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APPLYING RELATIONSHIP MARKETING MODELS IN TOURISM

During the last 20 years, a relationship marketing concept has become the dominant marketing paradigm and subject of many marketing researches. Relationship marketing is used in many marketing areas such as: service marketing, marketing research, customer behavior, international marketing, strategic marketing, direct marketing etc. Applying relationship marketing in service sector means that services have to fulfill customer needs to increase customer's satisfaction and loyalty during a long time period. Based on the literature review and the relationship marketing research in service sector, the aim of the paper is to identify key assumptions and effects of applying relationship marketing in tourism. It shows that many different approaches in building relationship quality between companies and customers lead to increasing customer's loyalty in tourism. The content analysis of applying relationship marketing models in the most famous journals of tourism is given in the paper. The aim of content analysis is to indicate the positive trends in applying relationship marketing in tourism business.

Keywords: relationship marketing, tourism, customer loyalty, content analysis.

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ЗАСТОСУВАННЯ МОДЕЛЕЙ МАРКЕТИНГУ ВІДНОСИН У ТУРИЗМІ

У статті показано, як за останні 20 років концепція маркетингу відносин стала домінуючою парадигмою у маркетингу, а також об'єктом багатьох маркетингових досліджень. Сьогодні маркетинг відносин використовується у багатьох сферах: сервісному маркетингу, маркетингових дослідженнях, при вивченні поведінки споживачів, у міжнародному та стратегічному маркетингу, а також у директ-маркетингу. Зокрема, застосування маркетингу відносин у секторі послуг призводить до підвищення ступеню задоволеності клієнтів та їх лояльності у довготерміновій перспективі. Виявлено основні фактори впливу маркетингу відносин на сектор туризму, представлено різноманітні підходи до формування відносин між фірмами та клієнтами у туризмі. Контент-аналіз застосовуваних моделей маркетингу відносин обґрунтував позитивний тренд розвитку даного напрямку у маркетингу.

Ключові слова: маркетинг відносин; туризм; лояльність клієнтів; контент-аналіз.

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ПРИМЕНЕНИЕ МОДЕЛЕЙ МАРКЕТИНГА ОТНОШЕНИЙ В ТУРИЗМЕ

В статье показано, как за последние 20 лет концепция маркетинга отношений стала доминирующей парадигмой в маркетинге, а также объектом множества маркетинговых исследований. Сегодня маркетинг отношений используется во многих сферах: сервисном маркетинге, маркетинговых исследованиях, при изучении поведения потребителей, в международном и стратегическом маркетинге, а также в директ-маркетинге. В частности, применение маркетинга отношений в секторе услуг приводит к повышению степени удовлетворённости клиентов и их лояльности в долгосрочной перспективе. Выявлены основные факторы влияния маркетинга отношений на сектор туризма, представлены различные подходы к формированию отношений между фирмами и клиентами в туризме. Контент-анализ применяемых моделей маркетинга отношений обосновал позитивный тренд развития данного направления в маркетинге.

Ключевые слова: маркетинг отношений; туризм; лояльность клиентов; контент-анализ.

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1. Introduction

Marketing activities are one of the key factors for successful positioning of service companies. Regarding the existence of significant difference between services and products, basically in terms of impalpable, variability, transience and inseparability, services require additional marketing activities. Unlike the palpable and standardized products, in service providing process is important to establish a contact with endusers. Service marketing implies the realization of different relation types between buyers and service companies, along with the traditional marketing based on the 4Ps concept, service marketing comprises internal marketing and interactive marketing, namely relationship marketing. Internal marketing covers the process of training and motivating employees (internal buyers), with the aim of providing quality service and endbuyers satisfaction. Relationship marketing concept presents the development, maintenance and improvement of the relationship with buyers with the aim of providing quality service, therefore the realization of companies' business performances. According to Kotler and Armstrong (Murphy, Maguiness, Pescott, Wislang, Wang, 2005) relationship marketing presents creation and maintenance of relationships with buyers, as well as with other stakeholders. Relationship marketing aim is forming a long-term value for buyers, and on the other hand the indicator of successful application of relationship marketing concept is the realization of buyers' satisfaction and loyalty".

