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15. Competitiveness of tourism establishments by means of innovation

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Introduction. Innovation and creativity are issues that are commonly used from the perspective of the manufacturing industry, though they are as much needed in the services industries for effective and efficient results. Innovations in general may be the profitable market introduction of new products and services, improved production techniques or processes or a better or more efficient way of applying marketing, communication and management strategies or a new way of implementing organizational applications. Service industry differs from the manufacturing industry in many aspects like being intangible, no storage possibility, consumption and production at the same time and place, being highly perishable etc. but still innovation theories can also be used to describe changes in services and tourism industry.

The study focuses on innovation applications in tourism industry by analyzing successful case studies. Innovation success factors were examined and common issues were found which are provided as suggestions to improve the performance of tourism establishments by means of process innovation. In addition, tourism innovation cases as a result of trends are taken into consideration, since tourism is a very dynamic and flexible industry which is very vulnerable to changes in the environment.

Tourism is one of the biggest global industries that is improving according to the constant changes in tourism trends and consumer preferences which makes the concept of

Innovation a vital issue for the tourism firms of any size to stand out from the severe competition with successful applications and profitable operations.

Innovation in tourism industry includes all the aspects of formation and development of creative ideas or improvement of better tourism services leading to higher tourist satisfaction, more effective managerial strategies, higher profits and lower costs as end results. Thus innovation in tourism is related to creative concepts on; easier problem solving, value-adding operations and methods and application of more efficient or unique ways while producing and delivering the tourism product. Therefore it is important for tourism establishments to realize the concept of innovation and the ways to achieve it by examining the successful cases and their common denominators as outcomes for successful and profitable long term managerial success.

Innovation is an important concept for growth, business improvement and differential advantage in competition. Though commonly misused, innovation and creativity, mean and represent different things since creativity covers new products and new services, production of new ideas, new processes, new brands, new techniques, new approaches and inventions, whereas innovation covers the application of new and creative ideas as well as implication of discoveries. It is derived from originally the Latin verb "innovare" and the Latin noun "innovatus", standing for transforming an idea or a process into a marketable product or service thus adding value to it. Thus within business the improved areas related to the product, service, process, marketing methods, organizational structures and such are termed as innovative approaches.

Application of innovation has many benefits as end results like; decreasing costs, increasing efficiency of operations and/or profit levels, ease in satisfying changing needs of consumers, increased flexibility in adapting supply to changing demand profiles, helping the firm to stand out from the concentrated competition by having and communicating a differential advantage.

Although tourism is an intangible service industry, innovation in the tourism sector has the same significance as in production of manufacturing industry. What is different is the fact that innovation in tourism is not associated with conventional research and development, and therefore takes different forms making it much harder to realize. These different forms usually come in the style of:

- Manufacturing innovations,
- Process innovations,
- Management innovations,
- Logistics innovations and
- Institutional innovations

Conclusions. As a result it may be concluded that successful tourism innovation examples seem to bring together important new or updated tourism products, service qualities and issues of trends in tourism industry in an integrated model.

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