

Modern Problems of Ensuring Competitiveness in the Hospitality Industry

Mirzahodjaev Alisher Botirovich ¹

Annotation

The author of this article considers the problems associated with the development of theoretical provisions, methodological foundations for ensuring the competitiveness of a hotel enterprise in the context of digital transformation of the economy.

Keywords: *Competitiveness, hotel services, competitive environment, factors, modern technologies.*

¹Senior Lecturer, Samarkand Institute of Economics and Service

The changes in the world of business lead to more and more advanced and efficient technologies and will ultimately change the entire structure of the world economy. Uncertainty - the violation of stable framework conditions - forces hotel companies to take measures to increase their competitiveness.

Competitiveness cannot be achieved without the formation of certain competitive advantages, those characteristics of the hotel company as a whole and the hotel product it offers, which positively distinguish it from the competition.

The competitiveness of a hotel service is not the only and not always decisive factor for the competitiveness of a hotel company. The competitiveness of the company itself is determined by its financial stability, the qualifications of the employees and the service technologies they use and etc.

The domestic market for hotel services is characterized by:

- increased consumer sensitivity to the price of hotel products;
- insufficient marketing activities of domestic hotel companies;
- generally quite serious barriers to entering the Russian hotel services market;
- Hotels that do not belong to a chain have sufficient distinctive features and specificities, even if they belong to the same category.

Currently, one of the main tasks of the hotel industry is the search for new, more advanced and adapted to modern conditions tools to attract consumers to hotel products.

Today, hotels have a wide range of tools at their disposal to implement these requirements. The competent organization of the virtual room system, the effective use of digital technologies and the possibilities of automating business and service processes give the hotel the opportunity to increase its competitiveness, to assert and expand its own market positions.

Based on different interpretations, it can be argued that the competitiveness of a hotel company is:

- the ability for long-term development within the framework of a strategy aimed at fully ensuring competitiveness in changing market conditions;
- a set of special abilities of the company that give it a leading position in certain positions in the competition, i.e.
- series of competitive advantages;
- the ability of a hotel company to compete in the hotel market with competitors offering a similar hotel product by providing a more advanced offering that can meet the expectations of a particular consumer segment;
- The ability to effectively manage their own economic and economic activities both at this stage and in the long-term (relatively long-term) perspective.

The competitiveness of a hotel company is the ability to maintain a stable position in an uncertain competitive environment, supported by the existence of competitive potential.

Competitiveness cannot be achieved without the formation of certain competitive advantages, i.e. those characteristics of the hotel as a whole and the hotel product it offers, which positively

distinguish it from the competition.

Competitiveness is influenced by a number of factors (their influence can be both positive and negative). In order to determine the possibilities of management influence, all factors are divided into internal (company resources that can and should be influenced directly) and external (it is often not possible to influence them directly).

Traditionally, the following factors are distinguished as such:

- 1) internal: staff qualifications, characteristics of the proposed hotel product, state of the control subsystem, service technologies;
- 2) External: the level of competition, the characteristics of competitors and competitive offers, the characteristics of consumers, the overall state of the competitive environment, the general socio-economic and political situation.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the digital transformation of the economy can amplify the negative effects of a number of factors that determine the competitiveness of a hotel company - we have **formulated possible measures to overcome the negative effects:**

1. Deterioration of the political situation, which leads to a decrease in the flow of tourists, a decrease in sales markets and a deterioration in the image of the area where the hotel is located.

Possible measures to minimize negative impact:

- activation of a marketing policy aimed at attracting domestic tourists,
- Participation of the hotel company in various programs and promotions aimed at raising awareness of the hotel company and emphasizing its social responsibility, making its image more positive in the perception of certain social groups.

2. Expansion of digitization and constant technological updates, leading to possible downsizing, unavailability of some services within a hotel product due to the difficulty in exploiting technological innovations or the impossibility of acquiring and installing them in a hotel company.

Possible measures to minimize negative impact:

- Development of more flexible function utilization and work schedules for staff;
- the introduction of technological innovations in the composition of the hotel product as additional, and not the main, forms of consumption.

3. Changes in consumer culture leading to a leveling of the value of rest and the importance of home comfort.

Possible measures to minimize negative impact:

- Joint efforts with authorities (e.g. at local level) to promote recreation as an integral and important part of human life.

4. Deterioration of the economic situation, leading to a decrease in demand for hotel products.

Possible measures to minimize negative impact:

- Optimizing the composition of the services included in the hotel product without affecting

the overall level of quality;

- Flexible pricing policy.

