IMAGE PERCEPTION OF CHAIN HOTEL COMPANIES BY CONSUMERS

INTRODUCTION

The relevance of the topic is explained by the fact that the image itself is intangible, but one of the main components of a successful reputation of a hotel company in the modern market of services. The image, in general, consists of all aspects of the activities of a hotel company, and if it is negative, it can affect competitiveness and financial condition.

The development of the hospitality industry has always attracted huge public attention and was a necessary condition. With the appearance of the first prototypes of hotels, it has undergone numerous changes, without which the industry cannot exist in the modern world. Over time, new types of activities appeared, and with them new consumers, which forced the hotel industry to expand and transform. The basis of the hotel business is, directly, the accommodation facilities and the services provided in them, and the consumers of these services. Modern researchers of the hotel industry are faced with the problem of segmentation of the hotel market, as new types of customers are constantly being identified. Potential consumers are classified according to a variety of criteria, which allows us to identify the motivation of choice, stereotypical behavior and the specifics of working with them.

The biggest difficulty in the work of an employee of the reception and accommodation service in a hotel company is that every day he contacts different people belonging to different psychological types, behavioral characteristics and goals of the trip. The main task of an employee in customer service is to provide high-quality service, for which he needs to understand different types of guests. The main types of clients of the hotel industry are presented in Table 1.

| Type of guest | Description |
|---------------|-------------|
| Individual visitors | As a rule, they travel alone and settle in single rooms. |
| Business tourists | Expect improved quality, business center, computer accessories. Wealthy and have a tight work schedule |
| Parents with children | Waiting for a place to feed/entertain children |
| Guests who came for treatment | They are waiting for peace and rest; most often they come for a long time |
| Guests with disabilities | Choose hotels with the presence of special ramps, the absence of thresholds and the possibility of providing equipment (special alarm clocks, remote controls) |
| VIP guests | All services are connected to the service of such guests, because such guests are celebrities, politicians, etc. |
| Newlyweds | Expect new sensations from the honeymoon and pleasant bonuses from the hotel |
| Group of tourists | Accommodation on one floor, several people in a room |
| Guests with the status of "incognito" | They don’t want anyone to know about their presence. If someone asks about a guest, the employee is obliged to answer that he does not live here |
| Non-smoking guests | Check-in in non-smoking rooms |
| Guests with pets | Check-in in rooms with pets only |

Source: Search data.

Recently, a lot of research has been conducted regarding the identification of types of consumers of services based on their attitude to the enterprise. In order to succeed in providing hotel services, you need to understand the psychotypes of customers with whom employees face throughout their work. Rudenko A.M., a Russian philosopher and psychologist identifies several main psychotypes of clients: "analyst", "enthusiast" and "activist" (RUDENKO, 2016).
In his work "Psychology of socio-cultural service and tourism", A.M. Rudenko mentions the classification of hotel customers by V. A. Kvartalny, another domestic researcher in the field of tourism, which is based on the analysis of the daily lifestyle of customers. This typology is based on the basic needs of a person and on his motives for choosing a means of accommodation. V. A. Kvartalny identifies the following types of clients of the hotel industry: "self-absorbed pleasure seeker"; "active and purposeful personality"; "business personality"; "blue-collar workers" and "traditional stay-at-home" (RUDENKO, 2016). Of course, psychographic factors are not the only ones by which clients of accommodation facilities can be classified. There are also geographical, behavioral, demographic factors.

The hotel industry, due to its specifics, covers many regions and countries. Each region has its own culture, history, rules and customs. First of all, the hotel services market is classified according to geographical factors, and then depending on the characteristics of each specific territory. On a territorial basis, it is possible to classify hotels within the same city or region, in the city center, near ports and transport routes, etc. F. Kotler gives the following geographical segments of the hotel market: Pacific; Mountain; Northwest, Southwest, Northeast and Southeast of the Central Region (European part); South Atlantic Coast, Center Atlantic Coast, New England (KOTLER, 1998).

Demographic factors describe the main requirements for hotel services depending on age, income level, marital status and social status. Such factors are taken into account first of all, because it depends on the age, health status, availability of funds and opportunities, desires and needs, nationality of each specific group, a hotel company can offer specific services. Behavioral signs are the most significant for the classification of consumers of hotel services. Such criteria help to find out what the visitor expects from the service, identify his basic needs, thereby ensuring the provision of high-quality hotel services and increase customer satisfaction.

