

Organization of Accommodation Facilities During the Pandemic: How to Stay Hospitable While Complying With Sanitary Requirements

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ABSTRACT

In conditions of forced isolation, restrictions on the movement of citizens and the provision of services, there is a decrease in business and investment activity, the purchasing power of the population, which directly affects the hospitality sector, making it one of the most vulnerable areas of activity during the pandemic. Today, industry specialists face a new urgent task, related not only to maintaining operations in non-standard conditions, but also to innovative development in a short period. The article analyzes the state of the hospitality industry, identifies difficulties and identifies recommendations for the organization of functioning and interaction with consumers. The main directions of ensuring the competitiveness of a hotel enterprise in the context of a pandemic are highlighted: state measures to support hotels; adaptation of internal service processes to new sanitary and epidemiological standards; cost optimization; improving management efficiency; active marketing activities; introduction of non-contact methods of interaction with guests.

Keywords: Hospitality, accommodation, hotel, pandemic, coronavirus pandemic, restrictive measures, digitalization

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the XXI century, the service sector has been an important indicator of the level of development of the country's economy and the quality of life of the population. Hospitality is an important part of the service sector that combines the areas of tourism, accommodation, food, transportation, entertainment, etc.

At the beginning of 2020, there were 126 accommodation facilities for 11,326 people (5,903 rooms) in Yekaterinburg, 118 of them were classified (94%). At the end of 2019, the occupancy rate of Yekaterinburg hotels was 58% [15].

In conditions of forced isolation, there is a decrease in business and investment activity, and the purchasing power of the population, which directly affects the hospitality sector, making it one of the most vulnerable areas of activity during the pandemic.

People are forced to stay at home, business restricts business trips, and mass events are canceled. In these conditions, hotels need not only to ensure survival, but also to maintain their position in the service market. Thus, finding effective tools for implementing activities and a management mechanism in the current situation comes to the fore. The relevance of the topic is the need to find solutions in a crisis situation.

Before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the hotel market in Russia was stable and dynamic, and there was a strong trend in the development of domestic tourism. But in the current situation, the competitive environment in the market has become tougher, and many hotel companies are

struggling for survival. Many hotels have decided to completely conserve during the period of restrictive measures related to the coronavirus. According to the Hoteliers ' Club, 180 accommodation facilities were closed in the Sverdlovsk region at the beginning of the summer. Loading during the period of restrictive measures was from 5 to 15% [17].

The forecast is disappointing: the process of recovery of the hotel market will not be fast, it will take 2-2.5 years to reach the indicators of 2019 [8].

The purpose of the study is to review the problems and generalize measures aimed at ensuring the competitiveness of hotel enterprises in the context of the pandemic.

1.1. Related Work

The study was conducted on the basis of domestic and foreign theoretical and empirical studies related to the functioning and development of the tourism and hospitality industry, revealing the features of ensuring the activities of enterprises during the crisis provoked by the COVID-19 pandemic. The analytical part of the study was based on data from the world health organization, the Federal tourism Agency, the hoteliers ' Club, and regulatory documents of the Government of the Russian Federation on measures to support enterprises in industries affected by COVID-19. The methodological basis of the research is a systematic approach to the study of the problems of the hospitality industry, General scientific methods: analysis, generalization and systematization of

the results of scientific and empirical research of the hospitality industry.

1.1.1. Manual interactive assumption generation

The scientific community is actively studying the problem of competitiveness of hotel enterprises: O. Jawabreh, R. Mahmoud, S. A. Hamasha, R. MasaDeh [1], O. Voronova, V. Hareva, T. Khnykina [2], A. A. Aleshin [3], E. N. Garanina [4], V. S. Grigorieva [5], I. V. Mishurova [10], R. K. Rajabov, H. R. Sharipova [11] and others.

E. N. Garanina connects the competitiveness of the enterprise with the quality of services provided. The most important elements of quality are: tangible service delivery environment, reliability, safety, responsibility, accessibility, competence, etc. [4, p. 79]. Other researchers speak about the ratio of the categories "price" - "quality", which determines the level of competitiveness of the hotel [10]. A. A. Aleshin speaks about the importance of the safety criterion in the indicators of competitiveness [3]. O. Voronova, V. Hareva, T. Khnykina pays attention to the mechanisms of implementing digital technologies in technological processes [2].

R. K. Rajabov and H. R. Sharipova identify indicators that can be used to assess the competitiveness of hotels: 1) quality of service indicators; 2) management and functioning indicators (Room Revenue, RevPAR, ADR, RevPAC, Average Length of Stay, Room Sold, Occupation); 3) personnel performance indicators (KPI) [11, p.32].

The analysis of existing problems in the economy related to the pandemic is presented in the works Of V.V. Igolkina, V.G. Pyankova [6], P.V. Trunin, A.S. Evseev, F.Ya. Iskhakova [16], E.I. Makrinova, V.V. Lysenko, and E.A. Rybochkina [9].

