

# Research on Marketing Innovation of Resort Hotels under the Background of “Internet +”

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**Abstract:** The so-called Internet + means, through the application of information and communication technology as well as the platform of network, the Internet can be deeply integrated with traditional industries and create the new development environment. This new round of communication revolution has greatly affected the marketing of hotel industry. If hotels cannot adapt to the new mode of Internet + marketing, they will be driven out of the market. Based on analyzing the current situation of holiday hotels and problems in the traditional marketing mode, this paper explores new marketing strategies for resort hotels under the background of Internet +, and puts forward suggestions for the development of resort hotels.

## 1. Introduction

On March 5, 2015, at the Third Session of the Twelfth National People’s Congress, Ke-qiang Li, the Premier of the State Council, put forward the action plan of “Internet +” in the Report on the Work of the Government for the first time. In March 2015, the Ali Research Institute promulgated the first “Internet +” Research Report in China, which systematically studied the spread and application of “Internet +”. It is a set of information technology based the Internet (including the mobile Internet as well as the cloud computing and big data technology), and can be applied in various sectors of our economic and social life.

According to the 42nd Statistical Report on Internet Development in China issued by the China Internet Network Information Center, until June 30, 2018, the scale of Internet users in China reached 802 million; the number of mobile phone users reached 788 million; the number of network payment users reached 569 million, of which 566 million were mobile phone payment users. It can be seen that researches on innovations in the “Internet + hotel industry”, especially in the network marketing, are the general trend and the important direction of hotel marketing in the future.

With the rapid development of Internet technology and the fierce competition in the market, the Internet economy has exerted a huge impact on traditional industries. For many enterprises, marketing activities guided by the traditional marketing theory cannot meet their objectives. To keep pace with the times, learning ability and application ability have become the basic requirements for enterprises to adapt to social development. In order to maintain the stable increase of operating performance, hotels do not only need to improve the service quality, but also need to use the Internet thinking mode to guide the whole operation process and formulate marketing strategies suitable for the development of the times.

## 2. Introduction to Resort Hotels

Resort hotels are also known as holiday hotels. They provide all kinds of recreational facilities and projects for guests to meet their needs for leisure, vacation and relaxation. Holiday hotels are mostly built by the seashore, near the hot springs, or in forests, mountainous areas and other scenic spots. In other words, they tend to locate in places with unique tourism resources. The purpose of site selection is to ensure the hotel occupancy through attracting tourists by the surrounding natural or artificial landscapes and other tourism resources.

With the continuous growth of China’s national economy, people’s disposable income is also increasing. Citizens now have increasingly higher requirements on the quality of life. In order to

alleviate the pressure brought by work and life, more and more people are pursuing a healthy, leisure and green life after work. Outbound tourism is also developing from the single sightseeing tourism to the combination of sightseeing, leisure and vacation tourism. The demand for resort hotels increases markedly; the industry has broad prospects of development.

At the same time, competitions in the hotel industry are becoming increasingly fierce. The trend of industry differentiation is becoming increasingly obvious. The market share of economic hotels, business hotels and holiday hotels are further refined. With the increase of people's disposable income and the influence of the concept of pursuing pleasure, resort hotels for tourists will become the mainstream.

### **3. Problems in the Traditional Marketing Methods of Resort Hotels**

Leisure tourism also has good prospects for development, but for resort hotels in tourist attractions, market competition is fierce. Most resort hotels' marketing strategies are too simple, and lack of characteristics and innovation. This is a common problem in the marketing strategies of resort hotels in tourist attractions.

#### **3.1 The obvious seasonality of products**

For the tourism industry, the strong seasonality is a problem faced by all resort hotels. In peak seasons, rooms are expensive and difficult to book. In low seasons, there are few visitors. In peak seasons, the increase of tourists leads to the decline of service quality. In off seasons, the profits are very low; hotel facilities are not well maintained and cleaned. Most resort hotels do not pay attention to the feature of seasonality in their marketing strategies, which affects the long-term development of hotels.

Though most resort hotels neglect the issues of life cycles of products and the seasonality of resources, these problems are prevalent in tourist attractions. The neglect of product life cycle will lead to blind market entry, while the neglect of seasonality and the time limit of resources will lead to imbalanced hotel running. All these are urgent problems to be solved by resort hotels in tourist attractions.

