/edergi/c6s9/makale/c6s9m7.pdf>
- Christopher, M., Payne, A. & Ballantyne, D. (1991). *Relationship Marketing: Bringing quality customer service and marketing together*. 1-30. Retrieved April 3, 2010 from: <https://dspace.lib.cranfield.ac.uk/bitstream/1826/621/2/SWP3191.pdf>
- Gounaris, S. (2008). Antecedents of Internal marketing practice: some preliminary empirical evidence. *International Journal of Service Industry Management* 19(3), 400-434.
- Jones, P. (1986). Internal Marketing. *International Journal of Hospitality Management* 5(4), 201-203.
- Kotler, P. Bowen, J. & Makens, J. (2003). *Marketing for Hospitality and Tourism* (4th Ed.). New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Lewis, R. (1989). Hospitality marketing: The Internal approach. *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly* 30(3), 41-44.
- Wilhite, B., Hamilton, K. & Reilly, L. (1988). Recreational travel and the elderly: marketing strategies with a normalization perspective. *Activities, Adaptation & Aging* 12(1&2), 59-72.
- Ylanne-McEwen, V. (2000). Golden Times for Golden Ager: Selling Holidays as Lifestyle for the over 50s. *Journal of Communication* 50(3), 83.