

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE SOURCES IN TRAVEL AGENCIES

Adriana Ioana Raduță¹

The Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Romania

Abstract

This paper aims to identify the most used ways to obtain the competitive advantage for travel agencies. Thus, following the study of the literature from the specific databases, and also following the application of a quantitative research, there were obtained information regarding the today's trend of the ways to overtake the rivalry in the field, as they are seen by the personnel employed in different types of travel agencies in Bucharest. Based on these, there may be noticed actual trends regarding the tackle of the travel agencies in order to obtain a market share as large as possible, and to secure the loyalty of the customers.

Keywords: Competitive advantage, competition, cooperation, loyalty, smart tourism, technology

JEL Classification: L83, C83.

Introduction

This research aims to discover some of today's expectation or most frequent ways to face competition or to outrun it, regarding travel agencies. Thus, following the examination of certain related articles studying competition and co-operation in the tourism area, the difference between the online and offline agencies, the loyalty of the customers, the importance of the services suppliers or even ways to obtain the competitive advantage concerning the travel agencies, it was possible to outline some ideas regarding today's trend on this segment of the tourism market and to align to them or even to outrun them in the benefit of the companies.

The main assumptions from which this research starts refer to the ways used by the travel agencies in order to obtain the competitive advantage on their market. Thus, it is possible to have a problem with the way in which each of the employees of such an agency perceive the notion of competitive advantage and how this perception may influence the whole activity of the firm. Another assumption from which we shall start refers to the way in which the dynamics of the technology and of the virtual environment have a considerable influence upon the activity of the travel agencies and the constructive use of these in the advantage of the firm may represent a strength. Last but not least, there was the idea that the customers' loyalty obtained through different methods, represents an important way to obtain a competitive advantage also.

The reason for choosing this subject started from the interest regarding travel agencies. So, starting from the personal knowledge and curiosity, it was possible to conclude that, for a person who works or would like to work in a travel agency it would be useful to know certain trends, regarding both getting new customers and maintaining customers' loyalty, and outrunning of the competitors by the best methods. In order to have a proper running of a company, of any type, it is necessary both a good knowledge of the potential customers, the market and the competitors, and of the expectations of its employees. All these elements may contribute to obtaining a competitive advantage, if the information was obtained in order to create a suitable strategy regarding the approach of each of them.

In order to check if the information gathered from the articles is known or considered as being appropriate to be applied by the operators from the national travel agencies, there was provided a quantitative research, based on a model of questionnaire applied to them. The questionnaire's purpose was to hit the main points of the research and it was applied to a number of 40 subjects, people who work in different types of travel agencies, in order to see and understand the ways in which they perceive the idea of obtaining a competitive advantage on the market on which their companies act. Following the application of the questionnaire, it was possible to outline an idea regarding which of the points met in the literature are considered as being the most useful and the most frequent or applicable concerning competitive advantage. In the meantime, there was also possible to get to some other conclusions, based on the answers given by the ones interviewed.

¹ adrianaioanaraduta@gmail.com

1. Literature review

One of the main subjects that should be discussed nowadays, no matter the field of activity, is represented by the technology and its development. Here we are not talking only about the constantly progressing electronic devices, but also about the online environment and the way in which it may influence – in a positive or negative manner – the activity of a company. An example regarding the way in which the internet can influence the activity of the tourists should be the trends set by them. Therefore, we can talk about the general trend of the tourists to use the online environment in order to investigate and schedule the holidays, about their increasing level of curiosity, fact that leads to a continuous searching of experiences. We can talk also about the ways in which social media, the mobile devices, and the emergent channels sustain this type of behavior. Meanwhile, we may consider that the internet influences tourists' decisions and the ways by which they choose to make a booking for their holidays. This influence is seen preferring one agency in detriment to another, or choosing to draw up their touristic packages, depending on the most favorable prices and on the way in which the offers may be adapted to their preferences (Xiang, Magnini, Fesnmaier, 2015).

Regarding the competitiveness of travel agencies and the way in which it is related to their online activity, we should talk about customers' loyalty. Thus, by offering complete, easy and good quality online services, a great number of the travel agencies may increase the number of their customers, but also increase the loyalty of the existing customers, extending at the same time their competitive level on the market. This way, the actors on this market had noticed that at the same time with increasing the value perceived by the consumers, their loyalty increases too. Therefore they had time to concentrate both on the quality of the services offered online, not only by the classic travel agency (Roger-Monzo, Marti-Sanchez, Guijarro-Garcia, 2015).