Relationship marketing in service sector presents a powerful tool as a competitive advantage realization with service companies, and is based on strengthening the relationships between sellers and buyers, applying the extended 4Ps marketing concept and customer service improvement. Berry (Sin, Tse, Yan, Lee, Chow, 2002) defined 3 strategic development directions of relationship marketing in service sector. Firstly, companies should provide the basic service based on strengthening their relations with buyers. Secondly, companies should adapt their services to individual users, enrich their service with different benefits and provide discounts to increase the number of loyal buyers. Thirdly, companies should invest in internal marketing and motivate their employees to realize better quality relations with their buyers.

Applying relationship marketing in service sector means that services have to fulfill customer needs to increase customer's satisfaction and loyalty during a long time period. Based on the literature review and the relationship marketing research in service sector, the aim of the paper is to identify the key assumptions and effects in applying relationship marketing in tourism.

2. Development of relationship marketing models in a service sector

Recently, marketing theory has been paying more and more attention to practical application of relationship marketing in business operations between service companies and customers. Studies suggest and analyze the influence of relationship marketing on the improvement of companies' performances in the service sector as compared to production (Dupont, 1998; Kim, Michell, 1999; Palmatier et al., 2006; White, 2000). In literature, different models of relationship marketing in the service sector are defined, development factors for marketing relations and the effects of its appliance in the service sector.

Researchers analyzed different factors of relationship marketing development, such as: trust (Ndubisi, 2004; Morgan, Hunt, 1994), customer loyalty (Nusair, Xu Li,

2010; Chan, Ndubisi, 2004; Dagger et al., 2011) customer complaint management (Ndubisi and Chan, 2005) means of communication of the employed with customers etc. (Ndubisi, Chan, 2005; Morgan, Hunt, 1994; Crosby et al., 1990). Authors Mousa and Zoubi (Mousa, Zoubi, 2011) defined key factors for relationship marketing development. Interpersonal characteristics of an individual present an important prerequisite for development of relationship marketing, mainly between companies and customers. Characteristics of customers such as: trust, communication and loyalty influence the quality of customer relationship with companies. Previous research showed the importance of internal marketing for marketing relations development (Saura, et al., 2010; Hwang, Chi, 2005). Investment in training, development and motivation of the employed directly influence building up better and better quality relations between the employed (salespersons) and customers. Information technology role is also important, for service personalization and relationship marketing development (the role of online communications, public networks, and data bases marketing, CRM etc.). Online shopping offers many advantages, such as comfort, interaction, simplicity and easy search, information update, time saving, search for the lowest prices, offer sorting etc., all of which influence greater customer loyalty (Cheng et al., 2011; Molina et al., 2010; Alvarez et al., 2007). Also, in relationship marketing research in service sector Ward and Dagger (Ward, Dagger, 2007) pointed to the important factors of relationship marketing development such as: the length of the process-relationship marketing development, frequency degree of customers contact with service companies, demographic characteristics of customers, relationship marketing importance for customers etc.

The conceptual model shown on Figure 1 depicts the relationship marketing influence on marketing performances of a company, that is a relationship marketing influence on improvement of competitive advantage and greater customer satisfaction. When building up quality relations with customers, companies business characteristics (such like business operating length, the number of the employed, scope of activities etc.) have an important role in applying relationship marketing and in improvement of company's marketing performances.

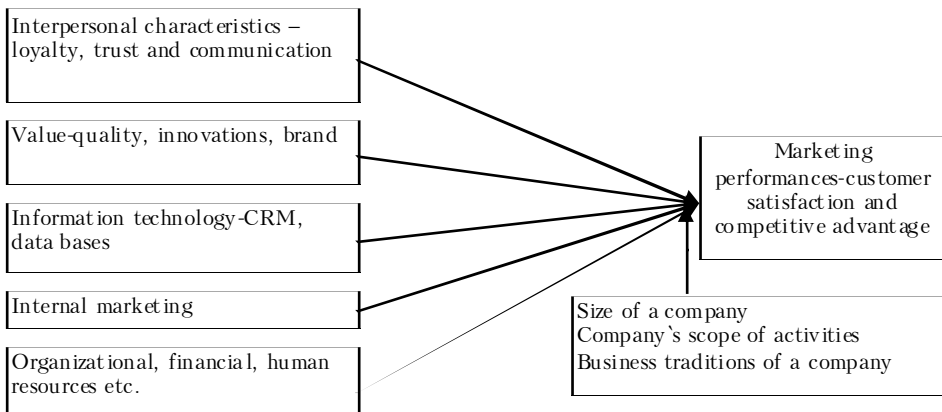


Figure 1. Influence of relationship marketing factor on marketing performances of a company (Source: Mousa, Zoubi, 2011)

During the research of relationship marketing in the service sector (Ndubisi, 2007) the subject matter of special analyses was the influence of customer trust factor, means of communication between the employed and customers, but especially efficient customer complaints management and its influence on building up and maintenance of relationships with customers, and therefore the increase in their loyalty (Figure 2).

