

EXPLORING MARKETING STRATEGIES OF BOUTIQUE HOTELS IN PHUKET DURING GREEN SEASON

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Abstract

Boutique hotels are small scale, non-affiliated hotels having 50 rooms or less. They provide unique modern design features, a unique culture, and a personalized service. The purpose of this research was to study the marketing strategies of boutique hotels in Phuket during the green or low season, in which few tourists travel to the destination leading to a significant decrease in tourism related income (Morse & Smith, 2015).

A qualitative methodology was adopted in this study, through the use of in-depth interviews carried out with 20 owners and general managers of boutique hotels in Phuket, with respondents obtained via a snowball technique. Analysis of the collected data revealed that the current marketing strategies of boutique hotels in Phuket during the green season focus mainly on promotions, followed by price, process, product, people, physical evidence, and location respectively. Hotels use their affiliation with online travel agents (OTAs) to launch their promotions, in addition to their sales representatives, and their own websites. Moreover, some hotels work with corporate companies by offering special packages for meetings, travel incentives, conventions, and exhibitions (MICE), but with a limitation for small groups of not more than 50 people. This increases the hotel's income during the green season while some hotels spend time during green season to renovate their properties and improve preparedness for the high season.

Keywords: Marketing Strategy, Service Industry, Promotion, Green season, Boutique Hotels

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is an important business and is key to developing the economy and welfare of the country. It creates employment opportunities in the community, such as tour guides and hoteliers, and leads to improvements in the infrastructure, such as roads, hospitals, and airports, upgrading the living standard of the host countries, and also developing the relationship between the guest and host countries (Zaei and Zaei, 2013). Richardson (2010) argued that many developing countries have attempted to participate in the world economy by developing their international tourism.

In many tourist cities, seasonality affects the volume of tourists and also the revenue of these cities (Williams and Lawson, 2001). According to Biederman (2008), the tourist season is another important factor causing difficult problems for destinations. All tourism businesses should pay special attention on how to manage these problems, and set strategies to overcome these situations, in order to minimise their impact on the business.

Baron (1975), Commons and Page (2001), and Goulding et al., (2004) summarized that there are two types of seasonality: 'natural' and 'institutional'.

Natural seasonality refers to factors relating to natural phenomena, such as the weather and climate in each year. This affects the motivation of tourists from one region to travel to other regions, as

they would like to escape from their existing phenomenon and travel to a better place. Once the weather or climate in their hometown returns to normal, they will be back. The season in which a destination is served by many tourists from other destinations is called the 'high season' or 'peak season'. While 'low season' or what is sometimes called "Green season" in marketing terminology, is the season of rain in which there are few tourists coming into the area, causing the number of tourists and revenue to decrease (Morse & Smith, 2015).

Institutional seasonality refers to factors such as school holidays, public or religious events, sporting seasons, licensing restrictions, and accommodation refurbishment (Goulding et al., 2004; Jang, 2004). Destinations become more popular as more tourists are travelling during these seasons. Many types of tourists enjoy trips which last for a short period, such as parents who bring their children to enjoy natural destinations during a school break while their parents take a vacation leave. These tourists may not need to be concerned about weather conditions as most schools close during the summer time anyway.

Thailand, a developing country, is recognized as one of the major tourist destinations in the world, due to its diversity of culture and traditions, as well as the hospitality and food for which it is well-known, arousing tourists who look for a chance to visit. The hospitality of Thai people is in fact one of the

major reasons that international tourists prefer to travel to Thailand, as they can enjoy activities according to their needs and budget. As stated by Kaosa-ard et al. (2001), Thailand also has a variety of beautiful natural attractions located in many provinces all over the country, which can attract many tourists. For example, waterfalls, mountains, and beaches.

According to The Department of Tourism (2018), there are 5 major touristic cities in Thailand which attract the most international tourists in terms of revenue and number of tourists: Bangkok, Phuket, Pattaya, Krabi and Chiang Mai as shown in Table 1.

As promoted by the Tourist Authority of Thailand (TAT), Phuket is recognized as one of the tourist attractions for very beautiful scenery and natural resources such as beaches and marine activities. TAT (2004) emphasizes that Phuket’s beaches are well-known among international tourists and treated as unmissable destinations that tourists should not fail to visit.

