

The Role of Organizational Culture in the Greek Higher Tourism Quality

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Introduction

The tourism industry constitutes one of the most important sectors in many local economies in Greece, mainly because of its constant increasing contribution to the income of these regions, but also due to the opportunities offered for further growth (Karakitsiou et al. 2007). Tourism is one of the most dominant industries at a global level that affect the world's economy. On the other hand, quality is related to the customers' satisfaction and to the extent to which organizations meet their customer's expectations. So quality is considered as the main determinant of customer satisfaction, which in turn influences purchase intentions (Spreng and Mckoy 1996).

Organizations seem to adopt a philosophy of continuous improvement in terms of quality. Nowadays the world is a fast paced and rapidly changing environment, where organizational culture of a company plays a huge role in its effectiveness. It turns out to be one of the key components for success and sustainability with a focus on higher quality for customer satisfaction.

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A. Kavoura et al. (eds.), *Strategic Innovative Marketing*, Springer Proceedings
in Business and Economics, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-56288-9_10

Methodology

The methodology that was used in this paper is the critical review of the current literature. Relevant literature selection was derived from popular online bibliographic databases, like Science Direct, Emerald, EBSCO host, and scientific search engines like Google Scholar. Also, general search engines like Google have been used. The types of bibliographic sources included in the research are articles published on scientific journals, books, conference proceedings, company papers and studies, white papers, online sites, and online journals. The selection of these literature sources was made on the basis of relevance to the topic of the paper and it is not exhaustive.

Literature Review

Organizational Culture

The organizational culture of a company consists of the setting of values, rules, and priorities that are followed by the personnel and all the individuals that are involved in it. These values are beliefs and ideas about what kinds of goals members of an organization should pursue and ideas about the appropriate modes or standards of behavior organizational members execute to achieve these goals (Hill and Jones 2001).

Over the years, this system of shared assumptions, values, and beliefs has gained more and more attention to the organization's management. A definition by Schein (1985) states that organizational culture is "a pattern of basic assumptions-invented, discovered or developed by a group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those processes". All of the above have a strong influence on the personnel's behavior and dictate the way they behave during their job duties partially or even totally.

Organizational culture provides guidelines and boundaries for the behavior of the members of the company. Some characteristics that deal with the organizational culture are linked with an orientation toward the results and the outcomes. Emphasis on the people of the company is important because they also affect the company through their actions and way of implementing tasks. Denison (1984) highlights the importance of an organization possessing a "strong" culture, by "exhibiting a well integrated and effective set of specific values, beliefs and behaviors, which will lead to a higher level of productivity performance". Sathé (1985) emphasized in "Organizational culture in terms of meanings and understandings with a focus on cognitive aspects. Culture as something being shared, which is distinctive and unique". Efficiency, reflexivity, innovation and flexibility,

supervisory support, and quality are among the most salient characteristics that influence the organizational culture of a company and contribute to its performance. These elements are also obtained using simulation modeling of the corresponding processes (Dimitrios et al. 2013a, b).

Greek Higher Tourism Quality

OECD (2009) suggests that “it is essential for attracting investment to continue improving the quality of both the cultural and tourism offer. Convincing residents of the benefits of tourism development is increasingly crucial as they come to form the core of the cultural and creative tourism experience”. It also implies that “whole series of steps need to be taken in order to develop a successful synergy between culture and tourism, and these need an adequate strategy to be established (2009)”. During the last decades, there has been a turn to high quality services concerning tourism industry in Greece. This enables companies such as hotels and restaurants to become more competitive with a focus customer orientation.

Quality matters to a high extent and it is inherently linked with customer satisfaction, performance, and success. For example, hotels survival depends on the satisfaction of the clientèle needs with the high level of customer satisfaction leading to higher loyalty (Lavlak and Right 2003). Despite Greece suffering from the economic crisis, the Greek tourism industry is still developing and opportunities arise. This makes the need for higher quality a necessity and vital to the company’s implementation of strategic planning. Not only it is essential for attracting more customers, but it is also an important tool for the operational effectiveness and efficiency. Quality especially in services based companies is a decisive key component of the overall business operation. The right skilful personnel and the dominant organizational culture contribute to the satisfaction of the customer. Especially in a face-to-face service business, high quality without a doubt coexists with customer and employee satisfaction levels. This practically means that high performance and good communication among staff are creating a well-based infrastructure to increase quality and boost efficiency (Trivellas and Reklitis 2014).