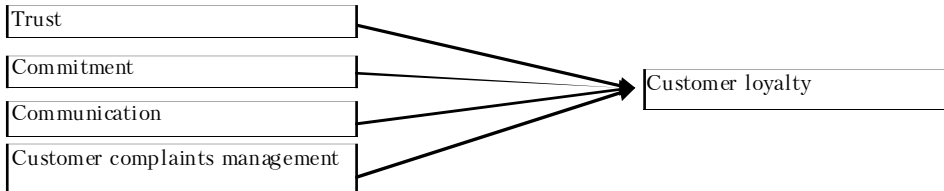


Figure 2. Interdependence of relationship marketing factors and customer loyalty (Source: Adapted from: Ndubisi, 2007)

The research results showed that loyal customers are the best promoters of companies, since they attract new customers by communication and oral propaganda. Loyal customers influence the increase of new customers buy and they also influence the improvement of company's business performances. Also, loyal customers are the main source of ideas and innovations in service providing.

Many authors (Smith, 1998; Barners, 1997; Ward et. al., 2007; Price et al., 1995; Bass et al., 1998; Bove, Johnson, 2000) have analyzed key assumptions for improvement of relationship quality between companies and customers which relate to demographic characteristics of customers, frequency and length of relation, types of products or services, awareness and informed customers of the necessity of applying relationship marketing etc. (Ward, Dagger, 2007). In the research of the effects of relationship marketing orientation on business performance in the hotel industry, Sin and others (Sin, Tsa., Chan, Yim, 2006) identified the key components of relationship marketing such as: trust, connectivity, communication, value, empathy and reciprocity. Evan and Laskin (Evan, Laskin, 1994) pointed in their model to important development factors for relationship marketing such like: understanding of customer expectations, development of relations in service providing, investing in the employed and total quality management.

Along with the analyses of relationship marketing development factors, it is important to point to the benefits resulted from applying relationship marketing, for all the participants in the service sector. In the service providing process, companies strive to build up the best possible relations with their customers. Based on the literature review, the most important effects of applying relationship marketing models in the service sector are: greater customer satisfaction and loyalty, better service quality, better profitability of companies etc. (Sin et al., 2002; Sin et al., 2006; Wu et al., 2012; Negi et al., 2010; Chen et al., 2010).

If we observe the economic aspect, the most important results of applying relationship marketing are: improvement of marketing and financial performances of companies. Marketing performances are related to the increase of customer satisfaction and loyalty, sales volume, market share, competitive advantage of a company etc. Customer satisfaction depends on companies' abilities to fulfill customer expectations

and build up strong relations with customers. The process of quality relations development with customers influences positively companies' competitive advantage, since it is difficult to copy the relations by competitive companies.

With the aim of increase in customer satisfaction and loyalty, companies should motivate customers to increase the number of repeated buys. Oral propaganda is a result of successful relationship marketing application in service companies' business operations. By oral communication, the number of potential and real customers is increased, as well as the increase in retain rate of the existing customers and the increase in return rate of lost customers. Applying both strategies, retaining and attraction of customers, influence positively on companies' profitability as well as on other participants in relationship marketing development. For example, the return on relationship (ROR) indicator shows the relationship of investing in relationship marketing process and the expected result. The indicator is an instrument for measuring successful application of relationship marketing development strategy in a company and presents the return on assets rate, invested in relationship marketing development (Egan, 2011). The research results showed the existence of positive correlation between the relationship marketing development factors and financial performance, namely the increase in return on investment (ROI) in service companies' business operations.

3. Applying marketing relations in tourism

At the end of the 1990s, competition increased and product differentiation rate decreased at the tourist market, influencing the necessity for applying relationship marketing in tourism. The process of building up of relations between different market participants presents basic tourism activity. Based on the literature review, applying relationship marketing model in tourist business implies the development and maintenance of long-term relations with customers and other stakeholders (suppliers, competitors, state, distributors, employed, customers etc.) All those are relevant for companies' success in tourism. Important contribution of all business participants in tourist offer chain relates to, primarily to provision of customer satisfaction and loyalty (Kim et al., 2012; Lombard, Steyn, 2008; Palmer, Mayer, 1996, Sin et al., 2006).

