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The International Hotels Groups on the Polish Market – Competition Strategies of Selected Examples

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Abstract

The Polish hotel industry and the hospitality market have been drastically expanded for last three decades with the contribution of international hotel chains' operations, which put each hotel's survival into jeopardy due to an intense competition resulted from the growing number of businesses. Branding strategies have gradually become inevitable for a hotel to achieve a better position than its rivals thorough customer loyalty, which will result in a more superior performance in terms of survival, development of a sustainable competitiveness and above–average returns compared to others. The purpose of this work is to analyze the Polish hotel industry, identify instruments and ways to compete for international hotel groups and recognize the essential components of the competitiveness phenomenon. A qualitative analysis on Polish hospitality sector and an in–depth case study of an international hotel group operating in Poland were implemented to enlarge the current comprehension regarding the field of hospitality management executed in the Polish hotel industry. The results showed that, on the one hand, the key factors for the development of the hotel industry in Poland were the economic growth of the Country, the growing popularity of Poland as a tourist destination for national and international tourists, on the other hand, experience and know-how allow the creation of specific and distinctive resources useful for competing on the market and reducing access.

Keywords: hotel; industry; competition; strategy; Poland.

1. Introduction

The hospitality industry is noted to be one of the largest industries throughout the world (Ottenbacher et al., 2009) since it consists of is a broad group of businesses, which provides products and services to its customers. The hospitality industry has three areas to serve: first of all, it provides customers with the appropriate accommodation options through hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts, and some other lodging businesses; second, it has some establishments either standalone or located in hotels such as restaurants, fast food chains, and others offering food and beverage; third, it is somehow in collaboration with travel and tourism agencies, which provide some offerings of airlines, trains, and cruise ships (Alfiero et al., 2018). Despite of that broad statement, it has to be noted that Nykiel (2005) defines the hospitality industry as limited due to the unique viewpoints of sub-industries. For instance, a hotel business may define itself as a business providing accommodation with food and beverages.

The hotel industry is gradually continuing to maintain, keep adapting itself and even expand although it has changed recently in terms of social, business and economic environments. The current context, characterized by globalization, and the growing recognition of mutual interrelations has imposed new rules of conduct for nations and companies whose competitiveness is based on international markets and integration into global value chains.

On the one hand, the hospitality industry is one of the most dynamic industries in the EU, makes an important contribution to the European economy, in term of employment, growth and tax. It is one of the most important components for the labor market, which plays a fundamental role in times of high unemployment among young people in Europe. Moreover, this sector supports around 16.6 million jobs, equivalent to 7.8% of the European workforce.

On the other hand, tourism sector is a useful tool to support hospitality industry, indeed, statistics shows that tourism gradually grows in terms of the number of tourists and turnover and it is one of the fastest developing industries, also in Poland (Gheribi, 2014).

Currently, this situation offers some opportunities to improve business and Polish economy and the stakeholders are involved on the development of the hospitality market. The scope of this paper is, on the one hand, to analyze the Polish hospitality industry with statistical secondary data, and, on the other, evaluate the competition strategy of the main player in the Polish hotel industry.

2. Literature review

Strategy is one of the first, foremost, broad and complex phenomena in management. In lights of Porter (1996), strategy is defined as the creation of a unique and valuable position consisting of a different set of activities. In other words, from a strategic management point of view, companies should place themselves favorably with particular attention to the structure of the sector and use the best strategies with respect to its competitors (Altuntaş et al., 2013).

Thus the essence on which strategic positioning is based is to decide what actions can yield more superior organizational performance than those of competitors in a way that they can be

used to defend or improve the current position because they are different or they cost lower than those of competitors. In such cases, those actions can be implemented to create a sustainable competitive advantage in either short or long term. Moreover, competition can be described as mutual tactical actions of the businesses in an industry which are made to get a better position through a competitive advantage and to fulfill their aims (Grant, 2005). In the business world, taken granted today's uncertain environment, adaptability and competitiveness play a crucial role for the health of any kind of business (Altuntaş et al., 2013). In this sense, there are several different studies to examine the pivotal role of a business' position in comparison to its competitors in any particular industry, which results in its organizational success with a focus on a business' external conditions (Altuntaş et al., 2014; Bresciani et al., 2015). Porter (1980) places a crucial emphasis on the strategic position, which will allow the company to generate more revenue than the industry average in which it competes.