Another way to approach the competitiveness in the online environment regards co-operation with the partners, such as accommodation units or transport companies. Thus, by using the channels from the online environment (web sites of the travel agencies or their social media pages, advertising etc.), the customers are drawn for offline services such as accommodation to certain hotels. (Chang, Hsu, Lan, 2019). By the mean of these types of partnerships, the travel agencies that act online gather information concerning the partners they choose to work with to create a database with their help and customize the offers for their clients, gaining their interest. One of the purposes of this type of activity is to convince the customers to choose again the agency's services in the future, or to return to the same accommodation units.

Nevertheless, the activities of the travel agencies are not only connected with the online environment, the small ones not even having the possibility to have such an intense activity online and being forced to face the competition exclusively offline. So, the main strategies that should be used in this case are represented by the improvement of the services, both by the agency and by the services suppliers, the increase of the agency's efficiency, and the improvement of the existing marketing strategies. Here we have to mention the ways regarding maintaining customers' loyalty, because they appear to be efficient in order to reduce the expenses of the travel agencies and also in order to obtain a remarkable competitive advantage. (Aguilar – Quintana, Moreno, Picazo-Peral, 2016) The loyalty may strengthen by offering promotions and customized offers, by offering discounts or a special attention granted to the clients' needs. At the same time, it attention should be paid to the ways of obtaining competitive advantage considering aspects such as agency's dimension, its positioning or the target market.

Because there was established that drawing and maintaining customers in the travel domain are very important, the differences and similitudes between the online and offline consumers are very important. Thus, it was concluded that the strategies to maintain the clients are very important. At the same time, the existence of a long term relationship with the clients in an agency, no matter their reasons (promotions, prices, comfort, the wish not to exceed the comfort zone or else), may lead to increasing the competitive advantage of the agency (Silva, Goncalves, 2016). Last but not least, this type of loyalty of the customers and a long period of relationship, ascertains them to be less sensitive to the prices and to offer more credit to agencies' services due to their previous experiences.

According to the things mentioned earlier, the relationship with the business partners represents another key aspect for obtaining a leader position on the market of the travel agencies. Therefore, by the mean of a good cooperation with the partner accommodation units, with the transport agencies or even with some restaurants or entertainment agencies, a travel agency may get an appreciably competitive advantage by decreasing the costs. Another example regarding the benefits given by a correct cooperation with the partners is represented by the coordination of the trips schedule according to aspects as the flights hours to destination of the air transport companies. A well scheduled timetable leads to a complex make-up which will lead to impressed customers that will want the same type of services in the future. Thus, the key is represented by a good organization inside the agency, but also by the efficient communication both with the partners and with the customers (Yeh, Ku, Ho, 2016).

The way the relationship with the competitors it is seen must not be neglected. Competition is the one that stimulates the continuous search for new combinations of resources, skills and processes. In the meantime, cooperation is the one that allows access to rare and complementary resources. Thus, this is why big companies help the small ones, both of them remarking the benefits that may appear from this kind of agreement (Della Corte, Aria, 2016).

Another aspect that presents interest for all the actors on the tourism market is represented by the prices. Thus, the agencies that want to obtain an appreciably competitive advantage, pay special attention to the offered prices, so these prices will be low enough to present interest, but also realistic enough for sustaining agency's activity. Innovation in terms of prices may represent one of the strongest sources for competitive advantage, being in the same time one of the less exploited sources, because not many of the actors on the market are able to assume risks like this. Nevertheless, their reasons may be miscellaneous and might be connected to the fact that they do not know enough ways to use the prices in order to obtain competitive advantage and they do not relate the prices and the agency's strategy, the used tactics, but neither the organization itself or its values, loosing enough field (Hinterhuber, Liozu, 2014). Nowadays, the majority of the travel agencies practice the same type of activities regarding the prices: season discounts, discounts offered to the old clients, promotions or others. Therefore, the applied prices should be connected both with what the organizational culture of the travel agency means and with the preferences and requirements of the market, in order to be both correct and accessible to the customers.

In the category of aspects, which competitors take into consideration regarding travel agencies there is also included the intelligent approach of tourism. The notion of smart tourism refers to a long-term approach of the touristic activity, which involves the lasting development, in the meantime aiming to operate and sell the touristic products of the travel agencies. Thus, it is taken into consideration that this complex approach brings modifications in tourists' behavior and in their desire for information, but also in travel agencies' activities, leading to considerable alteration of the whole activity and determining the human element to look at the view of the tourism implications in evolution status (Li, Hu, Duan, 2017). As a conclusion, it is possible that certain persons to wish to visit some touristic destinations in a very short time, before these destinations lose their beauty or their charm due to different reasons. Perceived at the right time, this fact may be used in the interest of the travel agencies, in this way being possible to sell as much as diverse packages and to offer a maximum possible assortment of products, thus being won an important number of customers.