It should also be said that when choosing a specific hotel, a potential guest proceeds from such indicators as safety, reliability, and popularity of the enterprise. Thus, we can say that there are a lot of different classifications of clients of accommodation facilities. They are based on geographical, demographic, psychological and behavioral factors. There is no certain factor, because each client differs from the rest by his personality, desires, goals and intentions.

Understanding what a potential consumer pays attention to when planning their vacation or trip is one of the important aspects of running a hotel business. In the modern world, the process of choosing a hotel company is almost instantaneous, you only need to specify your wishes when booking online or offline. There are a huge number of technologies and services that allow you to find exactly the hotel that a guest needs in a short time. As practice shows, the main points when choosing a hotel company by a consumer is the presence of positive reviews, photos, a “well-packaged” and active website.

When a person has needs, he begins to look for ways to satisfy them. Satisfaction of one need brings new sensations, and then a new one arises. Every need begins with its realization, for example, when an employee is sent on a business trip, one of the first questions is the search for housing (hotel, hostel). Then the person makes an effort to meet this need (search for a suitable hotel /hostel in Internet). The need for a hotel service will be met when this service is provided and the person is at the stage of eviction after the stay.

In the process of consuming the hotel service, the client will be satisfied or disappointed just as much as the service provided met his expectations: did the hotel look the same as in the photos, is it really good service there, as written in the reviews, do the prices correspond to reality, etc. A satisfied consumer is likely to turn to the service of a particular hotel company again and will be an excellent advertisement. However, if the customer is dissatisfied with the hotel service, the number of potential customers will decrease, because bad reviews are perceived to be more truthful than good ones.

Consumer dissatisfaction arises from the mismatch of expectations and reality, and for hotels in high demand, a good option is to create such an impression that reality exceeds all expectations. Only through understanding the needs of the consumer and their satisfaction, hotel companies can count on their popularity.
MATERIAL AND METHODS OF RESEARCH

The authors used both general scientific research methods and specific ones for studying the issues of hotel business. So, a system analysis was applied, thanks to which it was possible to form a theoretical basis concerning the image perception of consumers of hotel enterprises.

The survey method was used - the survey research method is based on receiving feedback from consumers. The questionnaire allows you to get written answers to the questions asked, and with this help to identify different points of view. The press questionnaire is implemented through the mass media using “Yandex Vzglyat” (surveys.yandex.ru). In addition, the authors applied methods of statistical analysis, historical, typology, etc.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Hotels of international hotel brands, as a rule, have greater advantages than single ones. Each hotel brand makes huge investments in the development of its name and sustainability in the hotel services market. Each brand is a carrier of quality, provides a guaranteed set of services that does not change depending on the location. All this concerns the requirements for the equipment of rooms, interior, appearance of employees, symbols, advertising campaign. A very important aspect is also the high level of security, which is controlled by the hotel services. Most travelers who have stayed in chain hotels at least once will most likely stay in a hotel of the same chain next time.

The purpose of the study is to identify the motives of a person when choosing in favor of a certain hotel company. A hotel that clearly understands the expectations of customers, their needs and requirements is the most successful. The practical significance of the study is to answer the question: “What exactly does the modern consumer expect?”.

The study was conducted by a survey method using “Yandex Vzglyat” (surveys.yandex.ru) in the period from 17.03.2021 to 10.05.2021 In the course of the study, a total of 400 people of the 18+ age category were interviewed on the territory of all regions of Russia, regardless of their financial condition, gender and place of work, and the results obtained helped to analyze consumer behavior.

Research objectives: to identify the main factors that influenced the choice of a hotel company. The object of the study is potential consumers. The subject of the study is the image and reputation of chain hotel companies.

Unlike interviews, the questionnaire gives the consumer the opportunity to answer questions independently and express their personal independent opinion. The advantages of the proposed method are universality and anonymity. At the same time, the results of the survey could be affected by difficulty in answering, or giving deliberately false information. In the course of the study, two surveys were posted on the “Yandex Vzglyat” (surveys.yandex.ru), each consisted of four questions. The first questionnaire was opened 201 times, of which only 75% of respondents answered all the questions (150 people); the second questionnaire was opened 200 times, of which only 63% was the conversion from the first question to the end of the interview (126 people). It should be said that a different number of respondents answered each question from the questionnaire.

The first questionnaire contains the following questions:

(1) Do you often stay in chain hotels?
(2) What services do you use for booking rooms?
(3) How much do network brands influence the development of the hotel market?
(4) On the basis of what do you make a choice in favor of a particular hotel chain?

