

DISTRIBUTION CHANNEL SYSTEMS OF RESORT HOTELS IN TURKEY

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Introduction

The positive influence of tourism on the Turkish economy has forced a need for improved marketing strategies to meet the increased and changing demand of international visitors. Today's tourists no longer represent a large homogeneous market. Instead, tourism is becoming increasingly specialized as tourist's interests divide, some becoming more discriminating in their destinations and more value conscious of travel considerations such as comfort and service. As the tourist's behavior and tests change, so must the destinations, and marketing strategies of hotels and resort hotels be changed and updated to meet those needs. It is the main objective of this study to investigate and delineate the nature, structure and characteristics of distribution channel systems of tourism service providers, more specifically resort hotels, in Turkey. In this study along with resort hotels other members of distribution channels have been examined and directly or indirectly critical points of Turkish Tourism were underlined.

Study of the Channel System

In tourism industry just like other service industries there is no physical transportation and distribution of services provided for customers. However, the hospitality and travel industry instead of a physical distribution system include several intermediaries within the distribution channels. This situation is especially very significant in distribution channel systems of resort hotels when they are mostly marketed at the international level (Middleton 1989, p.185).

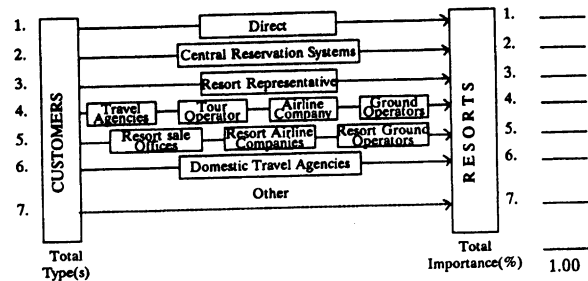
In this study as we analyse the distribution channels of resort hotels in Turkey we felt that it would be beneficial to underline the main differences between manufacturing industry and service industry, and identify the hotel industry's unique characteristics of intangibility, non-standardization, and inseparability. Here a special effort is made to point out and explain the additional P's in the marketing mix of resort industry (Morrison 1989).

The main scope is to analyse the distribution channels of resort hotels in Turkey. In order to accomplish this goal a broader view has been adopted and resort hotels and other intermediaries in distribution channels and their interrelationship have been investigated. A special focus is given on movement toward the approach of vertical marketing systems, in that resort hotels, tour operators, travel agencies, etc. have been reviewed (Kaven 1974). It is also noticed that even though there is an increasing demand for travel and holiday needs in overseas, people who book through tour operators are extremely budget minded and it is very likely that the most economical travel packages will come from vertical marketing systems in international tourism industry.

Resort hotels are the last member of distribution channel system and also the cost and risk of building a resort particularly in another country have been found higher. On the other hand, it is found that resort hotels do not receive a high percentage of tour package prices. It is very noticeable that under normal conditions independent resort hotel investments in Turkey are not very profitable, nevertheless, the sharp improvement in increasing bed capacity in Turkey was obtained during the last ten years mainly due to large scale of incentives provided by the Turkish government. Therefore, it would be very legitimate to say that investments on tourism in Turkey have been highly sensitive to the incentives given by the government.

A mail back questionnaire was specifically designed to examine different types of distribution channels used by resort hotels and their marketing strategies. The questionnaire also included a section on types of hotels, locations, marketing department related issues and types of markets. The study used a systematic random sampling procedure to ensure the representativeness of hotels in the country.

Considering seven possible distribution channel systems commonly used by resort hotels in Turkey, hotel owners or managers were asked to choose the ones that best describe and fit their marketing channel systems and also indicate percentage importance of each distribution channel. These channel systems have been at the figure illustrated below.



Conclusion

Of the 722 survey questionnaires mailed to the addresses obtained from the Turkish Hotel Association and other tourism organizations, 188 were returned at a response rate of 26 percent. It is hoped that findings of this study would be of help to tourism suppliers in their future marketing and planning efforts.

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Middletown, Victor T.C. 1989. Marketing in travel and Tourism. Halley Court, Jordan Hill, Oxford: 186.

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