Further, talking about the selection of the destinations that are desired to be promoted by a travel agency, it is important to take into consideration how difficult is to build an appropriate offer with a suitable price and how the success in this way adds a plus of value to the travel agency. Living in a continuously changing world, sometimes it is difficult to anticipate what will happen in next few months, period for which the touristic packs are already created. Therefore, when an agency decides to promote a touristic destination, it must take into consideration many aspects, among that there are the political factors, the economic ones, the social and cultural ones, the ecological elements and the factors regarding infrastructure, but most of all, the factors connected to the touristic interest of the destination. Sonorousness examples in this sense may be the attempts from New York, France or Turkey, which had modified for a long period of time waves of tourists to these destinations. It is necessary to consider the attractions, the natural potential and the anthropogenic one of the area, and also many other aspects which awaken and maintain the curiosity of the potential customers (Cibinskiene, Snieskiene, 2015). Thus, the choice of promoting a destination represents another strong point in the increase of the competitive advantage of an agency. It is true that, in the moment of building a touristic package, the agency cannot know if any events will take place, events which may put in danger the tourists or may determine the potential tourists to give up on visiting the destination. A good information concerning the situation of any type, both from agency's side and from customer's side, may have anyhow, many benefits.

So, it is possible to note that according to the previous remarks, obtaining a competitive advantage in a travel agency does not represent a common activity, but rather a lot of processes and activities, strategies and events, colligated for a better functioning of the company. This is based both on a good cognition of the business environment, on the relationships inside it and on the trends and technology, but especially on the customers' desires and wishes in the tourism field.

2. Methodology

To check the applicability of the analyzed theoretical information, there was used a quantitative research, applying a questionnaire issued by the author. This questionnaire was composed of 16 questions. The questionnaire was applied to a number of 40 agents from different types of travel agencies in the capital. The purpose of issuing and applying the questionnaire was to check how much of the information gathered from the literature is to be applied at the practical level into one city's travel agencies. We can also talk about the

approach of competitive advantage by the travel agents and the opinions by which they consider their level may be increased.

Among the 16 questions, first 6 had the purpose of collecting general information about the respondents, such as sex, age, level of education, the area where they live, average of the monthly income and the experience in traveling field. The answers to these questions helped with a classification of the respondents. There were noticed differences such as the ones related to the income of the employees, depending on their length of service, age or level of education.

The purpose of next 5 questions was to check which of the elements of the studied theory are applicable to the travel agencies from the respondents' point of view. Thus, they were questioned what they understand by the idea of competitive advantage, in order to verify the understanding of the term. Also, they received questions regarding the main reasons for which the tourists choose to appeal to the travel agencies and to the importance of certain aspects regarding the differentiation of the agency where they work facing other agencies on the market. Last set of questions related especially to the activity of the agency where each respondent works and their opinions regarding the ways to improve this activity. These questions helped creating a far-reaching image upon the agencies where the questionnaires were applied, also highlighting the weak points of their organization.

As regards the respondents, they were represented both by young employees, beginners in this area, and by older employees, with a vast experience. There was, of course, reticence concerning the fulfillment of the questionnaire; part of the persons asked to answer the questions politely refused, from different reasons, such as lacking time. Some of the respondents thought that by answering to such a questionnaire, they should be helped to catch a better vision upon their position face to the competition, considering that this thing is in their benefit for the future.

3. Results and discussion

The purpose of the first block of questions was to make a short characterization of the respondents. From the total of the persons questioned, 67,5% were female. The age of the questioned persons is not precisely defined, but most of them are under 25 years, representing 42,5% from the total. In decreasing order of the educational level, the interviewed persons are classified as follows: 16 of them have graduated a master program, for 21 the last level of education is the university degree and 3 of them graduated only the secondary school. The environment where the respondents live and work is prevalent urban, only 4 of them, meaning 10% of the total, live at the countryside.