The second questionnaire, in turn, contains more clarifying questions:

(1) What is the first thing you pay attention to when checking into a hotel?
(2) What is the most important thing for you in the image of a chain hotel company?
(3) How important do you think a hotel brand’s reputation is?
(4) Do you believe what is being written about the hotel company in the media and the Internet?

In total, the survey consists of eight questions that allow us to identify the main motives that influence the choice of a hotel company. There are 3-7 possible answers in each question.

Question 1: to the question "Do you often stay in chain hotels?" 197 respondents out of 200 answered. Answer options: "never had to", "rarely", "constantly". Unfortunately, statistics showed that 76.6% (151 people) of respondents did not stay in chain hotels, 18.3% (36 people) rarely, but still stayed, and 7.1% (14 people) use only chain hotels at all. This may indicate that the majority of respondents do not have the ability or desire to stay in chain hotels. Most likely, the price of accommodation affected, as a result of which consumers prefer cheaper non-chain hotels, or rarely go on vacation. Consequently, it can be concluded that most of the respondents are middle-income family people who prefer a very quiet holiday near their place of residence.

The second question: "What services do you use for booking rooms?" gave rather ambiguous results. 152 respondents out of 200 respondents answered this question. The most popular booking services used in 2021 were Booking.com, Airbnb, Hotels.com. The most popular booking services are used only by 34.8% of respondents (53 people) 16.4% (25 people) voted for "Booking.com ", 3.9% (6 people) for " Airbnb ", 0.7% (1 person) chose the option "Ostrovok.ru ", 1.3% (2 people) chose the option "Hotels.com ", 12.5% (19 people) for "HomeAway". The remaining respondents chose the options "Other" - 51.3% (78 people) and "Hotel website" - 13.8% (21 people). What was meant by "Other" is unknown. Quite possibly, these 78 people. they are clients “from the doorstep", i.e., those who decide to stay on the spot and do not plan their trips. For such clients, it is often important simply to be able to accommodate and stay for a certain time and they are not particularly concerned about the appearance of the hotel, its reputation and image.

Question 3: “How much do network brands influence the development of the hotel market?” again, gave mixed results. As an answer option, a scale from one to six was provided, allowing to assess how much the respondent agrees that network brands really influence the development of the hotel market. According to the survey, 66.9% of respondents (109 people) find it difficult to answer this question. Most likely, these are the respondents who have never stayed in chain hotels. 8.6% (14 people) gave the answer "I completely agree" and, probably, these are the same 14 people who answered in the first question that they constantly stay in chain hotels. 14% of respondents (35 people) have doubts and 10.4% (17 people) answered that network brands do not affect the development of the hotel market in any way.

The last fourth question was available only to those who answered in the first question that they constantly use the services of chain hotels. Only 13 people out of 200 respondents answered this question. Although this is a small figure, it is these people who are the target audience of hotels owned by large chain hotel brands, and it is their opinion that is taken into account by hotel brand marketers when conducting research on consumer satisfaction with hotel services. 23.1% (3 people) answered that their choice is influenced by the location of the hotel, corporate identity and the number of additional services in a chain hotel. Most likely, these are people who have come on vacation, for whom the appearance, interior, distance from/ to the airport / railway station and what kind of orientation this hotel has (which customers it is focused on) are important. 15.4% (2 people) and 23.1% (3 people) answered that the quality of service and customer orientation are important for them. 38.5% (5 people) answered that image and reputation play the main role for them when choosing a hotel.

After analyzing the results of the study on the first questionnaire, several conclusions can be drawn:

(1) The majority of respondents do not have the opportunity or desire to stay in hotels of chain hotel brands, and they do not understand at all how much chain hotel brands influence the development of the hotel market both in Russia and abroad. Most likely, the respondents are family citizens with average incomes and have an office job. Their priority is sanatoriums and recreation centers located by the sea, in the mountains or in neighboring regions. Comfort and low price are important for them.
The second survey posted on the “Yandex Vzglyat” (surveys.yandex.ru) consisted of 4 more specific questions regarding consumer choice. The second survey was created in order to get a more accurate answer to the research question: “What exactly does the consumer expect?”. The second survey contained clarifying questions regarding the image and reputation of a chain hotel company and consumer opinion. The survey was opened 200 times, of which only 63% of respondents answered all the questions (126 people). It should be clarified that a different number of respondents answered each question.

