

PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF INCREASING COMPETITIVENESS OF A TRAVEL AGENCY

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Statement of the problem in general. The effectiveness of a travel agency largely depends on its competitiveness, which, being a rather complex category, represents the degree of real or potential satisfaction by a travel agency of a tourist's specific needs compared to competing enterprises.

The tourist service market is primarily a market of monopolistic competition, in which numerous sellers operate, offering a differentiated tourist product to the market. It is the combination of the qualitative characteristics of the tourism product that determines the competitiveness of one or another tourist enterprise.

The aim of the study is to identify effective areas of competitiveness formation based on the analysis of the travel agencies specificity.

Presentation of the material of the main study. The peculiarity of travel agencies is that all enterprises offer consumers almost the same product. This is explained by the fact that travel agencies are merely selling tourist products created by tour operators, and most travel agencies, in order to expand their product line and cover as many consumer segments as possible, work with different tour operators.

The experience of travel agencies in the Russian Federation shows that most agencies compete on the basis of the discount off the operator's price. Therefore,

the situation is as follows: the client calls a travel agency, he is told that the cost of the tour is 30 thousand rubles, but they are ready to give a 5% discount. Then the client calls another agency, where he is offered a 6% discount on a tour with the same cost. The client calls back to the first agency and says: "I was given a 6% discount, and what will you give?" Such a game can go on forever. This is especially common for novice travel agents. When the travel agency opens, the office is ready to meet visitors, managers have stocked with effective phrases, everything is ready for sales, and there are no enquiries, the first thought coming to the agency owner's mind may be something like this: "If you don't buy for 30 thousand rubles, let's try to sell for 28 thousand rubles. " However, this position is extremely wrong. Despite the fact that most travel agencies adhere to this point of view, it not only does not produce tangible results, but also reduces the company's growth opportunities. Dumping is a direct road to bankruptcy of a travel agency.

Despite the fact that the level of competition in the tourism market is high, the number of competitors is significant, the competitiveness of the agency should not be based on dumping. You should look for other values, other advantages and strengths that will attract customers. It should be borne in mind that the tourist service market is a market for non-price competition; therefore travel agencies should not build their competitive advantages at the expense of dumping policies.

If a travel agency introduces innovative technologies, loyalty programs, work with bonuses, trains its managers - it goes the right way. In this case, the travel agency initially distances itself from the total mass of travel agencies that work according to the scheme: "And I'll sell at a price that is 1 thousand rubles cheaper. Will you go? "

Of course, there will always be customers who choose a tour exclusively according to the price. But this does not mean that travel agencies should use the same method of competition as other agencies. Competitiveness, based on the dumping policy of the enterprise, will not be able to provide long-term effect and will, all in all, lead to the bankruptcy of the enterprise. According to recognized luminaries in the tourism sector, such as Mkrtyan Alexan Mushegovich [2], the

founder and Chief Executive Officer of the Pink Elephant travel agency network, such a policy may be acceptable for a limited time period if the company has a margin of financial strength (reserves), in order to outpace from the market direct competitors that do not have such a reserve.

It is noteworthy that studies of successful travel agencies show that the proportion of customers who are strictly price-oriented is 20–25% of their total number [2]. Such clients will never become loyal and, having bought a tour at a particular travel agency once, the next time they will go to another travel agency that offered a big discount. Rich and successful travel agencies, both in big cities and in small ones, understand well that in any city there will be people who choose not only for the price. It's just that some travel agencies can find them, attract them, work with them, while others don't, others just compete on the basis for the discounts they offer.

Conclusion. Thus, in the study under consideration, it was made the attempt to consider some practical aspects of increasing the competitiveness of travel agencies in the long term. It was drawn the conclusion that to be an efficient tourist enterprise it is necessary to compete not on the basis of the prices offered, but on the wide-scale criteria including specific services, innovative technologies, loyalty programs, bonuses and other factors.

The list of references:

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2. Ньюсмейкер туристических новостей [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: <https://www.tourprom.ru/person/>.