Thus, the competitiveness of an enterprise is an opportunity and dynamics of adaptation to the conditions of market competition. In the modern economy, there is no universal single "formula" for increasing the competitiveness of a hotel enterprise. A competitive enterprise is considered to be one that can measure, predict, and minimize risks while providing a high quality of service. However, it is possible to identify mechanisms that contribute to maintaining and improving competitiveness.

1.1.2. Automated assumption generation

The research hypothesis is related to the consideration of the current situation as a basis for improving the competitiveness of enterprises in the hospitality industry. Enterprises are forced to look for new approaches to the organization of services, the introduction of contactless methods of interaction, which will contribute to changing the standards of hospitality.

1.2. Our Contribution

This paper analyzes the state of the hospitality industry, identifies difficulties and identifies recommendations for the organization of functioning and interaction with consumers. The main directions of ensuring the competitiveness of a hotel enterprise in the context of a pandemic are highlighted: state measures to support hotels; adaptation of internal service processes to new sanitary and epidemiological standards; cost optimization; improving management efficiency; active marketing activities; introduction of non-contact methods of interaction with guests.

1.3. Paper Structure

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. The article structure consists of several parts. Part 1 is based on the study of the impact of the pandemic on the tourism and hospitality industry and the analysis of statistical data. Part 2 examines measures of state support for the hospitality industry in Russia. Part 3 examines the internal organizational processes of enterprises and the adaptation of service processes to new sanitary and epidemiological standards. In the following sections, we discuss the possibilities of optimizing costs, improving management efficiency, organizing active marketing activities, and implementing non-contact ways of interacting with guests.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. Analysis of statistical data in the hospitality industry

In the conditions of forced isolation, restrictive measures against the movement of citizens and the provision of services, there is a decrease in business and investment activity, the purchasing power of the population, which directly affects the hospitality sector, making it one of the most vulnerable areas of activity during the pandemic.

Since the beginning of the restrictive measures, the operating indicators of hotels have sharply decreased against the background of a decrease in business activity and income of the population. Hotel occupancy ranged from 0 to 15%. The decrease in downloads led to a sharp decline in revenue: RevPAR (revenue per number) decreased by 45% compared to the same period in 2019. As of April 1, 2020, approximately 30-35% of hotel facilities have suspended their activities. In May, the condition worsened and about 80% of hotel complexes were closed [13]. Those hotel complexes that provide the necessary medical treatment remained open, but their activities were also limited.

According to Rosstat, real cash income in the second quarter of 2020 decreased by 7.7% compared to the

corresponding period of the previous year. The salary of hotel employees is 46% of the average salary in Russia [7]. In early April 2020, the leaders of the hotel industry asked for state support (tax, financial and administrative) and prepared their own "response measures" that would help to recover from the crisis.

Determinants of competitiveness of a hotel enterprise in modern conditions, are the presence of effective marketing strategy, quality of services, qualifications of staff, the tax environment, the management level, the technological level of the hotel product, the availability of funding sources.

Based on this we will highlight the main directions of ensuring the competitiveness of the hotel enterprise in the context of the pandemic.

2.2. State support for hotel companies

State measures to support hotels [9, p. 32], aimed primarily at supporting small and medium-sized enterprises:

- renewal of licenses and permits that expire from March 15 to December 31, 2020;
- issue of employment support loans at the rate of 2%;
- issue of interest-free loans for employees' salaries;
- subsidies to entrepreneurs (not subject to income tax);
- deferral of state and commercial real estate leases;
- expansion of preferential lending programs at the rate of 8.5% and micro-loans;
- credit holidays (including installments of up to 3 years, loan deferral for 6 months, special conditions for loan repayment for individual entrepreneurs);
- reduction of insurance premiums (for small and medium-sized businesses, insurance premiums from the part of salaries exceeding the minimum wage are reduced to 15%);
- tax holidays (including extending the tax to 6 months, deferred payment up to 1 year; extension of the payment of all taxes, except value added tax, up to 6 months, extending the reporting to the Federal tax service up to 3 months, exemption from taxes for the 2nd quarter of 2020, a ban on penalties for late submission of documents for tax reporting until June 2020);
- protection from bankruptcy for 6 months for the affected industries;
- suspension of all on-site inspections until June 30, 2020.

2.3. Adaptation of internal service processes to new sanitary and epidemiological standards

The restructuring of all hotel services required a more precise organization of all technological processes,

including quality control processes. During the quarantine period, the Government of the Russian Federation, together with Rospotrebnadzor and Rosturizm, developed measures to ensure the safety of tourists in hotels, public catering establishments, tourist routes, museums in open areas, etc. Main measures: mask mode in public METAS, social distancing, temperature measurement at the entrance and exit, introduction of a health passport for visiting objects [12].