Question 1: “What is the first thing you pay attention to when checking into a hotel?” it contained the following answers: “interior”, “customer orientation”, “room equipment”, “brand presence (brochures, embroidery)”, “additional services and their cost”, “material condition”, “other”. This question was answered by 194 respondents out of 200. Statistics have shown that the material condition of the hotel still plays a primary role in the consumer choice in favor of a hotel company, this answer was chosen by 31.4% of respondents (61 people). Naturally, guests will not want to stay in a hotel where there is no water or repairs have not been done for a long time, or there are problems with rodents, or perhaps dirty laundry sets. The hotel is not only a temporary place of residence for the guest, but also a kind of home, and it is very important that “home” chosen by the guests is clean and tidy. If the hotel rooms do not inspire confidence in a person, they seem untidy, old or something does not suit him - a person will never stay in such a hotel, no matter whether it is a network hotel or a private one.

The first question also showed that along with the material condition of the hotel enterprise, guests prefer a good interior - 28.4% (55 people), room equipment - 25.8% (50 people), and customer orientation - 19.1% (37 people). A smaller proportion of respondents noted that additional services are important to them - 12.4% (24 people) and the presence of the brand in the hotel enterprise (embroidery on textiles, corporate identity, etc.) - 11.3% (22 people). The remaining respondents chose the option “other” - 25.8% (50 people). Perhaps the “other” meant the location or the prices of accommodation.

Question 2: “What is the most important thing for you in the image of a chain hotel?” did not give the results that were expected. The majority of respondents noted that appearance is much more important for them than, for example, special brand offers - 39.3% (53 people) versus 5.9% (8 people). This suggests that it is much more important for guests to see a beautiful picture around them (interior, color solutions, material equipment) than to be able to use the services offered in chain hotels of a certain brand. Statistics also showed that the reputation of a chain hotel brand is equally important for respondents - 36.3% (49 people), customer orientation - 27.4% (37 people), and feedback - 30.4% (41 people), but brand activity on the Internet does not play a role at all - 8.1% (11 people). Although in the modern world, Internet activity is one of the main components of the successful promotion of a chain hotel brand and the communication of its mission and purpose to the public, as practice has shown, consumers are not particularly interested in it. Indeed, it is much more important where a person stops and what this place offers him than how beautiful pictures and posts are posted on the company’s social networks.

To question 3: “How important do you think a hotel brand’s reputation is?” 131 respondents out of 200 answered. In the case of this question, the results were exactly as expected. Respondents were required to assess the impact of reputation on the activities of the hotel brand on a 5-point scale, where 1 - "I do not agree at all", and 5 - "I completely agree". The majority of respondents - 36.6% (48 people) fully agree that reputation is important for the development of a chain hotel brand, while 18.3% (24 people) partially agree with this.
statement. 20.6% of respondents - 24 people. - partially disagree or are not sure about their choice, while 2.3% of respondents (3 people) do not agree at all that the reputation of a hotel brand somehow affects its competitiveness, development and consumer activity. 24.4% (32 people) find it difficult to answer this question.

The last, fourth question of the questionnaire confirmed the hypothesis that the activities of a hotel brand affect its reputation. In the XXI century, the reputation of any brand or product, not only hotel, determines the direction of its development. If customers are not satisfied with the result- they have the opportunity to leave their feedback on the company’s website, and when there are much more negative reviews than positive ones, the brand experiences a loss of consumer confidence. It is important to remember that almost any activity of a hotel company, be it financial, charitable or political, is recorded on the Internet, and potential consumers of hotel services have free access to this information.

To the question “Do you believe what they write about the hotel brand in the media, the Internet?” 126 respondents out of 200 respondents answered. Almost the same number of respondents equally believe information about a chain hotel brand that is publicly available. 27% (34 people) noted that this affects customer demand, 25.4% (32 people) indicated that with the help of the media, you can find out a lot of hidden information that is not posted on the official pages of hotel brands. 23% (29 people) consider information from Internet sources to be part of the reputation of a chain hotel brand, while 15.1% (19 people) do not trust information from the Internet. A significant part of respondents - 19.8% (25 people) prefer not to read the media and not to be interested in information from the Internet, and 8.7% (11 people) do not stay in chain hotels at all.

After analyzing the results of the survey and comparing them with the results of the previous survey, several conclusions can be drawn:

(1) Although the majority of respondents have never stayed in chain hotels, they understand that reputation is very important for a hotel company and will never stay in a hotel with bad reviews.

(2) The main factors determining the image of a chain hotel company according to consumers are appearance, reputation and customer orientation.

(3) Consumers make a choice in favor of a certain hotel company based on the following factors: corporate identity (interior, material condition, room equipment), reputation (availability of reviews, information in open sources about the company’s activities), as well as customer orientation (quality of service, the possibility of providing additional services, staff work).