Lauzon (2010) summarized that Phuket has gradually developed into one of the biggest tourist destinations in Thailand since 1980, with many sandy beaches such as Patong, Kata and Karon. These beaches have become one of the most popular destinations attracting many tourists.

Park and Hsieh (2008) conclude that the factors attracting tourists travelling to Phuket are fascination with the beaches, hotels and other accommodation, tourist activities, and historical and cultural sites. Due to the reasons above, there is a diversity of tourists from almost every corner of the world travelling to Phuket each year. Different tourists from different cultures also have different demands when they select a hotel in which to stay. Some tourists select their hotel based on location such as Patong, Kata, or Karon. Some select based on the price or promotions offered by the hotels. Others make their selection based on the style of the hotel, such as international chain hotels, guest houses, or boutique hotels.

Table 1: The top 5 destinations in Thailand in 2017-2018

Province/ City	Number of Tourist (Million)		Average Length of Stay (Days)		Average Expenditure/Person / Day (Baht)		Revenue (Million Baht)	
	2017	2018	2017	2018	2017	2018	2017	2018
Bangkok	18.56	19.14	4.12	4.75	5,785.25	5,364.24	485.75	497.23
Phuket	8.16	9.74	7.23	7.87	6,146.36	5,753.75	313.72	347.77
Pattaya	7.52	8.28	3.14	3.92	4,863.85	4,784.63	89.34	92.36
Krabi	3.15	4.87	5.75	5.84	4,363.87	4,623.26	42.67	49.32
Chiang Mai	1.58	2.02	4.25	4.98	4,872.23	4,235.75	36.53	38.76

Source: Department of Tourism, 2018

Choochote (2014) noted that nowadays there are many boutique hotels in Phuket, which have become an alternative choice for tourists. Boutique hotels offer tourists a unique design, they are non-affiliated, have a high staff-to-guest ratio, a relaxed environment, and are small scale in terms of the number of the rooms.

As Phuket is located on the Andaman Sea side of Thailand's southern region, its seasonality is naturally divided into 2 seasons, with the High or Peak Season running from November to March, and the Low or Green Season running from April to October. This makes Phuket varied in its number of tourists, especially during green season which causes Phuket a lack of tourism related income as it is the rainy season even though there is a school break during April (Songkran or Water Festival) and domestic tourism is increased. Regardless, the number of the tourists is still low.

Hotels are one of the most important parts of the tourism industry as they don't only provide the overnight accommodation for tourists, they also reflect the expenditure from tourists when they travel (Maharjan, 2012). Hotel businesses must therefore pay attention to how to survive during the green season by finding successful strategies for the business to handle and overcome this crisis.

As argued by Baum and Lundtorp (2001), tourism seasonality

becomes challenging in the tourism industry because it is related to business revenue reduction (Alananzeh, Mahmoud, & Ahmed, 2015). Many businesses actively try to find ways to increase their income and replace the lost revenue from their customers. Especially in the hotel business, which can survive the crisis by being successful in satisfying and attracting customers. Karppinen (2011) stated that seasonality is one of the biggest challenges that hotels must overcome when marketing hospitality and accommodation services. Many hotels are challenged to keep their profits high and remain stable throughout the year. The profits of a hotel are greatly affected during green season, thus many hotels must use marketing and other strategies to increase their bookings volume during this period.

From the background and problems outlined above, analysis of the marketing strategy of boutique hotels in Phuket during the green season emerged as an interesting topic for study. The purpose of this research was to study the current marketing strategy of boutique hotels in Phuket. The data from the study could be used to make useful guidelines for boutique hotels, as well as other types of hotel in Phuket, to develop their businesses and encourage the demand of tourists, at both domestic and international levels.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Boutique Hotels

There are many researchers who have given a definition for boutique hotels. Ekiyor (2011) summarized that boutique hotels are an accommodation type which gives tourists a feeling of home by creating a warm and friendly atmosphere, and providing a high quality of service to meet tourists' needs. Omanukwue (2006) also stated that boutique hotels are a place to provide a unique experience with special facilities and personalized service to clients. Day, Quadri and Jones (2013) defined that boutique hotels are small size businesses which provide high service levels, authentic historical and cultural experiences, in a unique style. It is just to say that boutique hotels are small size accommodation, offering their customers a unique experience in terms of the cultural and historical style, with a high standard of service.

