

Strategic management research in hospitality and tourism: a perspective article

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to critically review current strategic management (SM) research and discuss future directions for SM research in the hospitality and tourism (HT) field.

Design/methodology/approach – The study reviews and synthesizes current SM research.

Findings – The findings suggest that SM research in the HT field has made good progress over the past three decades; however, there is still a gap between the SM research in the generic and HT fields.

Practical implications – This paper offers specific theoretical and practical implications for SM in the HT field.

Originality/value – This paper provides a clear perspective on future developments of SM research in the HT field.

Keywords Hospitality, Tourism, Strategic management

Paper type Literature review

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Introduction

Strategic management (SM) research focuses overall on why an organization exists, where the organization is now vs where it should be, why some organizations succeed while others fail, what owners and senior managers can do to gain a competitive advantage and what drives organizational performance (Makadok *et al.*, 2018). In tourism, however, unlike other fields, research questions may also incorporate visitors, organizations, destinations, NGOs and other stakeholders (Tribe, 2016). Researchers, both from the generic SM field and the hospitality and tourism (HT) field, have addressed these questions by focusing on some dualities such as the source of competitive advantage (e.g. internal vs external), targeted population (e.g. micro vs macro), relational view (e.g. collaboration or competition), strategy–structure linkage (e.g. first structure or first strategy), modes of growth (e.g. related vs unrelated), SM process (e.g. intended vs realized) and nature of resource (e.g. tangible vs intangible) (Hoskisson *et al.*, 1999; Köseoglu *et al.*, 2019). This article aims to critically review the current stage of SM research and to offer suggestions for the future of SM research in the HT field. First, the evolution of SM research in the generic SM field, as well as in the HT field, is discussed. Second, a fresh perspective on future developments of SM research in the HT field is proposed. Finally, conclusions are provided.

Past perspective: 75 years of developments (1946-2020)

According to Okumus (2002), in the beginning of the new millennium, SM research in the HT field was embryonic, and there was a major gap between the mainstream and the HT research on SM. There are several studies that discussed SM in HT considering the

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boundaries of SM according to intellectual, conceptual and social structure (Okumus *et al.*, 2017, Olsen *et al.*, 1998; Okumus, 2002; Stokes, 2008; Moutinho and Vargas-Sanchez, 2018). These studies not only discussed SM-related topics but also showed that there is still a significant lag in SM research in the HT field in comparison with mainstream SM research. The first reason for this lag is a lack of studies related to SM topics, such as corporate strategy, corporate governance, cooperative strategies, innovation management, organizational behavior and entrepreneurship. The second reason for this lag is a lack of an intellectual domain since SM research in HT mainly uses marketing perspectives as the domain, rather than economy, sociology or psychology (Ramos-Rodríguez and Ruíz-Navarro, 2004), and strategic and corporate entrepreneurship and strategic behavior as seen mainstream SM research (Ferreira *et al.*, 2016). Because tourism involves economical (e.g. tourism spending, employment, investment), sociological (e.g. relationships, impact on traveler and society, cultural exchange) and psychological (e.g. behaviors, attitudes) aspects, researchers should approach tourism studies with more complex approaches while incorporating all stakeholders and their environment.

Future perspective: 75 years (2020-2095)

For the next 75 years, SM research within the HT field should have a research agenda that can advance the scientific progress in the field. The following points are offered to challenge HT researchers in the SM field, and each point should be developed further:

- big data, artificial intelligence and strategy making;
- technological advances, business formation and competition;
- internal environment and competitive advantage in HT businesses;
- business networks and sustainable, competitive advantage; and
- business ethics and corporate social responsibility.

More specifically, future research in SM with an HT focus should focus on the intersection between SM research and innovation and technology (Buhalis and Law, 2008), including some terms (Figure 1) such as smart tourism (Dorcic *et al.*, 2019), smart hospitality (Leung, 2019), smart destination (Femenia-Serra *et al.*, 2019) and co-creation (Boes *et al.*, 2016; Buhalis, 2000; Buhalis *et al.*, 2019; Buhalis and Sinarta, 2019; Bustard *et al.*, 2019; Gretzel *et al.*, 2015) from both the macro- and micro-level perspectives (Guerras-Martín *et al.*, 2014) by addressing the following research questions:

- RQ1. How do big data, artificial intelligence and other technological advances impact and shape the strategy process?
- RQ2. Considering the uncertainty and rapid changes in the environment, how can HT firms develop dynamic capabilities with the help of technological advances to gain and sustain their competitive advantage?
- RQ3. What are the links between strategy and ethical and corporate social responsibility practices?
- RQ4. How can technology better help networking strategies among firms?

Conclusions

This article critically reviewed the current SM research in the HT field and offered possible directions for SM research in the HT field. The social structure of SM research with an HT focus is still weak. There are few leading scholars in the field, which has slowed down its scientific advancement. Hence, leading HT schools and institutions should pay more

Figure 1 Key factors in SM in HT in the next decades



attention to form a strong SM community with an HT focus because SM will continue to be a popular research area in the business and management fields (Durand *et al.*, 2017). Finally, researchers from the HT field should publish in leading academic journals, both in the mainstream and HT fields.

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Further reading

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