Another aspect analyzed was the salary of the questioned persons, these persons working in different travel agencies with different profiles and number of employees. The employee may be involved into agency's activity depending on the level of the salary. The bigger the salary, the better the employee's work, him being motivated and satisfied and finding solutions for the problems, he has to face into the company. The employee contributes to obtain the competitive advantage by the ideas he might have regarding the services offered by the travel agency. A right and attractive salary maintains the employee in the firm, helps him to develop, to know better the values of the firm and thus, to be able to contribute to the issuing of the offered touristic packages, finally obtaining the desired competitive advantage. From the total of the respondents, 67,5% have incomes over 2,001 lei, 30% between 1,001 – 2,000 lei and only 2,5% obtain monthly incomes under 1,001 lei.

Further, by realizing that we wanted to find out the length of service in this area of the persons responding to this interview. Most of them, more precisely 14, are working for a shorter period than 3 years, 12 respondents have a longer experience working in the domain for over 5 years, 10 persons are new entered in tourism's area and have a smaller experience than one year, and for a period between 3 to 5 years, there are 4 respondents.

Next there was analyzed the degree of cognition of the notion of competitive advantage from the perspective of the time the respondents spent in the area in correlation with question no. 9, which refers to each respondent's perception regarding the signification of the competitive advantage. The ones with a smaller than one year experience understand competitive advantage as being made of the quality of the offered services, essential for obtaining this type of advantage. Other respondents consider this advantage as being made of offers, prices, by the diversity of the touristic packages, and by the increasing number of customers. These methods for obtaining the competitive advantage were found again in the literature, at Hiterhuber and Lizou (2014). One answer was related to the salary of the employees, one of the respondents considering that, once the competitive advantage was realized, this should increase, and another respondent considers that the competitive advantage is realized when a travel agency makes a counter-offer to a customer in comparison with another tourism company's offer. The persons that took part to this research having an experience in this domain between 1 – 3 years consider that loyalty programs and advantageous positioning on the market face to the competitors can obtain this type of advantage. Next interval from the questionnaire, with a length in service in the tourism area between 3 to 5 years

consider that the differentiation and maintaining of the quality at a high level as being part of the competitive advantage. The category with the largest experience in the analyzed area answered that the differentiation is the competitive advantage, as did the other categories. Except this answer, there were also the promotion campaigns and the offering of better services. As we may see, no matter the period of working in this domain, the perception face to the competitive advantage is almost the same, the employees knowing about how can their company may make headway face to their competitors.

Question no. 7, which refers to the main reasons for which the tourists choose to make their holidays with the help of a travel agency, regards respondents' opinion for these reasons. Here, the respondents had the possibility to choose more answers. The choices among which they had to choose are the following: snugness (comfort), lack of information for organizing the holidays by themselves, lack of necessary time, lower prices, having the possibility to give another answer than the ones enumerated. First choice, the snugness (comfort), obtained a 35% percentage from the total. Next options had obtained – following the order they were enumerated – 27.5%, 21.3%, 16.3%. Here from it is possible to extract a characteristic of the type of tourist who prefers to acquisition the holidays with the help of a travel agency despite its planning by himself, this characteristic being the snugness. Probably it is a feature of the modern man who lives now-a-days, where everything unfurls with high speed, having so many options at their disposal so that not to make too much effort in order to touch the superior human necessities.

The research proposed to identify the ways by which the agency where the respondent is employed, is different at the present moment on the market. The question had the following answer choices: lower prices, touristic packages to special destinations, there are taken into consideration customers' general preferences, offer's diversify, quality – price report, issuing of the offer face to face with the customer, discounts for the loyal customers, frequent offers/promotions, the web page well done, being easy to use for holidays' acquisition, better public relation. As for the previous question, the respondents had the possibility to select more answer options. The most selected options, with a percentage of 15.1%, were the choices related to the report quality – price and to the variety of the offers. Regarding these two aspects, we may note that the firms put emphasis on the quality of the offered services, and this represents a good thing for the customers. On the other hand, because quality means usually high prices, the firms are aware that it is necessary to exist a fair report between the offered quality and the final price of the touristic packages. As we could see from the study of the specialty articles in the domain, the diversity of the offer represents a way to obtain the competitive advantage. Thus, we see that the theoretical aspects are applied also in the business environment. At the opposite side, we may find the variant that supposes to issue the touristic offer face to the client, this one having a percentage of only 2%. As Yeh, Ku and Ho (2016) show, the composition of the touristic packages offered to the tourists requires an ample cooperation with different services suppliers. In this category are included transport operators, accommodation units, entertainers, but also restaurants. With all these companies, the agency may negotiate the prices for their services. Thus, in order to be able to offer the customer what he wants at once, issuing the offer with him, it would mean a very hard work and not very beneficial for the agency.

