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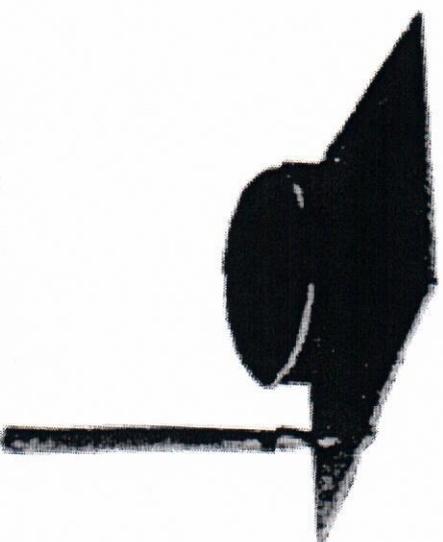
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# CHALLENGES in HIGHER EDUCATION and RESEARCH in the 21st CENTURY

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## APPLYING RELATIONSHIP MARKETING IN A TRAVEL AGENCY

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**Abstract:** The tourism industry is a global industry, important and complex, and the success of the tourism firms depends on obtaining customer satisfaction through consumption of the services offered. In this article are assessed the actions specific to relationship marketing applied within a well known travel agency from Romania, J'Info Tours. In order to identify the opportunities to improve these approaches, it was organized a marketing research with the topic "Opinions, attitudes and behaviors of customers regarding the relationship with the travel agency J'Info Tours".

**Keywords:** relationship marketing, loyal customers, travel agency.

### 1. Introduction

The evolution of companies' market objectives have determined important changes in the decisions of marketing policies. If a few years ago in the forefront of marketing strategies was the selection of new customers, recently, the creation of new customers and the increase in existing customers' loyalty has become a priority, but very difficult in the same time. The customers' loyalty includes the measures taken by a company for focusing positively the present and future customers behavior intentions on services offered by providers in order to develop the relationship with these customers [2]. In this framework a new business philosophy is approached, a strategic orientation which emphasizes the idea of maintaining and improving the relationship with current customers, more than attracting new customers, meaning relationship marketing [6]. Regarding the conceptual framework of relationship marketing, marketers consider that this is based on three different approaches, but interdependent [4]:

1. The approach from behavioral perspective (based on trust, satisfaction, loyalty for the organization, enthusiasts customers, exclusivity);
  2. Approach from network theory perspective (relationships networks, network company-suppliers-customer; modern customer);
  3. The managerial approach (the central role is played by domestic marketing).
- Under current conditions is more and more difficult for a provider to differentiate its offer in relation to competitors in terms of physical attributes, and relationship marketing is an effective and necessary mean in ensuring customers loyalty and building a strong partnership with them [3].

### 2. The Specific Application of Relationship Marketing in Tourism

In the tourism industry a few conditions can be distinguished which favor the application of relationship marketing: the existence of a constant demand for services, the customer has consumption alternatives, the customer controls the selection of suppliers, loyalty is fragile and decisions are frequent and easy and verbal communication is extremely important in the field [5]. The management of customers relations offer companies the possibility to ensure an excellent service and in real time, by an effective use of information regarding the individual customer. On the basis of what they know about each customer, the travel agencies can adapt the market offers, services, programs, messages and communication means.

The marketing tools specific for building a strong relationship with the customer pursue three aspects. First, the granting of financial benefits, category including the loyalty programs of the airlines, hotels, etc, the frequent customers being rewarded. A second set of measures grants social benefits, as a result of a thorough knowledge of customers' needs and preferences to individualize and customize the offer. The third alternative is more complex and aims to strengthen structural relationships with valuable customers by offering financial and social rewards (waiting rooms, telephone lines, special check-in, check-out operations, etc). This type of relationship is built only with certain customers, which means a careful selection of potential customers and effectively valued.

