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CATEGORIES OF INTERMEDIARIES IN TOURISM

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Abstract

Channels of distribution are characterized by intermediaries (links) whose number as increases, extends the channel, but contributes to increase of access to the tourist product. An intermediary may be part of several distribution channels. Involvement of intermediaries "increases the efficiency of the marketing activity, more specifically of their putting at the disposal of the targeted consumers and their accessibility to the necessary goods"[1].

Intermediaries are all who interposed between producers and clients or final consumers in the distribution channel.

Intermediaries are defined more or less broadly. From considering intermediaries as "any seller who behaves as a link in the distribution chain between an organization and its customers," intermediaries are individuals or firms that, as the name suggests, have the role of ensures connections between producers and consumers (whenever they do not come in direct contact), and they take the form of distributors and agents (producers or consumers) "[2].

Key words: : intermediaries, tourism, travel agencies

INTRODUCTION

Intermediaries are all who interposed between producers and clients or final consumers in the distribution channel. Intermediaries are defined more or less broadly. From considering intermediaries as "any seller who behaves as a link in the distribution chain between an organization and its customers," intermediaries are individuals or firms that, as the name suggests, have the role of ensures connections between producers and consumers (whenever they do not come in direct contact), and they take the form of distributors and agents (producers or consumers) "[3] direct), ei îmbrăcând forma distribuitorilor și agenților (producătorilor sau consumatorilor)".[4]

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[1] Ph. Kotler (1997). Marketing Management. Teora Publishing House, p. 662

[2] Olimpia Iuliana Ban, Distribution in Tourism and E-Mediators, Clujeana University Press 2015, p. 20

[3] Olimpia Iuliana Ban, Distribution in Tourism and E-Mediators, Clujeana University Press 2015, p.25

[4] Olimpia Iuliana Ban,Distributia in Turism si E –Mediarii,Presa Universitara Clujeana 2015,p. 25

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The methods used in this study were diverse: the historical method, the comparative method, the sociological method, the logical method and the analytical one, their aim was the systematic analysis of the information selected from the sources studied in order to develop personal points of view and conclusions about the stated objectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The travel agency is a structure specialized in capitalizing the tourist offer to the consumer (its packages or separate components), both in a direct system and through intermediaries.

The travel agency may legally belong to the tour operator's own network but can also function independently of it, in this position by offering for sale the products manufactured by another tour operator.

The Travel and Tourism / Travel & Tourism sector is one of the most important growth sectors in Europe and around the world. Its development is closely linked to wider socio-economic and technological changes, which, through their co-evolution, continuously redefine the nature of supply and demand for tourism and tourism services.

The problem: wisdom accepted in the tourism and tourism industry (with very few exceptions) has so far put the emphasis on the disintermediation or disappearance of traditional intermediaries such as travel agencies, tour operators or even global distribution systems (GDSs).

Relevance: There are evidences on which foundation to base an alternative scenario for the development of the T & T channel, which has a very large impact on e-commerce policies.

Different participants from T & T sector are prepared differently to meet technological challenges. Global distribution systems (GDSs), computer reservation systems (CRSs) and, in particular, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), are very different organizational structures and inherited competencies. The limits regarding their interoperability or the "end-to-end" provision of a consistent and predictable service are still "the biggest organizational and technical problem in this sector. In addition, demand / customer - is increasingly more attracted to the use of information technologies, especially the Internet, to have direct access to information on their travel and tourism needs. As ICT costs continue to decline and their capacities increase, the distribution and management of T & T transactions could be theoretically under the control of users. It is a common opinion that research, evaluation and coordination of functions, which represent the most important part of the knowledge of the transactions that people and companies have to do when exchanging goods and services, will be transferred from the intermediary - the retailer - to the client.

Changes in the field of telecommunications and the spread of the Internet involve a series of traditional tasks of intermediaries in the direct context of consumers.

However, extensive empirical evidence and conceptual analysis regarding the distribution channel of tourism and travel don’t support this argument (see Kanellou, 1999). In a rapidly evolving electronic market, spreading direct links between vendors and customers wouldn’t lead either to a broken intermediary or to its disappearance. On the contrary, intermediaries not only continue to operate the distribution channel but are susceptible to do so this thing as stronger actors, actively forming the structure of the T & T sector.

The reason for their continued existence is in their unique functions of integrating - "packaging" - complementary travel services and products to offer a complete and satisfying customer service. This is the most important function of intermediation: the intelligence function.

