Chapter 14
The Hierarchization of Product Attributes:
Hotel Managers in the Decision and Purchasing Processes of Consumers – The Case of Outbound Markets of Porto

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate which hotels' attributes are most valued by the guests of the main markets of Porto. The guests' knowledge, preferences, and needs are crucial data that impact customer satisfaction. As a people-to-people industry, the hotel industry must consider the heterogeneity of its markets and invest in improving its services, considering the aspects they value. However, is the heterogeneity pronounced that much? Or are there any similarities between markets? Guests do not have similar satisfaction levels, so to guarantee the best experience for the most significant number of customers, these should be studied by market segments, once individual study would be impracticable. Through the comments made on the Booking.com, following the assumption that guests comment on what they value, the attributes that guests of different nationalities refer to Porto hotels have been collected. From the analysis of all the collected data, it can be concluded that all the main markets' value attributes and the fundamental differences are based on the hierarchy of these attributes.

INTRODUCTION

The primary objective of any company is profit. The hotel industry is related to the activity of hotels providing, in addition to accommodation, a considerable amount of complementary services, to meet the individual needs of their consumers, the guests (Dubcová et al., 2013), so that loyalty and consumption, so that the hotel achieves the intended profit. Customer loyalty resulting from customer satisfaction is an essential factor in improving results, especially corporate profit (Wolsfold et al., 2016; Djekic et al., 2016).

All the transformations that have been felt with the globalization effect, and in particular the evolution concerning transport, which shorten distances and bring countries closer, have had an impact on the hotel industry, which has increasingly become a global service, that is, its "competitive set" is no longer a local scale, but a global scale. In addition to the competition, which must be overcome to achieve the primary objective, globalization creates the need to know the new customers that come up with it and their needs, as, increasingly, the country of origin of the guests is diversified and your preferences and needs as well.

Knowing potential customers and understanding the extent to which tourists from different places, whether countries or regions, resemble or differ in terms of preferences and attitudes is an advantage for hoteliers (Ozdipciner et al., 2012) that seek to satisfy the needs of their customers, to be a preference when making a purchase decision, to gain loyalty and to obtain good word-of-mouth advertising. Companies that can anticipate and recognize their customers' needs show better results than those that do not (Almsalam, 2014). The theory that hotel management decisions should start with guests' understanding to generate a feeling of satisfaction is defended by several managers (Lu et al., 2015). Therefore, identifying what is relevant for customers becomes of utmost importance for hotel managers (Albayrak & Caber, 2015).

The theme of customer satisfaction is a recurrent subject in current literature. The significant increase in competition in the hotel sector means that hoteliers need to stand out and make a difference in the market. However, it is not enough to make a difference. It is necessary that this difference is perceived and valued by consumers and seeks to satisfy their needs. Tourists are increasingly looking to personalize their trips, taking into account their needs. The impersonal system in which "mass tourism" operates is no longer sufficient for more experienced travelers, who seek to customize the tourist experience to their needs and preferences (Dwyer, 2015).

In the current global market, tourism companies are increasingly striving to increase customer satisfaction through their products and services, following the premise that customer satisfaction is one of the most relevant antecedents of companies' financial performance (Albayrak & Caber, 2015) since the dissatisfaction caused by the low quality of the service is considered a cost of non-quality (WHDP, 2014).

Data collected through an online source is reliable, as customers tend to rely more on an online assessment, where people feel more comfortable expressing their praise and criticism of the products and services provided to them (Lee et al., 2013). Increasingly, online reviews are used as a means of knowledge of hotels by tourists. These are one of the sources of information used in the purchase decision process by consumers. That is, a dissatisfied customer will not be just a non-loyal customer but also a customer who will negatively influence a large number of people in your purchasing process. Therefore, it is essential to work on this source of information to take into account the positive and negative aspects pointed out to the hotel to improve it so that a negative comment is compensated in the future with positive comments about the) same attribute(s). This will demonstrate concern for guests' comfort and well-being and consideration for their opinion. A quality improvement will increase satisfaction, which will be converted into an increase in the results of the hotel company (Eshtetie et al., 2016).

Today, information about customers and their preferences is accessible to any hotelier. Online reviews are an excellent source of information that offers hoteliers the opportunity to know the point of view of various customers and potential customers from different countries and with different needs, allowing them to invest in improving their services based on a specific base. Solid and grounded as to the improvements that must be made (Khozaei, 2016). Improvements are all the more effective when attributes that should be improved are identified (Lin et al., 2009).

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