Many researchers have summarized the characteristics of boutique hotels in terms of size, location, architecture, experience, service quality, and target market as follows:

Size: Boutique hotels are small in size compared with other types of hotels. They generally have less than 100 rooms (Erkutlu and Chafra, 2005).

Location: Boutique hotels can be found in many areas, including suburban, city and resort destinations

(Albazzaz et al., 2003; Lim et al., 2009).

Architecture and design: The interior of boutique hotels is designed according to the characteristics of the buildings in a creative and unique architectural style (Agett, 2007; Lim et al., 2009; McIntosh et al., 2005), as well as room decoration (Erkutlu et al., 2005; Lim et al., 2009). Most are designed with a different theme, offering an extraordinary feeling to customers.

Experience: One of the goals of boutique hotels is to offer their customers a unique experience by creating an atmosphere which is attractive to the customers' senses, through color, design, lighting, music and art.

Service: Boutique hotels are able to provide a very personalized service due to their high staff-to-guest ratio (Erkutlu et al., 2005; Lim et al., 2009). All staff are available to service customers around the clock making them feel unique and special during their stay. It creates a relaxed atmosphere and a homely environment (Agett, 2007; McIntosh et al., 2005). Additionally, boutique hotels offer their customers good quality food and beverages in their bars, lounges and restaurants. Last but not least, boutique hotels often facilitate customers with high-tech amenities such as free Wi-Fi, DVD players, libraries, swimming pools, fitness rooms, and spas (Albazzaz et al., 2003).

Quality: Boutique hotels provide

their customers with high quality products and services such as food and beverages, staff, room accommodations and other facilities. Agett (2007) and McIntosh et al. (2005) confirmed that customers are influenced to select boutique hotels due to their quality.

Target market: McKenney (2014) argued that the customers of boutique hotels belong to varied backgrounds, with ages ranging from 20 to 50, and income in the mid to upper range.

Boutique hotels in a resort destination: Anhar (2001) concluded that boutique hotels in resort destinations are small, exotic, and intimate. These hotels give a chance for their customers to experience a local feel at trendy locations. Many successful boutique hotels are designed in the traditional style, providing comfortable and luxurious decoration, but retaining the local community personality. They focus on the service provided to the customers. Private plunge pools, traditional spas, and honeymoon packages are some of the examples of excellent service and facilities offered by boutique hotels.

How the Boutique Hotel is Successful and Key Factors Influencing Customer Revisitation

Many studies provide evidence regarding the successful management of boutique hotels and the important aspects that lead to retaining guests.

Lujan, et al. (2019) summarized that customer service quality, digital

media usage, the hotel concept, and service integrity, are the factors determining successful competitiveness in boutique hotels. Zaman, et al. (2016) concluded that location is an important success criteria for hotels, and that intermediaries such as online travel agents and the promotion of small events are important channels to successfully boost the business. Hussein, et al. (2018) suggested that a hotel must be able to provide a great physical condition and social association between staff and guests. Das, et al. (2017) found that a reasonable price, food quality, and hospitable staff, are factors affecting customer satisfaction and service quality in the boutique hotel industry of Kolkata, West Bengal. Qawasmeh, R. (2016) summarized that staff performance is the highest factor affecting guest satisfaction, followed by hotel image, political stability, and destination image, respectively. Kodizas, J., & Larraufie, A. F. M. (2015) found that building a close relationship with guests is the way to exceed customer expectations and generate positive word-of-mouth.

Hence, it is summarized that hotels should provide both physical and operational management to their guests in order to induce loyalty.

Marketing Mix Strategy of Hotel Business

Pride et al., (2010) defined a marketing strategy as a plan to let the company or organization use its existing resources to pursue clients' needs. Moreover, maintaining the

target market is about implementing the right marketing mix.

Honkanen (2006) argued that seasonality is linked with supply. In this regard, hotels should focus on and pay more attention to implementing marketing strategies which deal with the green season crisis.

According to Armstrong et al., (2000), the Marketing Mix is a group of controllable variables that the organization can implement to influence the response of the buyer; these consist of Product, Price, Place and Promotion. In terms of the service industry, there are an additional three variables: People, Physical evidence, and Process. Hence, when applying this to the hotel business, all seven P's are required to measure the quality of service (Yelkur, 2000).

Product: refers to tangible goods, and the service that a hotel provides its customers. For example, the guest rooms, fitness, swimming pool, restaurant, bar, lounge, concierge, and housekeeping service. The experience of customers starts at the purchasing time and finishes when the customers are back from their trip (Kim et al., 2009).