#### **3.2 Products are lack of innovation; brand positioning is ambiguous**

Most domestic resort hotels have the same development model: focusing on the shape and size of the building, simply imitating the style, but lacking the characteristics of domestic tourism culture. The problem of unsustainable momentum is especially obvious in entertainment innovation.

Some resort hotels in tourist attractions fail to create and promote the brand value. They simply follow the marketing strategy of other hotels in pricing and servicing, or copy the style of other hotels in the design of products and hotel facilities. Hotels have ambiguous brand positioning; there are few specific researches on the own environment and the competitiveness of different hotels. These phenomena lead to the similarity of hotel products, services, facilities and styles, which is unfavorable for the development of hotels. The concept of sustainable development is also missing in the marketing process.

#### **3.3 Single marketing channel**

The conventional marketing channels of resort hotels include network, travel agencies and agents; different hotels have similar marketing channels. The two marketing channels of travel agencies and agents belong to the traditional group tourists-oriented mode. The two main modes of network marketing are direct marketing and indirect marketing. The so-called direct marketing means that individual hotels or hotel groups set up their own websites and carry out business activities according to their own business needs. Indirect marketing mainly includes third-party agents (such as Ctrip, elong and LY.COM), e-commerce platforms (such as Taobao and JD), search engines (such as Qunar), comment networks (such as mafengwo, TripAdvisor and dianping) and global reservation networks (such as Booking, Agoda and hotels.com). These websites guide consumers to book or settle transactions through network platforms.

### **3.4 Single marketing and promotion methods**

Because of the nature of resort hotels, consumers have low loyalty to the brand of hotels. It is easy for them to choose other hotels. At the same time, as a product with strong alternatives, consumers' demand for hotels is unstable and seasonal. The purchasing behaviors of clients are often influenced by the outside world. Most consumers are unlikely to buy hotel products if they are not impressed by them.

For most resort hotels in scenic spots, the promotion strategies are similar. Most of them adopt short-term and single promotion methods to attract consumers (gifts, discounts and prize-winning sales activities). The marketing effect is not obvious. This concept of "waiting for consumers to choose the hotel" is no longer suitable for today's fiercely competitive market.

## **4. New Marketing Strategies for "Internet +" Resort Hotels**

### **4.1 Hotel product development and brand marketing**

With the increasingly fierce competition in the hotel industry and the changing and even diversified needs of customers, in order to gain advantages in the market, hotels must take customers as the center, fully understand the needs of clients, change the traditional thinking mode, subdivide the market, and develop products which have the features of resort hotels and can meet guests' requirements on conference and vacation. During the holiday, guests usually stay a long period of time in the hotel. They have high demands for the conference and entertainment facilities.

Brand marketing aims to convey information about brand culture and brand ideas to consumers through market propaganda, so that clients can have better understanding on the advantages and characteristics of the brand. The good brand awareness and feelings in customers' minds can lead to favorable consumption behaviors. Some scholars have found that in the marketing process, many resort hotels have vague and unclear brand positioning. In view of this, resort hotels should strengthen thematic marketing in order to strengthen the brand image and expand the influence of the hotel. Hotels need to determine a distinct and prominent theme to attract the attention of clients. In that process, factors need to be considered include the actual needs of consumers, the features and management characteristics of the hotel, special resources of the hotel, such as surrounding humanity and natural landscapes, as well as consumer preferences and social popularity. The good propaganda planning can improve the image of the hotel and attract more consumers' attention.

### **4.2 Innovation of hotel marketing channel**

(1) Hotels need to integrate network resources, strengthen the construction of their official websites, and increase the direct online sales volume. Under the background of the "Internet +" era, hotels should attach great importance to the construction of official websites, vigorously promote the strategy of direct selling through their official websites, and comprehensively enhance the brand influence as well as the volume of direct online sales. In addition to displaying basic hotel information and main products on the official website, the reservation function should also be created. Specified staff should be responsible for background maintenance and accepting reservations, so that guests can book hotel products more conveniently and quickly.

