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Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 58 (2012) 1218 – 1227

Procedia
Social and Behavioral Sciences

8th International Strategic Management Conference

Perceptions of hotel top managers for opportunities and strategic collaboration with a foreign partner in tourism sector: An applied research in Alanya destination

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Abstract

This study aims to measure the perceptions of hotel top managers about the opportunities in tourism sector and their desire to make a partnership with a foreign investor. The study also focuses on measuring the perceptions of top managers about attractive sectors to invest in Turkey, the supports needed in tourism sector, key institutions which can support tourism firms, obstacles for tourism opportunities, preferences for foreign partners, supports expected from foreign partners. And top managers of three-stars, four-stars, and five stars hotels operating in Alanya were included in the research. At the end of the survey completed in December 2011, a total of 95 completed questionnaires were returned (50.3 percent response rate) from 189 top managers of these hotels. Research results indicate that managers think that tourism is an opportunity sector to invest in Turkey and they have a desire to invest in tourism sector with a foreign partner. Furthermore, Anova-Test results do show that no statistical relationship between the evaluations of managers with research items and their demographic variables is found.

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Keywords: Strategic alliances, tourism industry, Alanya

1. Introduction

The rise of global competition and economic pressures has encouraged more companies to enter into alliances on a worldwide basis (Othman, 1998). In other words, under the rapidly changing competetive conditions, enterprises opt to cooperate with their counterparts, even with their competitors to protect and develop their market shares and technologies. Strategic alliances, as a form of this cooperation, have now turned into a requisite for most sectors. As a result, a significant increase in the number of strategic alliances has been observed in recent years as a “strategic alternative” (Özalp, Besler and Doğrul, 2010).

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The argument is that strategic alliances can be used effectively in order to achieve growth and competitiveness which, in tourism industry, take a variety of forms and occur across vertical, horizontal and diagonal relationships (Poon, 1993; Bullock, 1998; Go and Appelman, 2001; Dale, 2003; Pansiri, 2005a). This is so because tourism is a 'highly complex compounded service brought about through the "assembly" of different services that are being delivered by a network of companies that is often global in scope' (Dale, 2003; Pansiri, 2005b). And major players in the tourism industry, particularly airlines, hotels, travel agents and tour operators have increasingly integrated in an industry whose boundaries are becoming increasingly blurred (Poon, 1993). In this context, our study focuses on the desire of hotel top managers to make a strategic collaboration with a foreign partner to get the opportunities in tourism industry. Firstly, the study examines the literature with strategic alliance and tourism. And then, the survey results conducted on hotel top managers to understand willingness, expectations, causes and barriers for making a collaboration with a foreign partner to get the opportunities in tourism industry are presented.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Strategic Alliances

Strategic alliances has been variously defined as (1) a long-term cooperative agreement between two or more independent companies that engages in business activities for mutual economic gains (Tsang, 1998), (2) a collaboration leveraging the strengths of two or more organizations to achieve strategic goals (Aaker, 1998), (3) voluntary arrangements between firms involving exchange, sharing or co development of products, technologies, or services as a result of a motives and goals, in varous forms and occur across vertical and horizontal boundaries (Othman, 1998), purposive arrangements between two or more independent organisations that form part of, and are consistent with participants' overall strategies, and contribute to the achievement of their strategically significant objectives that are mutually beneficial (Pansiri, 2005a; Huang, 2006; Pansiri, 2005b).

Faced with rapid technological advances, changing market structures, and increasing global competition, firms are motivated to form alliances with other firms in order to reduce investment risks, share technology, improve efficiency, gain access to specific foreign markets and distribution channels, enhance global mobility, and strengthen global competitiveness (Huang, 2006; Auster, 1987; Harrigan, 1988; Lin and Chen, 2002). A number of key trends are stimulating the emergence of newer forms of business relationships: increasing globalization and the internalization of markets; a blurring of the distinction between product and services marketing; the emergence of telecommunications and computing, with the resultant increase in both information and communication; the quickening pace of change; the disintermediation of markets; the emergence of network competition; knowledge-based not product-based organizations; and the merging of marketing strategy with corporate strategy (Atalık and Halıcı, 2009).

A strategic alliance can take many forms such as licencing, franchising, equity ownership and marketing, R&D agreements, joint ventures, joint product development, long-term resource utilization, turn-key agreements, subcontracting agreements, distribution or logistics-based alliances (Özalp, Besler and Doğrul, 2010; Pansiri, 2005a; Zaboj, 2009; Konoke, 2005; Pansiri, 2005b). And Alliances offer a number of direct benefits to their members including; gaining quick access to new markets, technology, overcome trade barriers, avoid predatory competition, gaining knowledge, and customers; absorbing a key local competitor; and lowering risk by sharing costs and benefiting from a partner's political connections Preble, Reichel, and Hoffman, 2000; Varadarajan and Cunningham, 1995; Inkpen and Beamish, 1997, Lin and Chen, 2002; Doz and Hamel, 1998; Carayannis, Kassicieh and Radosevich, 2000). Explicitly, alliances must provide the partners with superior resources and/or skills that they would not otherwise possess on their own. And these key resources obtained through alliances may include location, brand name, and customer base (Preble, Reichel and Hoffman, 2000; Varadarajan and Cunningham, 1995).

There were many successful strategic alliances in the world. Briefly, there were 37,538 strategic aliiances in the USA, 9,417 strategic alliances in Japan and just 212 strategic alliances in Turkey between 1990 and 1999 among 30 OECD countries (Tekinay, 2004; Barutçu, Tanyeri and Gönen, 2009). In addition to IBM's major player with it's strategic alliances more than 400 in the world by 1995, some of the well-known successfull examples in different industries were between GM and Toyota, Inland Steel and Nippon Steel, Canon and Kodak, Siemens and Philips, Digital Equipment Corporation and Apple Computer etc (Barutçu, Tanyeri and Gönen, 2009; Hanan, 1996).

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