Price: This factor is defined as the value of the service or product as it is charged to the buyer. It is more difficult to set the price of a service than that of a product, as it is intangible and may be measured only by the quality of the service. Peter and Donnelly (2007) stated that price becomes the factor that customers

pay most attention to when they make the decision to buy something.

Place: This refers to where the hotel is located, and efforts should be made to ensure convenient access to the hotel by all types of transportation possible. Easy accessibility makes customers more satisfied with the product.

Promotion: This refers to when the hotel implements advertising, personal sales, sales promotions, or public relations, as tools to promote the product and develop awareness among the public. Communication tools are necessary as they can create a powerful image, credibility, and confidence (Lovelock and Gummesson, 2004).

People: Sometimes called service providers, this refers to the hotel staff who are delivering the service to the customers, and who possess technical and communication skills which the hotel provides during training. The effectiveness of service providers is reflected in the satisfaction of the customers (Hartline and Ferrell, 1996).

Physical evidence: This is defined as the atmosphere of the hotel, in creating a good feeling for customers, and includes things such as exterior design, parking, signage, facilities, equipment, and the appearance of the hotel staff. Bitner (1992) proposed that physical evidence is one of the indicators influencing a customer's decision.

Process: This consists of the actions of the hotel staff when delivering a service to the customers,

such as the speed of the check-in and check-out procedures. Hirankitti et al., (2009) argued that the effectiveness of the process comes from the skill of the staff.

Marketing Mixed Strategy of Boutique Hotels

According to Horner and Swarbrooke (2012), boutique hotels are recognized as one of the fastest-growing hotel types in the leisure industry, providing expressive uniqueness, high standard services, and memorable experiences (Nur, Mohamad, & Dayang, 2017). These attributes make boutique hotels different from other types of hotel. Various researchers have summarized the marketing mix strategy of boutique hotels in many interesting aspects.

Kiatsongchai and Choibamroong (2014) concluded that boutique hotels in Thailand have implemented a marketing mix strategy to beat their competitors, with different design styles, pricing of room rates to be more expensive than small scale hotels, and using social media to reach potential customers. This also relates to the study of Laohajaroenyot (2016) whereby it was found that hotels rely on TripAdvisor as their main website to attract more customers, applying a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) concept as their green marketing strategy, and affiliating with OTAs for bookings, rather than using their own website, while Laohajaroenyot (2016) also mentioned that some managers of

boutique hotels in Chiang Mai offered extra services such as free transportation, and in-door activities. Additionally, using Customer Relationship Management (CRM) to create guest loyalty is another strategy that many boutique hotels focus on, using a guest database and information to provide personalized services to their guests (Kiatsongchai & Choibamroong, 2014; Wang,2019).

METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative research methodology consisting of in-depth interviews with the owners or General Managers (GM) of 20 boutique hotels in Phuket, all of whom had between seven and ten years of experience in the industry. These interviewees were chosen as they can propose the concept and idea of expertise development in the hotel business; moreover, they can assess the types and role of knowledge used when solving tasks in hospitality management (Wilson-Wunsch, et.al., 2015).

The respondents for the interview were carefully chosen based on their willingness to share their marketing strategies. At first, a simple random sampling was applied when selecting respondents, many of whom refused to give information because they felt concerned about the confidentiality of marketing data. The sampling technique was then changed to be a snowball technique. The first respondent was contacted for interview, and asked to

recommend other hotel owners or marketing personnel of boutique hotels in Phuket whom they felt would be willing to participate. In total, 20 respondents (14 males and 6 females) were interviewed. The interviews were conducted in both Thai and English. Eleven respondents (seven males and four females) were English speaking marketing personnel.

The interview process took approximately 45 minutes per respondent and was completed over a period of 29 days covering various areas of Phuket, namely Patong (3 hotels), Kata (3 hotels), Karon (3 hotels), Mai Kao (3 hotels), Panwa (3 hotels), Rawai (3 hotels) and Choeng Talay (2 hotels). A dictaphone was used to record the data from the respondents allowing the researcher to concentrate on the respondents (Richards-Kortum and Sevick-Muraca, 1996); moreover, this method prevents the loss of information (Aberbach and Rockman, 2002). The respondents were asked to be interviewed at their hotels in order for them to feel more relaxed (Malhotra and Birks, 2003). All 20 respondents were asked to explain their market situation and they were given a list of marketing strategies and activities to identify which ones were similar to their existing strategies; finally they were asked to explain each item with respect to their marketing mix strategy.