Strategy has been one of the subjects to so many studies conducted in various different settings. However, the most popular and widely used studies of the strategy phenomenon in the literature can be deducted to Miles and Snow's (1978) typology and Porter's (1980) generic strategy schemes. As its name indicates, three generic strategies, namely, cost leadership, differentiation and focus, by definition, are applicable to any particular context regardless of scale of a business or the industry it operates in and outperform all other concepts of strategy since they propose an easy-to-understand managerial tool to gain or strengthen a better competitive position with a potential result in above-average profits. However, all three strategies may not fit to a business since they force businesses to meet different requirements e.g. institutional measures, control procedures, reward systems or managerial style. Thus, profitability as a goal to be achieved heavily depends on the met between business and selected strategy. In this sense, the challenge a business faces lies in making the decision of appropriate strategy selection taking into account of its strengths and resources which are valuable, rare, difficult to imitate, and least substitutable by its competitors. In sum, Porter's model contributes to the decision-making process and results in a higher level of probability for a business to choose the best suitable strategy.

Cost leadership strategy defines the achievement of a lower level of overall cost relative to the competitors in the industry as the main objective. Thus, a business is typically required to act aggressively to more achieve efficient scale of economics, and pursue more cost reductions in each area of that business compared to those of competitors.

As suggested by Porter, a low cost position provides a business with a solid base to defend itself against not only intensity of rivalry but also powerful buyers, which exert power to decrease the prices charged by that business, since buyers can decrease the prices down up to the level of the next most efficient competitor. Such a low cost position provides also a window of opportunity to use against an increase in the costs charged by suppliers. In such hard cases of customers or suppliers, a business with a lower cost structure can still gain above–average returns since it positions itself a favorable manner in the industry. However, it should not be forgotten that to be able to achieve economies of scale and a lower level of cost position, a business is often required to have a high market share relatively, more than its competitors. In other words, cost advantages only creates value for any business if five threats of entry, rivalry, substitutes, suppliers and buyers decrease (Altuntaş et al., 2014). If a business wants to follow a cost leadership strategy, there are six sources of costs to focus on (Barney and Hesterley, 2006), namely, a) size differences and economies of scale, b) size differences and diseconomies of scale, c) experience differences and learning-curve economies, d) differential low-cost access to productive inputs, e) techno-logical advantages independent of scale, and f) policy choices.

Differentiation strategies deal with creating different products and services, being – at least perceived-to-be by the industry – unique in other words from the ones offered by the competitors through various ways e.g. design, brand image, customer service or dealer network.

A business which wants to follow a differentiation strategy should establish a base in one of the three categories: first, a company can focus comprehensively on attributes of products or services to do something different, e.g. characteristics, complexity, timing of introduction or position; second, a company can take care of the relationship between itself and its customers through personalization, consumer marketing and reputation; third, a differentiation strategy can be pursued by paying attention to linking within or between companies in terms of product mix, distribution channels and service support. However, the ideal strategy for a business to differentiate itself includes several dimensions of what is mentioned above. Creatively finding and taking advantages of the opportunities that already exist or that are to be created in a particular industry are heavily dependent on the willingness and ability of a business. Thus, product differentiation is only managed through the creativity of individuals or teams within the business (Barney and Hesterley, 2006; Bresciani et al., 2015; Alfiero et al., 2017).