CONCLUSION

The image of a hotel company is the first associations that arise in the minds of consumers with regard to the hotel brand. The more positive the image, the higher the brand’s reputation, and the more influence it has on the hotel market. Since image is the first association, it is important for a chain hotel brand to pay attention to creating a positive image. This process is influenced by factors such as:

(1) brand awareness when it is mentioned;

(2) uniqueness;

(3) creating a favorable impression in the minds of consumers;

(4) organization of events that support and improve the image, thereby motivating employees to improve their performance, and potential consumers to use the services of a particular brand;

(5) increasing the competitiveness of the brand.

To form a powerful hotel brand, it is important to pay attention to corporate identity, to convey the uniqueness of the brand to the masses through original and memorable slogans, small-format publications. A more modern way to create a favorable image of a chain hotel brand is
to communicate with consumers via the global Internet. This can be the collection and analysis of reviews, informing customers about the opportunities provided by a chain hotel brand.

The main reason why people tend to trust chain hotel brands is a sense of confidence, security and security. It is created through the long-term work of employees of the hotel chain to implement security systems, as well as continuous improvement of the quality of services provided.

It should be remembered that there are different categories of consumers who perceive information differently. Appearance is important for someone, location is important for someone, reputation is important for someone, and someone prefers not to use the services of chain hotel brands at all, but exactly the proportion of the population that understands the importance of the information provided and what kind of work is behind it are the target audience and the main brand activities aimed at improving their reputation are aimed at them.

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Image perception of chain hotel companies by consumers
Percepção de imagem de empresas hoteleiras de rede por consumidores
Percepción de la imagen de las cadenas hoteleras por parte de los consumidores

Resumo
A indústria hoteleira está crescendo e mudando cada vez que as necessidades humanas mudam. Há muitas empresas hoteleiras da rede prontas para atender às necessidades de potenciais clientes. Nas condições de concorrência cada vez maior, as empresas hoteleiras enfrentam a tarefa de criar uma imagem positiva. A imagem em si é um elemento obrigatório de uma marca de hotel e existe ao longo de toda a sua trajetória de vida. Criar uma imagem positiva requer muito trabalho criativo e organizacional. O objetivo da pesquisa é determinar o grau de influência da imagem e reputação de uma empresa hoteleira da rede na consciência dos consumidores. O problema do estudo é que é impossível determinar com precisão a opinião unânime dos consumidores. Cada marca tem vantagens e desvantagens, alguns consumidores têm usado os serviços de empresas hoteleiras da rede, e alguns não têm, no entanto, isso ajudará a considerar diferentes lados das opiniões dos consumidores.

Palavras-chave: Consumidores. Rede de hotéis. Serviços. Satisfação do cliente. Percepção de imagem.

Abstract
The hotel industry is growing and changing every time human needs change. There are a huge number of chain hotel companies ready to meet the needs of potential customers. In the conditions of ever-increasing competition, hotel companies are faced with the task of creating a positive image. The image itself is a mandatory element of a hotel brand and exists throughout its entire life path. Creating a positive image requires a lot of creative and organizational work. The purpose of the research is to determine the degree of influence of the image and reputation of a chain hotel company on the consciousness of consumers. The problem with the study is that it is impossible to accurately determine the unanimous opinion of consumers. Each brand has advantages and disadvantages, some consumers have used the services of chain hotel companies, and some have not, however, this will help to consider different sides of consumer views.

Keywords: Consumers. Chain hotels. Services. Customer satisfaction. Image perception.

Resumen
La industria hotelera está creciendo y cambiando cada vez que cambian las necesidades humanas. Hay una gran cantidad de empresas hoteлерas de cadena listas para satisfacer las necesidades de los clientes potenciales. En las condiciones de una competencia cada vez mayor, las empresas hoteлерas se enfrentan a la tarea de crear una imagen positiva. La imagen en sí es un elemento obligatorio de una marca hotelera y existe a lo largo de todo su camino de vida. Crear una imagen positiva requiere mucho trabajo creativo y organizativo. El propósito de la investigación es determinar el grado de influencia de la imagen y la reputación de una empresa hotelera de cadena en la conciencia de los consumidores. El problema con el estudio es que es imposible determinar con precisión la opinión unánime de los consumidores. Cada marca tiene ventajas y desventajas, algunos consumidores han utilizado los servicios de las compañías hoteлерas de cadena, y algunos no, sin embargo, esto ayudará a considerar diferentes lados de las opiniones de los consumidores.

Palabras-clave: Consumidores. Cadena de hoteles. Servicios. Satisfacción del cliente. Percepción de la imagen.