5. Stagnation of the hospitality industry, leading to a decrease in the authorities' interest in it.

Possible measures to minimize negative impact:

- Activation of various trade unions and associations in terms of lobbying for the interests of the sector;
- Participation in state programs to support certain categories of citizens (participation in the implementation of social tourism programs).

6. The market situation stimulating the intense growth of competition.

Possible measures to minimize negative impact:

- Finding ways to create new competitive advantages;
- Consideration of the possibility of entering (and developing) new markets.

7. Low customer loyalty.

Possible measures to minimize negative impact:

- Adjusting the applied loyalty programs to the changing needs of consumers;
- Participation of the hotel company in various programs and promotions aimed at raising awareness of the hotel company and emphasizing its social responsibility, making its image more positive in the perception of certain social groups.

8. Decrease in staff qualifications, decrease in the number of employees with a high professional level, which leads to a deterioration in the level of quality of the hotel services provided, a reduction in the range of services and a deterioration in the image of the hotel company

Possible measures to minimize negative impact:

- Regular application of preventive measures to attract and retain highly qualified employees;
- Establishing an effective system for training, retraining and further training of the employees of the hotel company;
- active cooperation with educational institutions engaged in the training of hospitality staff in order to “cultivate” future employees with a high level of theoretical and practical training.

9. Lack of management support for employee initiatives to develop competitiveness, seek/form competitive advantage and improve the quality of the hotel product.

Possible measures to minimize negative impact:

- Joint efforts of all employees and external partners of the hotel company to promote their own initiatives to ensure the development of competitiveness.

10. Insufficient staffing of the hotel company with everything necessary to create an attractive hotel product with the required level of quality, which leads to a significant deterioration in the competitiveness of the hotel company.

Possible measures to minimize negative impact:

- Change of strategic settings;
- Revised profit redistribution to find ways to build/obtain the necessary resources;
- Introduction of more rational ways of using resources;
- Optimization of staffing.

All of the above cases of negative effects from factors of different origins require considerable efforts to identify them in time, as well as to develop and implement appropriate countermeasures.

The global COVID-19 crisis has created the need for extensive use of digital technologies. Digitization not only creates a new digital global market for tourism services, but also stimulates the creation of new business models and updated business standards by adapting the business processes of companies in the tourism industry.

An analysis of changes in the operating conditions of hotel companies in the hotel services market in the republic showed that in the post-pandemic period, most likely, hotel companies of the middle price segment, as well as aparthotels and country hotels, will be the most popular hotels, from which the greatest profit can be expected, because they can minimize their costs for personnel and maintenance of the technology and technical communication. The implementation of the strategy described above will be possible with the active adoption of digital technologies and the transition to contactless service.

We believe that for the further recovery of the hospitality industry it is necessary:

- comprehensive state support of subjects of the hotel services market;
- Application of flexible forms of employment for the staff of hotel companies;
- Improving staff qualifications, taking into account the new challenges of the current situation and new expectations on the part of consumers of hotel services;
- Focus on fruitful and mutually beneficial cooperation with

Partners in the joint work on creating a hotel product and its promotion;

- more active use of digital technologies that allow to form (strengthen, expand) the competitive advantages of a particular hotel company;
- a thorough analysis of the “digital footprint” of real and potential consumers, which allows you to more precisely adjust the marketing policy and the characteristics of the hotel product and better adapt it to the needs and expectations of the target audience;
- Application of modern business technologies in the management of a hotel company.

In our opinion, in order for the use of modern technologies to become a real competitive advantage for the hotel, the following conditions must be guaranteed:

- regular market research of competitors;
- constant feedback with consumers of hotel services;
- systematic human resources development (particularly in the area of acquiring and expanding skills related to digital technologies);
- Timely and complete information of potential consumers about technical and technological

innovations on the hotel premises.

Actions to increase competitive advantages within the selected area of strategic decisions to increase competitiveness

Direction of strategic decisions to improve competitiveness	Actions to increase competitive advantages
Participation in various public-private social projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - formation of a special hotel product for guests from socially vulnerable groups; - membership in authoritative professional associations/unions; - participation in state grants;
Expansion of digitalization activities of the hotel enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - preventive measures in the application of digital technologies; - use of the latest technological advances in the service process;
Active use of new technologies in marketing activities of the hotel enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - attraction of highly qualified specialists;
Use in assessing the competitiveness of consumer quality assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - constant monitoring of consumer behavior; - measures to increase consumer loyalty;
Ensuring competitiveness by increasing innovation activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - encouraging the initiative of the staff;
Development of personnel of the hotel enterprise as its competitive advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - assistance to staff in improving their skills and stress resistance;
Improvement of business processes hotel company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - conducting regular business diagnostics processes to improve them

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