In tourism literature, we can find different approaches to building up the relations with customers and providing value to customers. One approach implies providing financial benefits, such as: free-of-charge night stay, comfortable and better quality rooms for permanent guests which influence their motivation to prefer one hotel brand. Hyatt introduced Golden Passport system, based on giving opportunities to guests to gain membership and realize different benefits (for example, free-of-charge night stay on weekends, staying in a better hotel room etc.) Other approach implies social benefits for customers by tourist services personalization. For example, a waiter in a restaurant company recognizes and addresses guests by their names; therefore, he realizes closer contact and social connection with guests. The third approach in building up customer relations implies the introduction of structural changes in service providing which are hard to copy by competitors. For example, airline companies will provide rooms for their first class customers and hotels will offer to their best customer's flexible time for checking in and out. Intercontinental Hotel Group provides for its permanent guests special benefits, including special reserve regime, welcoming and seeing off of guests, favorable accommodation prices during weekend, free daily papers delivery in hotel rooms etc.

In relationship marketing researches for the tourism sector cause-effect model is often applied. When defining relationship quality the starting point is customers perception, and their evaluation of communication and behavior of the employed in a company, based on the following criteria: respect, sincerity, kindness, support and help to buyers etc. Many researches defined cause and effect for improvement of relations quality between different subjects in tourism sector. In hotel business, relationship quality is defined by the analysis of the relationship between the employed and buyers. High quality of relationships implies primarily trust and satisfaction that guests feel towards hotel staff. Basic factors for the realization of relationship marketing activities in hotels are: guests trust, realization of contacts and communication between guests and the employed (Kim, Han, Lee, 2001). The aim of many researches is identifying the influence of the stated factors and its effects on applying relationship marketing in hotel business. (Gronroos, 1990; Bithier, 1995; Crosby, Evans, Cowles, 1990; Moorman, Deshpande, Zaltman, 1993). The effects of relationship quality improvement between guests and hotel companies' management can be seen in the increase of guests' loyalty, the number of repeated visits, as well as telling about positive experiences to potential hotel guests (word of mouth). Oral propaganda is the most powerful mean of communication in hotel business (Libai, 2010; Bronner & Hoog, 2011). For example, the research of applying relationship marketing showed that most of the persons questioned what is the most important for them when visiting a new restaurant, answered that their friends or relatives recommended it (Kotler, Bowen, Makens, 2010). The conclusion can be drawn, that identifying cause and effect of relationship marketing development helps with more efficient application of development strategies for better quality relations between participants in tourist offer chain.

4. Frequency analyses of applying relationship marketing model in tourism research

All published articles on tourism can be divided into conceptual and empirical articles. Conceptual articles are based on theory, and they do not use statistical methods, whereas empirical articles use different methods and techniques. Empirical articles can be qualitative and quantitative, this depends on the way the data for research is collected.

With the aim of analyzing the relationship marketing application Das (2009) conducted the content analysis of relationship marketing concept in empirical researches and in magazines from different scientific areas and concluded that the greatest application of relationship marketing models is in financial sector (banking) and trade, in the magazines published after 2000.

However, in the research it is pointed towards significant increase in applying relationship marketing model in tourism, primarily in the hotel business. It is interesting that the greatest application of relationship marketing concept is in tourism papers, which employ inquiry methods and business case studies analyses in their researches.

Content analysis was also conducted in the paper. The analysis relates to the most famous tourism magazines with the aim of analyzing the frequency of relationship marketing models application in tourism research. Content analysis shows to

what extent conceptual models of relationship marketing are applied in the articles published in the most famous tourist and hotel business journals. Content analysis of applying the relationship marketing concept is based on the choice of relevant tourism magazines. Criterion for the selection of articles is the keyword search and relationship marketing in the headlines and abstracts in tourism articles, published during 2010–2012. Content analysis of applying relationship marketing in relevant tourism magazines during 2010–2012 is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Content analysis of relationship marketing concept in tourism magazines

Tourism journals	Applying relationship marketing		
	number of papers, 2010	number of papers, 2011	number of papers, 2012
Annals of Tourism Research	39	70	80
Tourism Management	81	131	153
Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research	3	4	0
Journal of Travel Research	2	4	4
International Journal of Hospitality Management	75	96	160

Source: Calculated by the authors.