The methods of customers loyalty can be divided in the following operational alternatives: emotional loyalty achieved through customer satisfaction and represents the center of any loyalty measures, loyalty conditioned by economic factors, in this case the customer would notice that migration towards another supplier would create unnecessary additional costs (for creating new relationship, information and time, etc); contractual loyalty which "links" the customer with a producer, brand or sales unit by using provisions in contracts (for example, leasing) and technical-functional loyalty which is possible when there is a certain functional dependence between the basic service and the additional one [1].

The history of Rixos chain is relatively recent, starts in the year 2000 with the opening of the hotel Rixos Labada. The Rixos hotels are built on the principle - ALL EXCLUSIVE & ALL INCLUSIVE - that means customers have access at anything, and what is more important, everything is special for them. The hotel staff is convinced that the guests deserve all the best, to spend an unforgettable holiday. The oriental hospitality is felt from the entrance: the customer is expected with lukum Turkish delights, the hands are sprinkled with lemon water and wiped with refreshing wipes and in the room a lot of fruits and flowers are waiting. In each hotel there is a basic restaurant with hundreds of food types, fruits and cookies and 5-7 restaurants "a la carte" where each visitor can make a free reservation and many bars and cafes at customers' disposal in any moment. The first hotel, which opened the Rixos chain was Rixos Labada. They have chosen as locations only the Turkish mediterranean coast, than they have expanded in Kazahstan, Lybia, Croatia, Bahrain, Ukraine and most recent, the United Arab Emirates. [6].

The strategy adopted by Rixos chain: the increase of the employee's skills by using training programs in order to have a higher productivity, but also by rewarding the employees with awards, suggestions and recognition.

## 2. Presentation of the Hotel Chain Rixos

According to the classification type of the accommodation unit. Regarding the quality of the hotel services, this is given by all the elements in contact with the customer, from door-keeper, receptionist, luggage carrier, waiter to the colour of the walls from the room, the bed size, the tiles in the bathroom and the view of the room. All is meant to delight the final customer and to make him choose that hotel again for his next holiday or business trip. There are hotels organized in chains, extended in several towns or seaside, mountain and balneary resorts. The organization in chains of the hotels increase confidence because customers are more and more critical.

# QUALITY STRATEGIES USED IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY CASE STUDY: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS BETWEEN THE HOTEL CHAIN CORNELIA AND THE HOTEL CHAIN RIXOS

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**Abstract:** In the field of hotel services quality is considered, more and more frequently, the most important factor of competitiveness. In this paper a comparison is made between the quality of services offered by two hotel chains from Eurasia, one being in the peak and the other at the beginning. It is about the grand hotel chain Rixos and the small hotel chain Cornelia. The two hotel chains are representative for highlighting quality hotel services.

**Keywords:** hotel chain, performance, quality strategies.

## 1. Introduction

The tourist services of any kind are defined by the quality of delivery. The way in which these services arrive at the customer makes the difference between them [1]. The assessment of tourist service quality by the consumer is the result of comparison between expectations and the experience gained.

Although the heterogeneity of tourism products make the quality assessment difficult, a few features are identified for defining quality in tourism [3]:

The accurate performance of tourist services by honoring promises and performing services in best conditions (accuracy in preparing bills, keeping proper accounting methods, service performance in time). Showing a maximum responsibility from the tourist organization, expressed by receptivity at customers' desires. Competence assured by using specialized knowledge and qualified staff in the performance of tourist service.

The accessibility of tourist services expressed by ease in contacting the tourist organization, in finding information and acquiring the tourist product, the flexibility of the operating hours and minimization of the waiting time. Kindness of the staff, politeness, respect, consideration and friendship for the target audience.

Communication, correct information of target audience by using a proper, adapted language. Credibility assured by the name and reputation of the tourism organization, by the closeness degree between the provider and consumer during the performance of the tourist service.

Physical, financial safety and confidentiality, meaning the lack of any danger, risk or doubts regarding the performance of the tourist service.

Understanding the specific needs of the target audience by customization of tourism products and existing relationships between the tourism organization and consumer. Tangible elements should be as attractive as possible: modern furniture, new, comfortable, pleasant environment, well dressed staff, modern equipments, endowments ac-