The analysis of the intermediation stages in T & T (Kanellou, 1999) suggests that:

- the role of the intermediary has been an important element in all the stages that the tourism and travel sectors have so far experienced;
- he role of the intermediary is inexplicably linked to technological change; because each major wave of new technology changes the arena and power distribution among actors,
- the role of each intermediary also changes, yet this change doesn’t lead to disintermediation;
- in each stage a new intermediary controls the distribution channel; the nature of the intermediation (power source, product / service, and driving force), although it is different.

The history of intermediation in tourism and travel suggests that in accumulation of specialist knowledge or "intelligence", suppliers and customers are essential for successful intermediation.

Intelligence in this sense is defined as being knowledgeable or capable of filtering and evaluating available information about suppliers' products and services and in order to meet requirements so that suppliers and / or customers can act on it.

Building this capability, which is the key strategy, the resource of the T & T distribution channel, continues to be relevant today in the Internet-based distribution channel. How to convert available information of global services into knowing "right" information about a trip or holiday that satisfy the needs and wishes of any customer at any time in any part of the world is a challenge for T & T participants.

The novelty is that, as new technical solutions generate an overload of increasing information; this in turn raises the problem of how to transform available information into "personalized" or "actionable" knowledge. This problem is intensified and the integration of information becomes more and more important.

In the 1990s, the tourism industry used extensively computer reservation systems. Practically all larger airlines have offered a wide range of services through one or more systems, and the penetration rate of on-line terminals among travel agents has generally increased during this period, so that 100% of US companies and 95% of European travel agencies will be equipped with GDS terminals.

The emergence of global distribution systems in the 1980s and 1990s has transformed the role of intermediaries in the tourism and travel sector from retailers of "package holidays" to information distributors.

In the 1980s-90s, GDSs emerged as new intermediaries by interconnecting vendor databases and thus became content creators for travel and tourism services. The result of this transformation was a major change in the way of purchase and travel sold worldwide and also changed the role of the travel distribution system from one of the holiday packages distribution to one sold worldwide, and has also changed the role of the travel distribution system from one of the distribution of "holiday packages" to one of the distribution of information.

By the late 1990s, the boom of the internet had become evident. Today, each GDS chooses its own strategy according to its technological capabilities, its organizational structure and / or its market share in the distribution of travel sales. Each GDS has done enough at the beginning of the importance of the Internet, as well as the threats it has presented and tried to answer.

The new "new environment" has the potential to evolve into an interconnected market, facilitating the sharing of extensive information, variety of products and services. In recent years, a new type of intermediary - the so-called "cybermediary" - has developed alongside existing intermediaries (travel agents, tour operators, CRS and GDS). Their specialist service will be to adapt a diverse set of possible services and pricing options to the needs of individual customers. By the possibility to monitor a large number of service providers, they can build intelligence adapted to individual needs or to specialized demand segments. This strategy leads to information integration. Becoming information distributors, these new intermediaries contend with the challenge to become tourism information and personalized tourism generators. The latest development of the sector, which took place in December 1999 when Travelocity, Preview Travel and Price.com formed a marketing alliance through which the users of any of these services will be able to access other services, indicates the huge potential and opportunities for this new type of intermediary.

The Internet has brought a new type of intermediary in the field able to exploit the network to offer an increasingly comprehensive range of services and pricing options approach. The main issue today is how customers will obtain information relevant to their interests and what can be done to increase the possibility that suppliers' information to reach customers. The challenge is to empower customers through intelligence-based intermediation services.

The main aspects of the business are the transition from the capacity of information processing and organization to:

- integrating information from all suppliers;
- building databases for customer;
- the ability to search and filter information for products and services that meet customer needs, which are not always clearly defined;
- the ability to guarantee the quality of services;
- personalization of information;
- personalization of the service / product;
- costs and time savings.

The main distribution activity in the travel and tourism sector today is the transfer and manipulation of information. TIC offers customers the opportunity to move from staging viewers to dynamic retailers or, at least, allow them to perform some of the functions of retailers. On the other hand, the "virtual" nature of the intermediary means that it gains the trust of the clients, the reputation and credibility of the building becomes of particular importance for it to become "dynamic." The "virtual" nature of these new intermediaries means that the confidence gain of the clients and the building of reputation and credibility become the greatest importance. These developments greatly change the importance and role of the intermediary, and do not lead to disintermediation, but rather to a change in the origin of "dynamic governance costs," that is, the cost of "not having the capabilities you need when you need them" (Langlois, 1992).[5]

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