(2) Hotels can search for customers through Wechat platform and reduce the excessive dependence on OTA online distribution channels. Through the platform of Wechat Official Accounts, hotels can promptly push all kinds of promotional and preferential information to their followers, which will play a good role in finding potential customers and shaping the brand image. When editing the message, contents which are commonly seen in the industry should be avoided. Through the analysis of customer data and in-depth collection of customer' concerns and interests, hotels can publish contents with authenticity and practicability. Wechat membership cards can be developed. Guests can book rooms through the Official Account platform; their member points can be accumulated to exchange for hotel products online.

(3) Hotels need to construct diversified online distribution channels to promote direct sales through distribution and improve hotel occupancy. At present in China, famous online agents

include Ctrip, eLong and Mango city. Through the construction of diversified distribution channels, hotels can discover potential customers and reduce the dependence on one single platform. Online distribution channels can bring the hotel with a large number of customers who come for the first time. The hotel cannot belittle online business because of the low cost. Customers attracted by online distribution channels should be taken as the precious opportunity to maintain the customer relationship system. Through high-quality service, these customers can be guided to join the hotel's direct online selling channels through the official website and the Wechat booking function. These measures can improve the direct sales volume as well as the occupancy of hotels.

(4) Hotels should pay attention to online comments and timely response to guests' opinions, so as to maintain the good reputation of the hotel. Hotels should attach great importance to their own service and product qualities, improve relevant evaluation mechanisms, and set up a special public relations group which is responsible for responding to network comments and monitoring network public opinions. Bad comments should be dealt with timely, since positive response can help to eliminate the misunderstandings of guests. If the guests are persuaded and delete or modify the bad comments, the brand image of hotel will be protected.

#### **4.3 Relational marketing: instill the marketing concept into the minds of staff**

For resort hotels, it is necessary to achieve a high degree of unity of the business philosophy and the marketing strategy. Hotel managers should popularize modern marketing concepts and methods among staffs, and help them to establish marketing concepts consistent with the current situation of market competition. Hotels should mobilize all employees to participate in marketing and publicity based on the "customers first" guiding principle. But for the internal management, the "customers first" concept should be replaced by "employees first". Feasible marketing and propaganda programs should be formulated to stimulate employees' participation enthusiasm. The information channels and resources of all employees should be used to carry out marketing and publicity and create a strong marketing atmosphere inside the hotel. Then, all staff can continuously improve their brand awareness and expand the influence of the hotel.

Hotel managers must fully recognize the importance of integrated marketing, and consider the integrated marketing revenue as an important source and an indispensable part of the hotel's total income. Then, on the premise of the actual situation of the hotel, they should formulate and refine the sales promotion indicators for different employees, and decompose the business indicators according to departments.

#### **4.4 Collaborative marketing: establishing conferences and resorts hotel alliance**

In the past year, under the impacts of the Internet wave and the economic situation, major hotels huddled together for warmth. Marriott's acquisition of Starwood, Jinjiang's acquisition of Plateno, as well as the merger of BTG and Home Inn hotel are typical examples. The strategic alliance of hotels has become a trend and a breakthrough strategy of the hotel industry to achieve win-win cooperation in the Internet era. In order to survive and develop in the fierce market competition, resort hotels must attach importance to the application of collaborative marketing tools, maintain and manage public relations, keep good cooperative relations with peer enterprises, and enhance market competitiveness. The alliance of resort hotels in scenic spots can be built to provide a common platform with shared resources.

The alliance can also fully mobilize, integrate and share the excellent internal and external resources of enterprises, including hotels, cruise ships, aviation, car rental, tourism, real estate, communications and the Internet. Hotels can then jump out of the inherent service mode, upgrade their products and services, and jointly create an ecological circle with "food, housing, travel, tourism, shopping and entertainment".

### **5. Conclusions**

With the introduction of the "Internet +" strategy, the "Internet +" trend has been spread to the hotel industry. For hotels, the Internet is not only a technical tool, but also a way of thinking. It will

profoundly affect the development and innovation of the hotel industry. Under the background of “Internet +”, hotels should learn and explore the requirements of customers, and then efficiently optimize their functions according to customers’ needs. Hotels need to actively adapt to people’s consumption psychology and booking habits, actively create convenient living experience, develop potential customers and cultivate loyal customers, so as to achieve the perfect unity of promoting hotel brand value and gaining economic benefits.

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