A differentiation strategy may generate more superior profitability since it provides a defense against competitors due to customers' lower level of price sensitivity and higher level of brand loyalty, which increases the profit margin like the a low-cost strategy. A business with a differentiation strategy also strengthens the entry barriers into an industry through creating customer loyalty and offering unique products and services and benefits from higher margins as a result of less buyer power because of the lack of alternatives. A focus strategy is aimed to serve a particular market segment such as a certain buyer group, a specific product line or geography, instead of doing it in all segments as in both cost leadership and differentiation strategies. Thus a focus strategy tries to achieve a low cost or differentiation position, or both in general, but with a narrower perspective.

The competition in international hotels groups is increasingly fierce, so only hotels with the best management are expected to be the winner on the market. To be such a winner, it is important to provide the best service quality since the customer satisfaction is the key component especially in the hospitality field.

3. Materials and Methods

This work essentially relies on a qualitative research, with a heavy focus on exploration, and tries to enlarge the current comprehension regarding the field of hospitality management executed in the Polish hotel industry. Two different method were selected, in order to collect the necessary data and information.

On the one hand, statistical analysis approach was used to reveal the main developments in Polish hotel sector. The scenarios of the 1990 – 2017 period were examined using the available secondary sources such as data from Central Statistical Office, Statistical Yearbook of Poland, tourism outlook and other sources in line with other authors (Sheresheva et al., 2018; Sobaih, 2015; Coroș and Negruşa, 2014). Indeed, the presented analysis is based on the main dataset for structural business statistics, size class data and local data, all of which are published annually, in line with other authors (Slattery et al., 2008).

On the other hand, an in–depth case study of an international hotel group operating in Poland was implemented. The authors chose to analyze the AccorsHotels strategy using a single case study method (McKinney 1966; Smith 1988; Yin 1989). The case study method can be adopted in order to better understand the dynamics present in a single setting (Eisenhardt,

1989). The case study offers insights that may not be achievable with other approaches (Rowley, 2002). The selected case study was analyzed using various sources of information (Eisenhardt, 1989), including the sources available online, namely the annual reports and official websites of the group. In order to collect all the information on the AccorsHotels strategy, the authors carried out a semi-structured interview, i.e. both the questions and their order could be changed according to the individual interviewed, in line with other authors (Bernard, 1988; Alvesson, 2003; Harrell and Bradley, 2009; Bertoldi et al., 2012; Cortese et al., 2017). The interview was conducted in November 2018 by phone conversation. The data and information collected were analyzed individually by each author, to avoid any influence among them in the evaluation phase (Atkinson and Shaffir, 1998; Cortese et al., 2017). Lastly, the obtained results were grouped and compared, therefore the fundamental issues relevant to the purpose of the document were extrapolated.

4. Findings
4.1. The Polish Hotel Industry

The Polish hotel industry is one of the most vigorous industry and the main determinants to be hold accountable for the achievement of this growth is the development of tourism infrastructure facilities, especially the lodging base. A hotel is a categorized facility, which meets the requirements of a hotel facility specified in the appropriate regulation of the Council of Ministers. The establishments other than hotels are categorized as other accommodation facilities. This kind of classification is also known as traditional classification, which differentiates hotels into five different categories, namely – (1) one-star, (2) two-star, (3) three-star, (4) four-star and (5) five-star hotels (Vallen and Vallen, 2013).

Following major reforms in 1992, Poland experienced a boom in economic activity in the '90s as shown in the data, provided by Central Statistical Office, although there were 499 hotels in Poland in 1990. The number of categorized hotels in Poland in 2017 exceeded 2,540 (Figure 1), providing 261,500 beds (Figure 2) in around 128.304 rooms. These results were obtained thanks to the increasing number of new hotels, the rising number of tourists and the growing interest in the Polish market from the international hotel brands. This situation reflects that the hospitality market in Poland is still in a stage of growth. In addition, the trend line suggests that number of hotels in Poland will grow for the next-coming years.
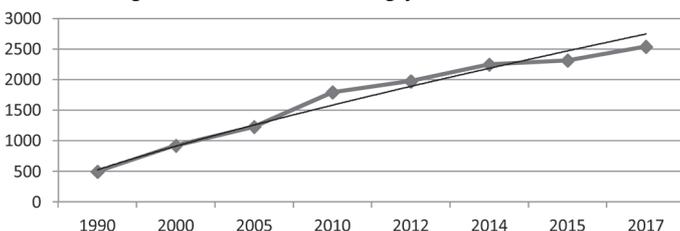