Next requirement of the questionnaire guides the respondents to order by importance, a series of sources for obtaining competitive advantage, from 1 to 6. To obtain low costs from the services suppliers, fact that leads to a competitive advantage based on agency's domination by costs, is the choice that obtained most of the times the last place of the classification. At the opposite side, an approximately equal percentage of the employees considered that, the highest influence in gaining face to the competitors is represented by the available offers and promotions of the agency where they work. Therefore, we may note that to focus the attention of the employees especially upon the relationship between the customers and the agency and the importance of the way of their attraction is a very important aspect. This thing may be established in detriment of building the relationship with services suppliers. For the future, the travel agencies may take into consideration to strengthen the relationship with the suppliers in order to increase the competitive advantage.

Concerning question no. 11, this requests the acceptance or dismissal of the respondents regarding certain aspects. First of the assertion which needs respondents' opinion refers to the way by which the improvement of the relationship between the employees may be considered a source of improvement of the agency's mode of functioning. At this question, 95% of the respondents agreed with the high or very high influence of this activity, considering that a good relationship at the working place may lead to a productivity increase. The high percentage continues for the ones who consider that customers' loyalty represents itself an aspect for obtaining the competitive advantage, which means that the employees are conscious of the importance of the agency's customers and the outline of the relationship with them. Making the connection with question no. 10, the one that asks the respondents to order certain aspects regarding the sources of competitive advantage, a percentage of 97.5% of the respondents consider that improving the relationship with services suppliers may represent a strong aspect in the development of the business of which they are part. Regarding the existing marketing strategies and their colligate with the market's necessities, 10% of the respondents consider this as being indifferent in

obtaining a competitive advantage, 30% see it as being in a large measure important, and 60% consider that it is very important. This thing shows that not all the respondents are conscious by the implications of a wrong applied marketing strategy over the activity of the agency where they work, which shows a certain measure of carelessness. Last but not least, the diminishing of the agency's expenses is seen by the employees also as a very important problem. Nevertheless, 5% of the respondents consider that not all these influence in a important manner the activity of the agency, and 20% are unresponsive regarding them.

Further, we talk about the opinion of the interviewed persons about the competitors from the market and which are the trumps hold by the other travel agencies, from the employees' point of view. A percentage of 23.6% consider that the experience on the market is a trump for the other agencies, 17.5% think that the other firms have a better image on the market, 15.8% consider a well done promotion campaign as being a trump of the competitors. Also, 14.9% think that another trump is represented by the experienced personnel, this idea being followed with a percentage of 13.2% by the high technology and at last, 12.3% see the advantageous placement of the agency's headquarter better for the competitors than for their companies.

Next two questions are connected: a positive answer at the first question meaning a mandatory answer to the second one. They refer to the personal data and how much benefit brings their collection to a better functioning of the agency. It is useful to obtain the social information about the customers or about the potential ones in order to create dedicated offers for them in the opinion of 87.5% from the respondents. Among them, 74.3% consider this thing useful, the only problem being that the agency where they work does not capitalize it at maximum. At the opposite side, with a percentage of 2.9% there are the ones who consider this information gathering as creating troubles to the customers. For gaining the desired advantage on the market, we consider that it is necessary to have a balance, social data may be gathered as far as it's guaranteed to them the confidentiality of the information and it is only used for creating the touristic offers.

In order to identify how many customers go to the travel agencies for buying their holidays the respondents were invited to choose one of more reasons for which the tourists select the known travel agencies in spite of the new entered on the market companies or the ones with smaller visibility. A percentage of 62.5% from the total of the respondents consider that there are persons who wish to make a change, but also persons pleased with what they already know, so everything may depends on how attractive is the offer and on agency's reputation. In exchange, only 5% consider that the tourists do not take into consideration the reputation of the travel agency. The travel agencies image on the market is a competitive advantage; therefore, the company has to invest in its image for attracting the tourists.

Last requirement of the questionnaire consists of granting points from 1 to 10 for the power of resistance of the firms where they work for the competitors. Most of the respondents granted mark 10, being very confident in the travel agencies where they work, following the marks 8, 9 and 7. Astonishing or not, there is a mark 5, this one being seen also for the other two analyzed aspects. In the meantime, this question refers also to what do the employees consider regarding the aspect of their agency facing the market's requirements, also the majority of the offered marks being 9 and 10. A number of 9 persons, representing 22.5% of the total, considered that it is necessary to give mark 8 to the agency, taking into consideration this aspect connected with the market's requirements and their satisfaction. Here also we may find a mark 5. Talking about the way the agency faces the changes in technology, although the majority considered that the correct mark is 10, the answers were different, also existing few marks under 7, respectively 5 and 6.