By measuring customer satisfaction, a company can evaluate its current position among rivalry and identify any potential market opportunity. In addition, through understanding the customers’ expectations, a company can realize what needs and desires need to be fulfilled. The expected behavior is also a characteristic that most of the companies within the industry try to predict and be well prepared for. Tourism industry is heavily influenced by a significant number of factors from the external environment. Therefore it is more than necessary to improve the quality of the services that are offered in order to protect competitive advantages and increase customer’s loyalty at a high level Trivellas et al. (2015a, b) and Vasiliadis et al. (2015). After all, customer’s satisfaction is the result of interaction between his experience and the actual expectations he had. This involves characteristics that are linked with accommodation, food consumption, natural and urban environment,

hospitality, and entertainment. Furthermore, it should be emphasized that overall satisfaction is strongly related to all three loyalty measures (revisit intention, recommendation, and confirmation of expectations) which is consistent with the relative literature (Grigoroudis and Siskos 2010). All these are necessary for the decision-making process, the positioning of products and services and the market segmentation analysis. Overall, the organizational culture enhances both sides; the effectiveness of the company and the individual's well-being (Dekoulou and Trivellas 2014).

Discussion

As Watson suggests: “an important trend in managerial thinking in recent decades has been one of encouraging managers to try to create strong organizational cultures” (2006). But connoisseurs claim that a stable culture and a seemingly strong culture do not always indicate an efficient and quality oriented culture. Thus, it is not always a common sense that a culture with strongly and commonly shared attitudes, values, and beliefs is able to survive and prosper. This is also due to the fact that goals, beliefs, and attitudes should from time to time be reviewed and changed according to the possible changes that occur within the business environment. If an organization continuously remains stable then endorsing the same beliefs might prove to be cumbersome and not positive to change. It is not only about how strong organizations support their beliefs, but also about the quality of the beliefs that they support. As Schein (2004) states: “the concept of culture is the climate and practices that organizations develop around their handling of people” (2004). It is clear that when organizations ensure employee commitment through culture awareness programs, team-oriented projects, and initiatives then it is more possible to achieve a climate suitable for change that further endorses the relevant culture that is advocated by managers Trivellas and Dargenidou (2009).

Conclusion

The competitive advantage of Greece lies in the tourism industry and it emerges from the fact that it possesses a highly good reputation and fame due to its Mediterranean climate and its natural pristine beauties. As it is mentioned by the National Tourism Organization: “The tourism industry constitutes a vitally important economic sector, occupying the most prominent place in the Greek economy, by contributing to its development. At the same time, the industry is elevating the country to one of the top 10 destinations worldwide” (2012).

Nevertheless competition is intense within the country. Therefore quality expectations rise and companies trust to make their customers more loyal in order to achieve a long lasting relationship that may also affect other people through

recommendations or even word of mouth. So an emphasis is given in fulfilling customer's expectations. Managers are aware that they could not achieve this without having a proper organizational culture that will boost effectiveness and efficiency in all levels and aspects. For having an improved performance, companies adopt practices that aim on boosting quality and also try to achieve synergies between it and the organizational culture of the company (Trivellas et al. 2012).

Suggestions for Further Research

Future researches should try to have an insight on how the organizational culture can be directly measured in relations with quality of the service that is provided to customers. Through identifying the organizational climate that dominates a company managers will be able to optimize the overall performance by identifying inherent strengths and weaknesses. They can also exploit the opportunities that are offered and create more competitive advantages that can assist them in avoiding future risks and threats. In addition, variations in perceptions between managers and lower level personnel should be examined in order to identify what are the priorities in common among all employees.

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