Figure 1. Number of hotel establishments in Poland
in 1990-2017
Source: Authors' elaboration based on Statistical Yearbook
of Poland 1990-2017

The key drivers for the development of hotel business in Poland are the following (Lubowicki–Vikuk, 2012; Gheribi, 2015; Religioni and Religioni, 2015; Eurostat, 2016; Budzyńska, 2016; Association of Business Service Leaders, 2017; Turystyka, 2018): economic growth, rising popularity of Poland among both domestic and international tourists as a holiday destination, development of medical tourism in Poland, dynamic growth of BPO/SSC industry, growth of expenditures of Polish residents for trips.

Central Statistical Office data show that the number of bed places in hotels in 2017 exceeded 261 500 and is growing year-to-year too (figure 2). Power trend line suggests that number of bed places in hotels in Poland also will grow for the next-coming years.
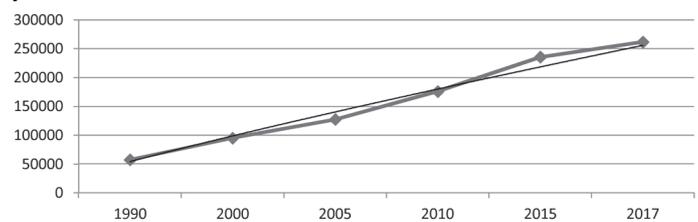

Figure 2. Number of bed places in hotels in Poland
in thousands in 1990-2017
Source: Authors' elaboration based on Statistical Yearbook
of Poland 1990-2017

The number of tourists accommodated in hotels in research period were growing year-to-year (Figure 3) and this success was due to the globalization process and the constant relative decrease in cost of travel. In 1990, the travel industry recorded 3.92 million tourists accommodated in hotels while there were 6.39 million in 2000 and 20.91 million in 2017. The results of the survey for the occupancy of tourist accommodation establishments show that accommodation facilities hosted 28.9 million tourists (76.8 million overnight stays, of which 15.0 million stays – by foreign tourists). Foreign tourists arrivals increased to 6.1 million, compared to 5.7 million in 2015. Majority of tourists (21.7 million) stayed in hotels and similar establishments i.e. in hotels, motels, boarding houses and similar, while only 7.2 million tourists stayed in other establishments – excursion hostels, shelters, camping sites, etc. More than a half of all tourists were accommodated in hotels – 18.8 million (increase from 17.5 million in 2015) (Turystyka, 2017).
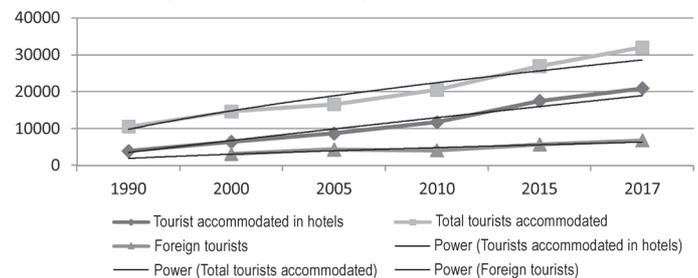
Figure 3. Tourists accommodated in hotels in thousand
in Poland in 1990-2017
Source: Authors' elaboration based on Statistical Yearbook
of Poland 1990-2017