Thus, according to the dimension and area of activity of each of the agencies, the perception of the employees is different, each of them remarking the eventual troubles of their working place and seeing, therefore, the potential sources for a further competitive advantage. At the same time, noticing that these aspects represent a strong point, the employees demonstrate involvement and interest regarding the area where they work and their working place.

Conclusions

In conclusion, as we could see, there are many methods use to gain the competitive advantage by the travel agencies, but there are also a series of factors that must be taken into consideration when this advantage is desired. At the level of each company, all the processes, the activities and the strategies colligate for an efficiency of the company. For obtaining the competitive advantage, it is crucial that the firms know the business environment and the relationships inside it as well as possible, as well as the trends and the development of the technology. Another very important aspect, maybe the most important one, regards the wishes and preferences of the consumers of the touristic services.

Following the quantitative research based on the realized questionnaire, it could be seen that the theoretical aspects concerning the sources for obtaining this type of advantage apply to real situations. Thus, the employees know what the competitive advantage means, how they can obtain it, but there are also information regarding the

business environment of the companies and the degree of maintaining on the market face to the competitors. The employees are confident in the companies they work for and grant a very high reliance on them. It could be noticed that the most used sources for obtaining the competitive advantage are the differences regarding the competitors by prices and offers. The promotion campaigns represent another source to obtain this type of advantage. In the opinion of the questioned persons, the firms they work for use different ways to discourage the competitors and to maintain themselves on the market. It could be noticed that the most used methods are the quality/price report and diversifying the offers. This last point represents also a source for obtaining the competitive advantage.

An aspect that was not enough taken into consideration by the respondents was the web page of the travel agency, and the fact that this may be used for securing this kind of advantage. Thus, we may conclude that a well done web page, attractive from the visual point of view, containing many information of very good quality which should be organized as logical as possible, being easy accessible, may represent a pretty important advantage. The online environment and the present-day technology are vital for the maintaining the firm on the market, in order to obtain visibility, and to capture the consumers' attention. Now-a-days, people spend more and more time in the virtual environment, connected at phones, tablets, laptops, and in order to be in their sight, the travel agencies must be found there where they spend most of their daily time. Another proposal, also for the online environment, should be the paid presence on social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter etc. The aggressive promotion campaigns may bring a competitive advantage in the domain of tourism. Used with moderation, these channels can bring the desired advantage, also for the touristic packages.

References

- Aguiar – Quintana, T., Moreno, S., Picazo – Peral, P., 2016, *How could traditional agencies improve their competitiveness and survive? A qualitative study in Spain*, Tourism Management Perspectives, no. 20.
- Chang, Y.W., Hsu, P.Y., Lan, Y.C., 2019, *Cooperation and competition between online travel agencies and hotels*, Tourism Management, no. 71.
- Cibinskiene, A., Snieskiene, G., 2015, *Evaluation of city tourism competitiveness*, Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences, no. 213.
- Della Corte, V., Aria, M., 2016, *Competition and sustainable competitive advantage. The case of tourist destinations*, Tourism Management, no. 54.
- Hinterhuber, A., Liozu, S.M., 2014, *Is innovation in pricing your next source of competitive advantage?* Business Horizons.
- Li, Y., Hu, C., Huang, C., Duan, L., 2017, *The concept of smart tourism in the context of tourism information services*, Tourism Management, no. 58.
- Roger – Monzo, V., Marti – Sanchez, M., Guijarro – Garcia, M., 2015, *Using online consumer loyalty to gain competitive advantage in travel agencies*, Journal of Business Research, no. 68.
- Silva, G. M., Goncalves, H.M., 2016, *Casual recipes for customer loyalty to travel agencies. Differences between online and offline customers*, Journal of Business Research, no. 69.
- Xiang, Z., Magnini, V.P., Fesmaier, D. R., 2015, *Information technology and consumer behavior in travel and tourism: Insights from travel planning using the internet*, Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, no. 22.
- Yeh, C.C., Ku, E.C.S., Ho, C.H., 2016, *Collaborating pivotal suppliers: Complementarities, flexibility and standard communication between airline companies and travel agencies*, Journal of Air Transport Management, no. 55.