



Hospitality marketing research: Recent trends and future directions

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ABSTRACT

This article reviews the hospitality marketing research published in four top hospitality journals from 2008 to 2010 for the purposes of identifying significant trends and gaps in the literature. A total of 274 articles are reviewed and classified based on research topic, industry focus, and analysis technique as well as on a number of other methodological criteria. Significant topical and methodological trends are discussed. Important topical trends are synthesized and specific directions for future research are proposed. We conclude with the presentation and discussion of an organizational framework for future hospitality marketing research.

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1. Introduction

Periodically, it is necessary for scholars to review their field in terms of an overall progression of the literature. Since 1992, three published studies have analyzed the hospitality marketing literature in an effort to capture temporal trends in subject/focus and methodology. Crawford-Welch and McCleary (1992) were the first to undertake such a task, reviewing articles from 1983 to 1989. Bowen and Sparks (1998) updated this study, reviewing hospitality journals from 1990 to 1997. Most recently, Oh et al. (2004) reviewed the literature for the period of 2002–2003. Thus, since 1992, the trend within the hospitality literature has been to review and synthesize relevant articles approximately once every six years. Because the most recent review appeared in 2004, we suggest an update. More importantly we assert that, due to time needed to conduct research and navigate the journal review process, the synthesis conducted by Oh and colleagues was likely based on research conducted during the last millennium. That is, manuscripts published in 2002–2003 were likely based on research designed and executed prior to the year 2000. Since that time, we have seen dramatic changes in world markets (e.g., the growth of e-commerce, attacks of September 11, 2001, and increased globalization). Thus, in addition to an updated review of the literature, there is also need for an assessment of how hospitality scholars have adapted to the extensive market changes impacting the field.

This study reviews the research published in selected hospitality journals from the years 2008–2010. We limit the articles selected to those with a focus on hospitality marketing. As did Oh et al. (2004), we define the scope of hospitality marketing as inclusive of any research relating to marketing's function and/or its environment. Marketing research articles are also included. Articles meeting one or more of these criteria are categorized according to research focus and target industry. Additionally, six methodological dimensions are identified and categorized.

The purpose of this research is twofold. First, we review the literature and compare our results to the findings of Oh et al. (2004) to bring the literature current. Relevant similarities and distinctions among trends are discussed, and future research directions are proposed. Second, we synthesize this research emphasizing the most popular topics and trends. From these analyses, we present an overall state of the literature and propose potential directions for future research. It is our hope that readers of this article will better understand the current state of hospitality marketing research and begin to conceptualize studies that will advance the literature for scholars and practitioners alike.

2. Methods

We first identified the leading journals in the hospitality field. To this end, we selected the top four journals per McKercher et al.'s (2006) rankings; *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly (CHQ)*, *International Journal of Hospitality Management (IJHM)*, *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research (JHTR)*, and *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management (IJCHM)*. According to McKercher et al. (2006), only these four journals rated 50% or higher in terms

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of aggregate importance. Additionally, these journals are mostly consistent with the journals reviewed by Oh et al. (2004). The only difference is our use of *IJCHM* instead of *Journal of Hospitality and Leisure Marketing*. From these journals, we identified a total of 496 articles published between January 2008 and May 2010. Of this total, 274 (55%) were deemed relevant to hospitality marketing.

The next step was to identify the topical focus of each article. Before coding the articles, a coding scheme was developed to ensure that (1) a comprehensive list of marketing topics was selected and (2) our results could be meaningfully compared to those of Oh et al. (2004). The coding scheme was largely based on Oh et al.'s (2004) instrument, although some categories were further broken down to allow for a more fine-grained assessment. In general, these changes reflect macro-shifts in the focus of the hospitality marketing environment as suggested by journal content. Use of *post hoc* analyses for the purposes of category generation are commonly reported in literature review endeavors (e.g., Oh et al., 2004; Runyan and Droge, 2008; Werner, 2002). In approaching the coding schematic in this way, we were able to define the topical focus more narrowly for synthesizing purposes, while keeping intact the most recent metric for comparison purposes.