Taking into account the past five years, the data show that the 3-star segment, with a total of 1,223 hotels, represents a market share of 52.02% in 2017, holds accountable for the majority of the supply in the Polish hotel market. Regarding the number of hotels, the second place goes to 2-star facilities (with 23.48% of total market share), as does the third place to 4-star hotels with a prevailing market share of 15.56% (Figure 4). Central Statistical Office data show that the number of 3-star hotels in 2017 exceeded 1,223 and grew by 367.2% compared to year 2000. The largest increase in 2017 compared to 2000 was in the number of 5-star and 4-star hotels, 1083.3% and 915% respectively. Figure 4 show that while the upper midrange segments of the Polish market continue to grow, 1-star hotels were recorded as declining as ongoing way. The supply of rooms in Poland seems to be a well-balanced manner in terms of star categories, 44% and 29% of which nearly are in the 3-star and 4-star hotels respectively. About 4,600 hotel rooms with 4-stars are to be in operation soon, which are under construction or being planned at the moment. The Polish hotel market has been counted as one of the stars of Europe in recent times
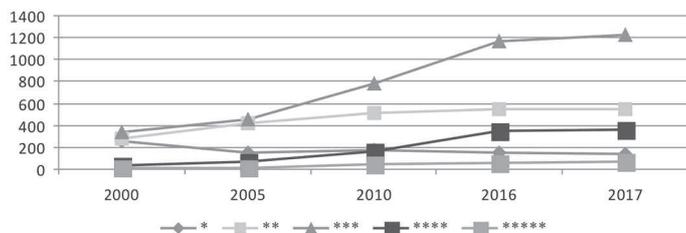
Figure 4. Number of formally categorized hotels in Poland in 2000-2017
Source: Authors' elaboration based on Turystyka, GUS, 2001-2017

without any doubt that it will be a lucrative business for the near future.

However, 13% of classified hotels are hotel chains compared to the average level of 30% in Europe. In this case, it is observed that the higher the category of a hotel, the greater the percentage of hotels in the chain in the category. Currently, the share of hotels in the chain is more than 50% in the 5-star category and is less than 10% in the 1-star hotel category. Chain hotels are on average larger than the independent ones, which are connected to the minimum requirements of the hotel chains as far as corporate profitability is concerned. In larger hotels, fixed costs are spread over a larger number of rooms. In Poland, chain penetration by hotels was 14% but by keys 37% in 2017 (Table 1).

Specification	Poland	Germany	Croatia	Hungary	Italy	UK
Chain hotels	342	2,078	167	140	1,488	3,520
Chain rooms	47,489	301,045	30,808	20,567	164,196	373,000
Average size per chain hotel in rooms	139	145	184	147	110	106
Average size per hotel in rooms	51	40	8	57	33	18
Chain penetration % by hotels	14%	10.3%	24.4%	13%	5%	8%
Chain penetration % by keys	37%	37.1%	53.2%	33%	15%	49%
Total number of brands	61	203	20	45	227	148
Domestic brands	26	89	5	6	137	68
International brands	35	114	15	39	90	80

Table 1. Key statistics of chains hotels in Poland and selected European Countries in 2017
Source: Horwath HTL, 2018

In Polish hotel market is 14% of chains hotels and 86% are not chains. International brands' share of hotel market in Poland still remains low, 11.04%, with domestic hotels which are to hold accountable for 8.2% (Table 1). This low share is the result of a growth in supply of both independently run and hotel chain facilities. The leading international hotel chain in operation in Poland has been the AccorHotels with 74 hotels and 12,498 rooms with her main brand of Ibis with 3 hotels and 4,502 rooms (Table 2). The second international hotel chain, after the leader AccorHotels, is Hilton with 19 hotels and 3,330 rooms, followed by Marriott International being the number three with 13 hotels and 3,089 rooms.

