



Innovation in the Spanish tourism industry: Factors determining the innovative capacity of the Spanish hotel sector, using the approach of the strategic management process

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Goal and objectives of the dissertation

Goal

The research presented in this thesis concerns the relationships existing between, on the one hand, the factors determining the Strategic Management Process in the hotel companies operating in our country and, on the other, their capacity for Innovation. There is also an analysis of the influence of innovation on the competitive advantage and organizational results of these companies.

Objectives

As a starting point in this Doctoral Thesis, successive theoretical and empirical objectives are proposed, as milestones to be reached as the work of investigation advances. The main objectives, both theoretical as practical, that have been considered are the following:

1) To understand in depth the theoretical framework in which the strategic management of the innovation process is situated.

2) To set out the various theories proposed to explain innovation in the services sector, and more specifically in the tourist sector.

3) To develop a model that shows the relationship between the factors that comprise the strategic management process and the degree of innovation achieved in the Spanish hotels sector.

4) To find out to what extent each of the determining factors identified in the strategic management process influence the capacity for innovation. A model will be established to test this influence empirically. Then this model will be used to articulate the nature of the relationship between each of the factors that comprise the strategic management process and their impact on the degree of innovation achieved.

5) As a last stage, to determine the strategic importance of the resulting model for the degree of innovation as the generator of sustainable competitive advantages and

positive financial results for the companies studied.

Methodology

These objectives could not be met without constructing a methodological framework that is appropriate for the task. The theoretical positioning to be adopted in this research is integrated, within the discipline of Strategic Management, taking the approach based on the resources and capacities of the organisations under study. Starting from this premise, innovation is emphasized as a key strategic capacity, and the management of innovation is considered to be a fundamental element for the development of dynamic capacities that would enable a company to secure competitive advantages.

Results

In this research it has been possible to test positively how the various factors determining the Strategic Management process affect the degree of innovation achieved, both individually and considering their joint action; the incidence of the innovation activity as a specific strategy in generating the company's business results has also been determined. The results obtained support the proposition that, adopting the approach of the company's Resources and Capacities, innovation is significant as a key strategic capacity of the company for obtaining advantage competitive.

Theoretical conclusions

In general, this study aims to provide a series of both theoretical and practical contributions to the field. Theoretically, the novelty lies in presenting the connections between the factors that determine the strategic management process and their impact on the capacity for innovation; although these have obvious points of contact, they have not, to date, been subjected to integrative study, according to a review of the specialised literature. For this, the theoretical approach based on the company's Resources and Capabilities is a relevant and suitable theoretical framework for understanding these points of connection.

Empirically, the analysis of the strategic interrelationships between certain factors of the Strategic Management Model and the degree of innovation, and their impact on the enterprise results, will help to emphasize the importance of managing innovation as a strategy in itself, and to introduce them into the model of strategic thinking of the hotel chains operating in our country. Thus, it is an attempt to promote the idea that managing innovation introduced in the correct way helps companies to generate competitive advantages and increase business profitability.

Content of the dissertation

Abstract of chapter one

The first chapter presents an analysis of the conceptual framework for the study of innovation, and considers the definitions and types of innovation to be studied; all aspects relevant to innovation in the service sector are studied, and a more in-depth analysis of innovation in the tourism sector is made; the arguments for applying the study to the hotel sector in particular are presented.

Abstract of chapter two

In the second chapter innovation is studied from the perspective of Strategic Management, and all the research that has been carried out with respect to this relationship is investigated. The evolution of the various approaches to Strategic Management or schools of thought is analysed, together with their relationship to innovation, the sequence of phases or stages involved in the model of Strategic Management of Innovation, and the current trends that can be identified in this novel field of study.

Abstract of chapter three

Within the different currents that comprise Strategic Management, the third chapter is focussed on the strategic approach of the company's Resources and Capacities, since it is the most modern approach widely adopted in this discipline, and is, without doubt, the most dynamic focus in the study of innovation. All its theories and approaches are analysed, and special relevance is attached to the approach based on dynamic

capacities. The chapter ends by relating the resources and capacities and innovation as bases for achieving competitive advantage.

Abstract of chapter four

The fourth chapter establishes the basis of the subsequent empirical research. It presents an analysis of the determining factors that mark the level or degree of innovation achieved by a company, in this case for the Spanish hotels sector; these factors are analysed from each of the phases of the process of Strategic Management. The goals and mission of the company are the starting point, followed by the internal and external factors, and the analysis concludes by formulating the strategies and all aspects related to the plans for the implementation of those strategies. Finally, there is a review of the literature that serves as a model for measuring the degree of the innovation achieved, and its impact on the business results of the company.

Abstract of chapter five

In the fifth chapter, the phase of empirical study is introduced, and the research design and methodology to be utilised are discussed. A series of connected relationships in a model are established, and a series of working

hypotheses are put forward. In addition, the variables are designed, together with the measurements that allow the subsequent testing of these hypotheses. Then there follows a description of all the field work undertaken to obtain the data to be utilised in the statistical process.

Abstract of chapter six

Chapter six presents an analysis of the empirical data collected in the sampling process; the results that enable the hypotheses to be tested are evaluated. Following the objectives set out, an analysis of the model is made which shows the relationships between the factors comprising the various different phases of the Strategic Management process and their influence on the degree of innovation achieved in the field of the Spanish hotels sector.

Abstract of chapter seven

Lastly, in the seventh chapter the conclusions of the work are presented, with special reference to the practical implications for the future growth of the hotels sector in particular, and of the tourism sector in general. The dissertation is completed with references to the limitations of the study, and to proposals for future lines of research.

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