Wang, Y. C., et al. (2019) suggested using data triangulation to

examine the same phenomenon from multiple sources. In this research, two types of triangulation were applied. Firstly, data triangulation was applied by combining various sources of material. Aside from interviews, conversations with hotel owners and GMs at the hotels were documented in order to compare the successful practices of the implementation of marketing. Secondly, investigator triangulation was carried out among the researchers, in order to analyze and interpret the data. Data from all sources (documents, interviews, observations) was described and categorized based on specific differences from all data sources. Data were analyzed by the researcher, and then proceeded to be checked by a member of hotel management.

RESULTS

The Current Marketing Strategy of Boutique Hotels in Phuket

Results revealed that the number of tourists staying at boutique hotels in Phuket is mixed between Thai and foreign visitors. The behaviour of tourists is not so different even though they are from different cultures with varying needs and expectations due to their differing mind-sets. Although there is strong competition among the boutique hotels in Phuket, low operational cost is a core strength of these businesses and they still have good chances to

grow in the market. Regarding the current marketing strategy of the boutique hotels in Phuket, more than half of the respondents focused on promotion mostly because there is a lot of competition not only among the boutique hotels but also with other types of hotels in Phuket. Every year the number of hotels in Phuket increases, allowing customers more choice when selecting a hotel for their stay. The boutique hotels are small scale businesses and must adjust their marketing promotions to remain competitive and attractive to customers; such promotions include early bird discounts, stay-pay promotions (e.g. stay 4 nights, pay for 3 nights), and honeymoon packages. As studied by Pereira (2017), promotions are shown on the hotel websites, which illustrate their room rates in order to attract potential guests.

The second strategy that boutique hotels implement to attract customers is price. Special discounts are commonly provided to customers, such as a 20% reduction during the green season as the hotel owners believe that customers don't want to take the risk of travelling to Phuket during the rainy season; reducing the price is believed to be a better strategy for attracting more customers. Singh (2018) suggested that discounts should be offered to guests during weekdays, or to leisure guests staying a minimum of two week days.

As the style of boutique hotels emphasizes personalized service, the process of delivering services is

considered as the third rank of the hotel's strategy. Some hotels are flexible regarding check-in and check-out time by allowing customers to check-out at the same time that they checked-in on the arrival date. This is a new strategy that makes the customers feel more comfortable. Another personalized service is to create a sense of belonging for customers by repeating the customers' names every time that staff have a conversation with them, and by keeping a guest history to record their necessary information. This strategy is related to the study of Wang (2016) which stated that hotels should keep a guest database in order to provide a personalized service for guests, recording and maintaining their information.

The hotel product was ranked as the 4th strategy that boutique hotels utilized; for example maintaining the condition of the guest rooms to ensure that customers felt at home, and maintaining a well-equipped fitness center, or a ready-to-use swimming pool, were some of the products offered. Every facility must be kept in order and maintained in good condition with some unique style and design. The exclusiveness of the product design is the key when formulating the boutique hotel's strategy (Kiatsongchai & Choibamroong, 2014).

The fifth strategy that the boutique hotels focused on during the green season was "people", that is to say there was a significant focus on training the hotel staff. All staff must be trained properly to be able to serve

the needs of customers effectively. In boutique hotels, which are small-scale, all staff must be responsible for any request from customers and have the ability to provide them rapidly with an effective solution. The results of this research correspond to the findings of Cetin, G., & Walls, A. (2016), who summarized that the experiences of hotel guests would be greater if they had interactions with attentive and professional staff.

Physical evidence was the sixth strategy used by the boutique hotels during green season. The appearance of the hotel is one of the most important factors that will impress customers. The hotel should therefore pay attention to the cleanliness and hygiene of the uniform of staff. Some of the respondents proposed that signage and parking is another factor creating satisfaction among customers, the hotel must make it clear how customers can reach the hotel, and provide a safe parking area to customers in case they have their own cars. This result is related to the study of Wang (2019), who summarized that the unique design, hotel atmosphere, good fashion and the mix of local culture become the demand of guests who would like to stay at the hotel.

