

The Senior Traveler Market as a Competitive Advantage for the Luxury Hotel Sector in the UK Post-Pandemic

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Abstract : Over the last few years, the senior travel market has been noted for its potential in the wider tourism industry. The tourism sector includes the hotel and hospitality, travel, transportation, and several other subdivisions to make it economically viable. In particular, the hotel attracts a substantial part of the expenditure in tourism activities as when people plan to travel, suitable accommodation for relaxation, dining, entertainment and so on is paramount to their decision-making. The global retail value of the hotel as of 2018 was significant for tourism. But, despite indications of the hotel to the tourism industry at large, very few empirical studies are available to establish how this sector can leverage on the senior demographic to achieve competitive advantage. Predominantly, studies on the mature market have focused on destination tourism, with a limited investigation on the hotel which makes a significant contribution to tourism. Also, several scholarly studies have demonstrated the importance of the senior travel market to the hotel, yet there is very little empirical research in the field which has explored the driving factors that will become the accepted new normal for this niche segment post-pandemic. Giving that the hotel already operates in a highly saturated business environment, and on top of this pre-existing challenge, the ongoing global health outbreak has further put the sector in a vulnerable position. Therefore, the hotel especially the full-service luxury category must evolve rapidly for it to survive in the current business environment. The hotel can no longer rely on corporate travelers to generate higher revenue since the unprecedented wake of the pandemic in 2020 many organizations have invented a different approach of conducting their businesses online, therefore, the hotel needs to anticipate a significant drop in business travellers. However, the rooms and the rest of the facilities must be occupied to keep their business operating. The way forward for the hotel lies in the leisure sector, but the question now is to focus on the potential demographics of travelers, in this case, the seniors who have been repeatedly recognized as the lucrative market because of increase discretionary income, availability of time and the global population trends. To achieve the study objectives, a mixed-method approach will be utilized drawing on both qualitative (netnography) and quantitative (survey) methods, cognitive and decision-making theories (means-end chain) and competitive theories to identify the salient drivers explaining senior hotel choice and its influence on their decision-making. The target population are repeated seniors' age 65 years and over who are UK resident, and from the top tourist market to the UK (USA, Germany, and France). Structural equation modelling will be employed to analyze the datasets. The theoretical implication is the development of new concepts using a robust research design, and as well as advancing existing framework to hotel study. Practically, it will provide the hotel management with the latest information to design a competitive marketing strategy and activities to target the mature market post-pandemic and over a long period.

Keywords : competitive advantage, covid-19, full-service hotel, five-star, luxury hotels

Conference Title : ICHIHOA 2021 : International Conference on Hospitality Industry, Hotel Operations and Accommodation

Conference Location : London, United Kingdom

Conference Dates : July 26-27, 2021