In order to ensure a valid instrument, we sent a copy to an expert in the field of hospitality and tourism marketing for further review. Based on the expert's feedback and the *post hoc* identification of emergent trends, several changes were made to Oh et al.'s (2004) codebook. For example, whereas Oh et al. (2004) had only one category for e-commerce topics, our codebook incorporates an electronic marketing subcategory with four distinct topical foci: corporate website design, e-distribution, technology adoption, and social media/networking. A similar process was followed for the PR/crisis management, demand/pricing/selling, and internal marketing categories (see Table 1).

Both authors were involved in each step of the process for selecting relevant articles (i.e., identification and inclusion/exclusion) as well as in all decisions pertaining to category modifications. Any disagreement was discussed and ultimately agreed upon by both authors. In the subsequent coding process, articles were coded into the selected categories based on keywords and title/abstract content. In cases where this information was not sufficient for the assignment of an article to one (and only one) category, the article in question was discussed until agreement was reached as to its appropriate classification.

After the topical review, we reviewed the context in which the research was applied. Such an analysis is important, as marketing applications are not homogenous across industries. While some marketing topics may be highly pursued within a certain industry, the same topic may be under-researched in others. The industry-focus analysis is intended to document such instances as well as to identify under-researched industries.

The methodological review includes an analysis of six components. We coded each article based on the type of research (empirical or conceptual), study design, sampling frame, sample size, response rate, and the main analysis used for each study. Using Oh et al. (2004) as a framework, we added several categories to the study design and sample type analyses. For example, we created separate categories for interview/focus group and case study/content methodologies. Similarly, we expanded the sampling frame category to include several groups that were not used by Oh et al. (2004) and added a "not applicable" code for the sample size and response rate categories. Finally, rather than omitting studies that, by design, do not necessitate sampling, we created a separate category to keep track of such occurrences. Additionally, quota samples and non-random convenience samples were coded separately.

Table 1
Hospitality marketing literature: topical focus analysis.

	n	%
Marketing environment	101	36.9
Consumer perceptions	77	28.1
Perceived value	11	4.0
Perceived risk/safety	2	0.7
Satisfaction	24	8.8
Expectations	4	1.5
Service quality	12	4.4
Performance evaluation/service encounter	9	3.3
Employee–customer relationships	9	3.3
Experiential value	6	2.2
Persuasion	0	0.0
Dissonance	0	0.0
Consumer characteristics	24	8.8
Decision making	12	4.4
Motivation	6	2.2
Information search	0	0.0
Novelty/variety seeking	1	0.4
Attitude	5	1.8
Marketing functions	170	62.0
Management, planning, and strategy	54	19.7
Market segmentation/positioning/targeting	11	4.0
Consumer relationship marketing/loyalty	10	3.6
General marketing strategies	10	3.6
Business relationship management	5	1.8
Physical distribution/franchising	7	2.6
Branding/brand extensions	11	4.0
Electronic marketing	19	6.9
Website	6	2.2
E-distribution/travel websites	6	2.2
Technology adoption	7	2.6
Social media/networking	0	0.0
Public relations	20	7.3
Crisis management	3	1.1
Green initiatives	8	2.9
CSR	9	3.3
Internal marketing	47	17.2
Empowerment/training	7	2.6
Employee relationships	2	0.7
Employee behavior/satisfaction	35	12.8
Hiring	3	1.1
Demand, pricing, and selling	30	10.9
Personal selling	1	0.4
Forecasting	5	1.8
Pricing/revenue management	18	6.6
Sales promotions	2	0.7
Advertising	4	1.5
Marketing research	3	1.1
Research methodology	1	0.4
Information technology	2	0.7
Theory/philosophy of science	0	0.0

3. Topical review

Oh et al. (2004) used the classification scheme employed by the *Journal of Marketing* for its published studies. Using a similar three-tiered coding schema, we first classified each study as relevant to marketing's environment, function, or research. These categories were then organized into subcategories and, finally, by topic. Table 1 shows the number of studies coded into each category, subcategory, and topic as well as the percentage of the total that each component respectively occupies. Readers should note that, for the purposes of appropriately comparing our results to previous findings, percentages (and percent changes) are reported in terms of the total number of hospitality marketing articles included in the pertinent time period, not the total number of articles published within the selected timeframe.

Our findings for the overall classification of articles published between 2008 and 2010 are almost identical to the findings of Oh et al. (2004). Current topics relating to the marketing environment and the marketing function comprised 36.9% and 62% of the total, respectively. Marketing research topics accounted for only 1.1% of

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