The last strategy that boutique hotels focused on during the green season was 'place'. Most of the respondents stated that customers are not concerned about accessibility to the hotel, as most of them come to the hotel by public transportation and the drivers know the hotel's location

very well. Therefore, the hotel owners and managers do not feel that they need to focus much on this strategy. The hotel must simply maintain the accessibility to the hotel, ensuring its continued convenience. Yang, et, al. (2015) concluded that there are three important components of hotel location: access to interesting points, transportation convenience, and surrounding places.

The Effectiveness of the Marketing Strategy during the Green Season for Boutique Hotels in Phuket

During interview, the 20 respondents were also asked to compare the focus of the marketing strategy they used between high season and green season. A total of 15 respondents stated that their hotel paid most attention to the strategy that they formulated during green season, but that the number of tourists during this period is still not enough to fulfil the hotel operation costs, such as the salaries of staff. Many of them spent the green season refurbishing or renovating their hotels, working to maintain a good condition to ensure readiness to serve customers during the high season. The owners or general managers of the hotels realize that during the green season, customers consider guesthouses as another option, or may change destinations because they do not want to be faced with the unpredictable rain in Phuket. Some owners and managers of some of the

hotels contact corporate businesses during the green season, to offer MICE packages, but they are only able to accommodate a small group of people, not more than 50. Some hotels affiliate with Online Travel Agents (OTAs) such as Agoda, and Booking.com, to launch the hotels' promotions, and boost their sales volume, in addition to selling through sales representatives and the hotels' own websites. These additional strategies can help to fulfill the hotel revenue during the green season and many are thinking about adding additional meeting rooms in their hotels. However, some of the management team do not agree with constructing these meeting rooms at the hotels as it may create a misconception of the boutique hotel; this matter is still pending in many hotels and needs to be further discussed among the shareholders.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to study the current marketing strategies of boutique hotels in Phuket, Thailand. The qualitative method was presented through the in-depth interviews of hotel owners or general managers of boutique hotels in Phuket. The study was undertaken to shed light on the current marketing strategies and effectiveness of boutique hotels in Phuket. Utilizing this method, allowed for detailed information to be collected directly from the hotel owners and marketing personnel who expressed their opinions based on their experiences.

It was realized that all 7 Ps of the service marketing mix are not equally important in the point of view of the respondents. They selected only three out of seven as being most important in the marketing mix: Promotion, Price and Process. This is because the hotel's owner and marketing personnel must take into consideration the competition in the hotel industry in Phuket. They must provide an outstanding strategy to attract customers and convince them to select their hotel, and to satisfy their customers with a unique experience. Promotion seems to be the easiest tool to compete in the market as it allows the hotels to use many channels to reach their customers, such as advertising, personal sales, sales promotions, and public relations. This can encourage customers to make a decision to select boutique, over other types of hotel.

Finally, the results revealed that most of the boutique hotels spend time during green season with renovation of the hotel, so as to be in a good condition,¹ and also find the MICE market as another client to replace the main customers of the high season.

However, there are some negative comments from hotel owners, in terms of service failure regarding the marketing strategy which must be highlighted: 1) some hotels have trainees who are student interns from local universities whose English proficiency is not good enough to communicate well with

guests, which causes some misunderstandings between guests and the service providers. The hotels should be more careful when assigning the frontline staff who will serve guests so as to avoid this complaint, 2) hotels should specially take care of the ceilings during rainy season as they sometime leak, hence there is a need for refurbishment and to maintain the hotel in a good condition, 3) bugs and insects are a common complaint as there are many trees surrounding the hotels, and owners are frequently asking their housekeeping department to take care of this matter. These are some of the problems that the hotels always hear from their guests when they receive feedback from guests who are in-house or during check-out. This brings to the attention of the managers the importance of maintaining their hotel in a good condition through regular refurbishment as they believe that in the event of one complaint they may lose a valuable guest (Davis & Horner, 2015).

There were some limitations to this study regarding the method for contacting the hotels' owners or marketing personnel as they were quite busy and did not have much time for participating in the interview; moreover, they were not very willing to express their marketing strategy considering it as confidential. It was important to confirm with the respondents that the hotel and respondents name would not be disclosed, and that the information and all related data

would be given to the respondents to recheck and authorize before publication.

A suggestion for future research would be to conduct research in other types of hotels such as guesthouses, or to change the destination, so that the data will be beneficial to improve and develop the marketing strategy in different hotel types, and widespread destinations.

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