However, it is expected a rise in branded hotels' share –

according to STR Global's data. Poland is the fifth–largest market in Europe in terms of the number of branded hotels planned to be opened or under construction, after Great Britain, Turkey, Russia and Germany respectively (Colliers, 2016). In 2016, 16 new international hotels (15% of total new supply), 8 (majority in other words) of which are held by AccorHotels started their operations in the market. However, the share of brands owned by international chains in Polish hospitality market still remains low at 6%, with domestic hoteliers, who account for 10% (Colliers, 2017). The most dynamic hotel chains in terms of new openings in Poland are: Orbis/Accor, Hilton Hotels and Resorts, Best Western and Marriot Hotels and Resorts.

Table 2. Overall ranking of chains and brands by size in Poland in 2017

Source: Horwath HTL, 2018

Rank	Chains Groups			Chains Brands		
	Specification	Hotels	Rooms	Specification	Hotels	Rooms
1	AccorHotels	74	12,498	Ibis	33	4,502
2	Hilton	19	3,330	Mercure	24	3,812
3	Marriott International	13	3,089	Novotel	9	2,775
4	Best Western	19	1,699	Best Western	14	1,,22
5	Golebiewski	4	2,331	Golebiewski	4	2,331
6	Louvre Hotels Group	18	2,185	Radisson	6	1,483
7	Radisson	10	2,331	Qubus	14	1,465
8	Qubus	14	1,465	Gromada	9	938
9	InterContinental Hotels Group	10	1,714	Wam	15	1,113
10	Gromada	9	938	Satoria Group	7	1,106

The number of hotels is growing in the major cities and tourist destinations in Poland. Such a strong supply of new hotels poses a challenge for hoteliers, who have to deal with increasing competition.

4.2. The case study of AccorHotels Group

Accor S.A., with the brand name AccorHotels, is a Paris-headquartered French multinational hotel group. The Société d'investissement et d'exploitation hôteliers (SIEH) hotel group was founded by Paul Dubrule and Gérard Pélisson with the opening of the first Novotel hotel outside Lille in northern France in 1967. The second brand, Ibis, was launched in 1974 in Bordeaux. Now, the AccorHotels group's brands are in presence in more than 95 countries throughout the world, with over 4,200 hotels and 600,000 rooms, which make them rank sixth in the global hotel industry, based on number of rooms (AccorHotels,

2017). AccorHotels have been affiliated with the Group with four basic organizational structures – franchise agreements, management contracts, leases and ownership. As part of the Group's organization into the HotelInvest and HotelServices businesses, all of hotels either owned or leased are integrated into the HotelInvest portfolio and are operated by HotelServices under management contracts.

The AccorHotels group is developing most intensively in the European hotel market, which leads in the rankings of international groups and hotel chains. In Poland, it remains the leader, taking first place among hotel chains (table 2). The AccorHotels Corporation has expanded into the Polish market through a strategic partnership with the Polish Orbis Hotel Group, from which it acquired 51.55% of the shares. As a result, she transferred her know-how and competences, which are the result of many years of experience. Individual brands are positioned in all five market segments, which are presented in

Category	Brand
Deluxe/Luxury (5*)	Sofitel, Raffles Hotels and Resorts, Fairmont Hotels and Resorts
First Class/Superior (4*)	Pullman Hotels and Resorts, Grand Mercure, MGallery, Novotel
Comfort (3*)	Mercure, Adagio
Budget Class/Standard (2*)	Ibis Hotel, All Seasons
Tourist (1*)	Etap Hotel, HotelF1, Hotel Formule1, Studio6

table 3. AccorHotels has a wide range of services tailored to the different requirements of guests from the luxury segment to the budget segment, traveling individually and business.

AccorHotels' strategy is to accelerate hotel development, through both organic growth and acquisition. They have been investing partnerships with major businesses, such as transport, leisure activities, information and travel-related services, with the same customer base since 1998 to create synergies, indicating a strategic intent to provide customers and partners with an advantage. Their business network is gradually growing more and more. AccorHotels are highly effective in the long-run at acquiring, developing and managing resources and capabilities, which provide them competitive advantages. They use their intangible assets like the knowledge of hotel management to compete with other global competitors in operation in the Polish hotel market like Starwood, Marriot, Hilton, Intercontinental, Hyatt and Wyndham, all of which have been operated with strong business performance background and capability. AccorHotels pay a particular importance to plan and follow its strategic design to promote its growth in terms of corporate service.