The list of sanitary and epidemiological measures depends on the degree of danger, the level of restrictive measures and includes:

- design of all hotel facilities (including halls, check-in counters, buffet areas, sports facilities), ensuring a social distance of at least 1.5 meters using signal markings;
- conducting General cleaning of premises with the use of disinfectants, cleaning of ventilation systems, air conditioners, and checking the effectiveness of their work before starting work;
- carrying out preventive disinfection in hotel premises in compliance with the relevant recommendations of Rospotrebnadzor, taking into account the epidemiological situation;
- wet cleaning with the use of disinfectants: all contact surfaces in public areas;
- organization of an "input filter" with mandatory thermometry using a non-contact method, installation of thermal cameras for measuring the temperature of guests;
- equipment of check-in counters, if possible, with transparent barrier structures, furniture that allows cleaning and disinfection, ensuring disinfection of room keys and their safe delivery, installation of dispensers with antiseptic hand treatments;
- providing staff and guests with personal protective equipment (masks, gloves, disinfecting wipes, skin antiseptics for hand treatment), as well as organizing a centralized collection of used funds;
- organization of airing of premises every 2 hours;
- accommodation of guests in the room is mostly single, with the exception of family, etc.

The following measures are envisaged to ensure the operation of catering establishments:

- catering for guests mainly based on the principle of individual room service;
 - the provision of food services and recreational services primarily in open areas;
 - reduced buffets;
 - applying signal markings on the floor when organizing a buffet-style meal or using a distribution line;
 - increase the length of time of meals in hotels, etc.
- To provide tourist services, it is provided:
- daily decontamination of outdoor gazebos, children's playgrounds, benches, entrance areas, bins, Bank and Parking terminals, treatment of contact surfaces on the street;
 - processing of beach and outdoor pool equipment after each guest;
 - admission of tourists to museums in individual groups of up to 5 people;

- placement of sun beds on the beaches by the pool at a distance of 1.5 meters;
- mandatory use of masks and gloves while tourists are in the vehicle (changing masks every 2 hours) [12].
- The pandemic has revealed the need to review all operational processes inside the hotel, first of all, to adapt standards to sanitary standards and new expectations of guests [8].

2.4. Cost optimization

Many hotel companies have optimized costs during the pandemic by reducing utility bills and staff costs. Among the measures: the introduction of a shortened working week, the introduction of hourly and piecework pay for employees, remote working hours for some employees, etc. The period of low occupancy of the hotel was used to organize training and professional development of staff to help them adapt to new conditions.

2.5. Improving the efficiency of management

The pandemic has created conditions for analyzing hotels' performance and implementing solutions aimed at improving their performance:

- team problem solving (implementation of mechanisms for effective interaction between the employer and employees for joint decision-making);
- delegation of authority (clear distribution of responsibilities for performing work remotely);
- strategic planning (drawing up clear plans for the implementation of work by hotel employees);
- organization of control over the performance of duties by the hotel management;
- formation of reports on the analysis of the final results of the hotel complex (identification of shortcomings and their correction) [13].

2.6. Active marketing

Work for future promotion: even during the suspension period, hotels tried to devote more time and effort to advertising and business promotion in social networks, using completely new formats.

Introduction of new services (such as delivery of dishes from the restaurant, cooking semiproducts, dumpling making, promotions for renting a room during self-isolation, etc.) provide an opportunity to generate income by offering a large number of additional services.

Individualization of service (offering individual services that ensure social distancing, providing individually created services at the request of guests, etc.).

Experts predict an increase in demand for individual service, individual tours, and a departure from the traditional all inclusive in favor of event-based individual tours and entertainment [9, p.29].

2.7. Introduction of non-contact methods of interaction with guests

- The use of contactless methods of delivery of the ordered services;
- Expanding the use of digital technologies in the service organization: organization of receiving and tracking orders, website optimization, interactive menus, mobile applications, forms for collecting reviews and evaluating the quality of service, etc.) [2].

3. CONCLUSION

At the same time, current data on retail sales and business activity indicate a steady recovery in services and manufacturing in developed countries at the beginning of the third quarter. The composite index of business activity PMI in the service sector in Russia increased from 47.8 to 58.5 points in July, which is a record value since July 2008 [16, p. 48].

Determinants of competitiveness of a hotel enterprise in modern conditions, are the presence of effective marketing strategy, quality of services, qualifications of staff, the tax environment, the management level, the technological level of the hotel product, the availability of funding sources.

Based on this, we can identify the main areas of ensuring the competitiveness of a hotel enterprise in the context of a pandemic:

- use of hotel support measures proposed at the state level;
- adaptation of internal service processes to new sanitary and epidemiological standards;
- cost optimization;
- improving the efficiency of management;
- marketing activities;
- introduction of non-contact methods of interaction with guests.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The scope of the results is aimed at developing recommendations aimed at ensuring the competitiveness of hotel enterprises during the period of restrictive measures in connection with the coronavirus pandemic.

The research results were discussed at the following scientific and practical conferences:

- Ural economic forum "Ural-driver of neo-industrial and innovative development of Russia", Yekaterinburg, Russia, October 24-25, 2019;
- II international scientific and practical conference "Modern approaches to improving the quality of service in the tourism and

hospitality industry in the context of intercultural communication", Yekaterinburg, Russia, April 23-24, 2020.

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