

Case Study Summation

This case examines the dilemma of a SME located on an island on the West coast of Florida. The land was originally used for development of summer homes and evolved to a business of rental management of the units. Amenities including a swimming pool, tennis courts, a restaurant and snack bar, a store, and bicycle and golf cart rentals were added. A consultant determined The Resort's positioning, in relationship to its competitive set, had been performing well in terms of occupancy level and ADR, but was declining in general business activity. Analysis of reservation data indicated that most of the market came from within Florida. This observation was a surprise to the management team, who admittedly did not understand how potential guests were learning about The Resort. The owner recognized the marketing shortcomings and the confusion to market the property online.

Discussion Questions

- What terms and definitions need to be understood to work with this case?
- Which online distribution channels could be the most effective ones for The Resort to use?
- Which social media options could The Resort utilize to help them in their marketing efforts?
- How can UGCs help or hinder The Resort in its efforts to attract more customers?
- How can Internet marketing and distribution approach insulate itself from changing business climates?

Teaching Objectives

Objective 1

To review terminology relevant to the case and the hospitality industry, students will be able to think about organizing schemes for making sense of the data in the case study.

EXPLANATION: This objective establishes advance organizers to "warm up" the students for the other major objectives to accomplish.

Objective 2

By using a concept map or similar graphic organizer, students will be able to analyze the factors and their interconnections that contribute to the business model and marketing shortcomings of the SME. Methods to improve the marketing should evolve from this exercise.

EXPLANATION: This second major objective gives students a structure for creating the "big ideas" of the case study and gives them a method that they can use again in future analyses and generation of solution strategies.

Objective 3

Use of an Internet exercise to organize thinking of online distribution channels and Island Beach Resort's reservation system, the students should gain a better understanding of the nature of electronic distribution channels, how a vacation rental reservation service can work for an independent property, and what a website can offer a hospitality SME.

EXPLANATION: An Excel spreadsheet can be used to illustrate the student's findings and list the positive/negative findings. This activity is meant to enhance the exploration of these websites and to give students a concept of what a customer might experience when searching for a resort on a third-party website.

Objective 4

Using social media sites, create a simulation of methods for gathering information on UGCs for the changing profile of potential customers. Students will be able to experience the design elements that appeal to that market segment's base.

EXPLANATION: This fourth objective gives students experience in creating specific elements in electronic venues frequently used by prospective customers. Students and teachers may suggest other digital methods to explore, such as "apps" for mobile devices or other emerging electronic venues.

Suitability for Use and Target Audience

This case is suitable for use by instructors and students in undergraduate hospitality management programs. The case has been designed to allow maximum latitude on the part of the instructor in beginning or higher level courses of marketing, revenue management, and electronic distribution channels. The case study can be distributed in class for discussion and responses prepared individually/ groups of students. The case study can be linked to course content in order to provide students with practice on analytical reasoning, research, and communication.

Teaching Approach

Prior to class, students will be asked to read the case study and will be provided power points and additional reading. Direct students to do the following: 1) go to <http://www.YouTube.com>; 2) in the search bar, type in Jay Hubbs -- he is the Senior Director of Revenue Management for Expedia Partner Services Group; 3) listen to the video entitled "5 Ways to Improve OTA Distribution." This provides a good preliminary overview to the subject matter of online distribution.

Ask students to read the case study and draw their attention to the "Further Reading" section. Students should be ready to answer

and discuss the following questions/topics:

Multi-Channel Review	Channel Distribution Mix
Social Media Outlets	User Generated Content
Stakeholder Analysis	Consultant's Role
Marketing Approach Review	Concept Mapping
Business Model Review	

Activity Number 1 – Terminology Review

Assign students to report on the definitions and significance of terms and explain relevance or irrelevance to the case: CRS (central reservation system); OTA (online travel agent); PMS (property management system); SME (small to medium-sized enterprise); UGC (user generated content); search engines; stakeholders; ICT (information communication technologies); third-party travel website (e.g., Travelocity); Escapia (a web-based vacation rental management software company); Navis Rezforce (vacation rental reservation service); CTR (click-through reservation).

Activity Number 2 – Concept Mapping

This activity can be with online concept mapping tools in groups or individually. Student sketches may also be hand drawn/written. The teacher leads the group to see the “big picture” of the case for the *Island Beach Resort*. Begin this exercise with the list of stakeholders and assist the students to define who they are and how these groups may have contributed to past marketing/philosophy decisions.

Directions for Students: Make a concept map or chart to show how all the information for the case study fits together. List the “big ideas” of the case using lines to connect all the related points. These are some of the “big ideas” the students might create:

List of stakeholders	Type of resort	Amenities
Customer base of market	Distribution Channels	

You may use other headings for “big idea” topics that are different from these. The information is a way to provide a visual “map” for the students to understand relationships. Invite students to share their concept maps, point out the “big ideas” and explain the relationships. Variety in the concept maps will be expected. An important component of using this exercise is that the teacher can also look for problems the students may be experiencing in their understanding of the dilemma faced by the *Island Beach Resort*.

Activity Number 3 – Website exercise

Divide the class into thirds: one portion of the class can examine websites using third-party travel websites; the second section can examine the proprietary website of Navis Rezforce; and the last portion can examine the proprietary website Escapia. Have the students write compare/contrast lists of website features and present their conclusions.

Activity Number 4 – UGC exercise – Website exercise

Divide the students into small groups and direct them to go to social media sites. Have the students examine content in context with developing a plan for the *Island Beach Resort*'s business model to monitor the content for positive/negative comments.

Further Reading

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- Toh, R., Raven, P. & DeKay, F. (2011). Selling rooms: Hotels vs. Third-Party Websites. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 52(2): 181-189.
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