AccorHotels have leveraged their more than 40 years of experience to develop a platform of very high level skills. These interconnected business units expand into all businesses and Countries, which create a truly unique system for them. AccorHotels have created an organizational memory through which they share the best practices and pool the costs that allows to enhance the performance of Accor's brands, support hoteliers and their employees in their daily operations and ensure that customers always are provided with the best service as possible as it gets.

AccorHotels distribution channels and website with online marketing

A business is expected to create competitive advantage by optimizing or coordinating links to the outside (Porter and Millar, 1985). In this sense, information technology can be used as a strategy to manage market complexity in order to establish a competitive advantage (Crichton and Edgar, 1995, Tavitiyaman et al., 2011). Thus, in any kind of hospitality businesses, there should be some technological emphasis on the way services are produced and delivered (Altuntaş et al., 2014). Hotel Reservation Systems (HTSs) are also an important component of the critical success factors, which contributes to the strength of a brand (Olsen et al, 2005). In this sense, the accorhotels.com or individual brand sites of AccorHotels are used to enhance the visibility and to make booking easier by their web teams. In addition, the brand's online development through partner websites are supported. As seen, AccorHotels' brands has a strong reservation system, also known as TARS, which contributes to sales optimization management through its online sales and payments with 38 million reservations booked and 79 million room nights produced. TARS has been serving via 32 local versions and 16 different languages, which lets AccorHotels localize knowledge in each and every market and have an average of 45,000 reservations per day (O'Connor, 2014). In addition, AccorHotels have managed to develop mobile sites for each of their brands, mobile applications, were downloaded 3 million times by their guests, and call centers and after-sales services. The services of phone reservations, bookings, customer relationships with e-mails, postal mail or social networks, are handled by AccorHotels Customer Contact Centers. A total of 1,500 hotels used the services provided by call centers and after sales service while 2.5 million booking calls were replied by the department in 2014 with a call capture rate of 95%.

Branded hotels may use brand revenue systems, which enable them to increase their revenues as stated by some industry revenue specialists. With the contribution of such a system, demand curve fluctuations may be identified correctly to ensure effective rate structure to smooth the occupancy level (O'Neill and Carlback, 2011). Revenue management system, or Revenue Management on Demand (RMD) as named in AccorHotels and employed in 1,600 hotels in 2014, contributes AccorHotels to strengthen its brand name and increase its revenue through 700 revenue management concentrated specialists in 2014 who also offered RMD consulting and training. Moreover, hotels with RMD generated 8% growth in RevPAR in comparison to the hotels without RMD as in case of hospitality businesses with better financials due to the strong R&D capabilities in terms of sales, research and development distribution, customer services, marketing, human resources, accounting and information technology (Gursoy and Swanger, 2007).

It is stated that branded hotels are expected to better perform than their competitors of independent hotels in terms of some organizational performance criteria such as occupancy percentage and net operating income even in recession times (O'Neill and Carlback, 2011), whereas branded hotels are equipped with sufficient and strong revenue management systems and tools (Cetin, Demirciftci and Bilgihan, 2016). Hotels with strong brands are also expected to differentiate themselves with its offerings from the competition, to create loyal customers, to have greater control of promotion and distribution of their brand as well as to put a premium on their prices in comparison to the competitors (Altuntaş et al., 2014). The worldwide sales network of Accor's Hotel group is another key initiative and the main corporate client accounts worldwide amount more than 500.

In addition, AccorHotels on the Polish market offers numerous promotions and discounts; among others free stay of one or two children (under 12) in a room with parents or guardians. In the Novotel network, children under 16 receive a free breakfast and overnight stay under the care of adults. The consortium also applies weekend and seasonal price reductions. On the Polish market, the corporation differentiates prices taking into account the geographical location of the facilities. Other prices are valid for objects of the same brand located in the city center from those located in holiday resorts.