Based on the given content analysis the greatest number of articles which subject matter was the research of relationship marketing in tourism is published in "Tourism Management" and "International Journal of Hospitality Management". The number of the published papers in the mentioned journals increases year after year, thus confirming the necessity for research of applying relationship marketing model in tourism. Based on the results of the analysis, the conclusion can be drawn that relationship marketing concept is the subject matter for many researches in tourism and there is an increased trend of its application in the future as well.

The content analysis was also conducted for applying relationship marketing models in the most relevant tourism journals. Impact factor (IF) was the decisive factor, in the selection of representative tourism journals. Impact factor shows the frequency of magazine quotes, e.g. how many times on average an article is quoted in a certain year. Based on the criterion for the greatest impact factor in 2012, two most famous tourism journals are selected, "Tourism Management" (IF – 2.597) and "Annals of Tourism Research" (IF – 3.259).

The content analysis of the total number of articles in the stated journals (2010–2012) determines the frequency of applying relationship marketing models in tourist researches. The total number of published and electronically available articles in "Tourism Management" (2010 to 2012) is 584, and in "Annals of Tourism Management" is 403 articles (http://kobson.nb.rs/servisi/pretrazivanje_casopisa.84.html?words=tourism&issn=&cat).

The research results showed that in tourism researches (during 2010–2012) the relationship marketing concept is applied to a great extent. During the observed period, about 189 articles from "Annals of Tourism Research" and 365 articles from "Tourism Management" were applying relationship marketing in tourism as their main subject matter. Frequency of the relationship marketing concept in tourism researches is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Content analysis of applying relationship marketing in "Tourism Management" and "Annals of Tourism Research", 2010–2012

Applying of relationship marketing	% Participation in "Tourism Management"	Number of articles in "Tourism Management"	% Participation in "Annals of Tourism Research"	Number of articles in "Annals of Tourism Research"
Relationship marketing in tourism	63%	365	47%	189
Relationship marketing in hotel business	75,6%	276	34%	65
Relationship marketing in airline industry	2,7%	10	6,3%	12
Relationship marketing in tourist agencies business	46,8%	171	49%	92

Source: Calculated by the authors.

Based on the given analyses, significant application of relationship marketing models in tourism research is confirmed, since more than half of the papers (e.g. about 65% of the papers in "Tourism Management") research influence of different factors in relationship marketing on business performances of tourism companies. It is interesting, that the most analyzed is applying the relationship marketing models in hotel companies business and tourist agencies. However, based on the content analysis it is obvious that a certain number of tourism papers have as a main subject of their research relationship marketing models in different tourism areas at the same time (hotel business, airline industry, tourist agencies) which is one of the main drawbacks of the method.

For example, many papers analyze the relationship marketing application between hotel companies and tourist agencies, airline companies and tour operators or between different participants in a tourist offer chain. Therefore, it is difficult to analyse relationship marketing application in a certain business activity, since a great number of subjects in tourist chain participate in a providing services to end buyers.

The conclusion can be drawn that during previous years the number of research papers on applying relationship marketing concept in relevant tourism journals increased significantly, and that its positive trend will continue in future researches in service sector.

5. Conclusions

Based on the literature review, different models of relationship marketing in service sector are analyzed, as well as the hypotheses and effects of applying relationship marketing in tourism. The most important hypotheses on relationship marketing development in tourism are interpersonal characteristics of buyers, investing in internal marketing, IT application and customer complaint management etc. The process of building up more quality relations between companies and buyers results in customer loyalty increase, therefore this in total improves business performance of tourist companies.

The content analysis carried out in this paper, showed significant application of relationship marketing in tourism. Great number of researches, published in the most relevant tourist journals – "Tourism Management" and "Annals of Tourism Research" relate to influence the analysis of different factors of relationship marketing on busi-

ness performance of tourist companies. Based on the content analysis results, the conclusion is drawn that relationship marketing concept is the subject matter of numerous theoretical and empirical tourism researches and that increase tendency of its application will be present in future business operations of tourist companies.

In contemporary theory and practice, science discussion on the issue of marketing relationship implementation in tourism isn't developed enough. The main contribution of this paper is to suggest measurements for successful implementation of marketing relationship strategies and propose the guidelines for competitiveness improvement in tourism.

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