AccorHotels' loyalty program: Le Club AccorHotels

AccorHotels differentiates prices using other marketing tools, including loyalty program in which guests receive points for staying in hotels and for services purchased from partners, including at Europcar, Club Mediterranean, the 12 largest airlines like Air France, KLM, British Airways. As indicated in the literature, loyalty programs are paid attention by the guests for booking a hotel room. Two out of five guests from hotel businesses prefer to book to a specific hotel due to the attractiveness of that hotel's loyalty program (O'Neill et al., 2008). In addition, a loyalty program with more commercial accounts provide a more smooth occupancy for the branded hotels, particularly in recession times, since corporate and governmental guests look for value and consistency (O'Neill and Carlback, 2011). Le Club AccorHotels is one of the most valuable components of AccorHotels' brands. With the contribution of this loyalty program, AccorHotels have managed to establish long term relationships with their guests. The number of hotels in particular networks involved in this type of activity means that these are offers of large scope and scale.

Human resources – recruitment and training initiatives

Human resources strategies are expected to contribute a business to reach its predetermined competitive goals by recruiting, training and retaining the employees, who have the essential ability and motivation consistent with its strategy (Altuntaş et al., 2014). Any kind of action applied in differentiation and in the strategy of cost leadership requires different practices and policies in terms of human resources, because each of these strategies needs companies to arouse particular attitudes and behaviors of employees to achieve success in terms of competition. The success of human resource management practices can contribute to the current competitive advantage and provide a direct and economic support to financial performance (Kim and Oh, 2004; Wang and Shyu, 2008; Tavitiyaman, Qu and Zhang, 2011). Moreover, a strong brand name is a strategic asset in the hospitality industry to enhance employee loyalty, reduce labor turnover and provide employees with an opportunity to improve themselves (Chauhan and Mahajan, 2013). In this sense, employees are considered as the key assets for AccorHotels, indeed there is a high competition among hotel businesses to attract and keep best employees. AccorHotels' businesses provide employment opportunities in 95 countries. A caring employer providing respect, training and career development for more than 250,000 employees in its hotel brands worldwide. AccorHotels offers more than 100 professions across the 5 continents and the Académie Accor is the one of the best hospitality education school all around the World, offering more than 300 courses in 20 different languages with 170 e-learning modules specifically designed to Accor Hotels' needs and wants. This is a worldwide school that operates in various Countries e.g. France, Germany, China, Brazil and Dubai, training more than 145,000 people so far.

In Poland, AccorHotels achieved low-cost position with a high market share. It provided the buyers with a traditional accommodation service at an affordable price. It continues to expand its operations on the Polish market through the offer of new networks (including the Ibis Styles and Pullman brands), which is addressed to well-defined groups of buyers.

In Poland, AccorHotels group policy concerns primarily the development of the Ibis Hotels and Ibis Budget brands, as well as the transformation and adaptation of selected facilities of the Orbis Hotel Group to the requirements of the consortium network. Thus, further Accor's activity will be carried out through the expansion of the brands presented to our market.

5. Conclusions

The work noted that the essential being in creating a long-term advantage competition is played by undertakings that generate distinctive resources used in the provision of hotel services. Having adequate resources guarantees hotel companies a more effective use of market opportunities and effective reduction of dangers resulting from the impact of the environment.

Competing on the basis of distinctive resources among concerns on the global market means that currently a significant number of networks decides to start operations on new unknown markets. The proceedings adopted by the hotel corporations impose the need to involve not only own resources, but also to exchange them with foreign organizations.

As a consequence, unique resources arise which result from the consolidation of own experience and know-how with resources owned by foreign companies operating on a given market. Thus, distinctive resources affect the form of conducting business, because they contribute to the increase of market access restrictions and to exclude direct rivals from it, who are unable to adapt to the current circumstances in the sector.

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