

Chapter 06

Rethinking homo economicus

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Evaluation of intangible assets that generate competitive advantage in a hotel: case report

Evaluación de activos intangibles generadores de ventaja competitiva en una instalación hotelera: reporte de caso

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: in the contemporary hotel sector, competitive advantage is fundamentally supported by the management of intangible assets. This case report specifically evaluates organizational learning, innovation, commitment, internal marketing, and resilience in a three-star hotel in Havana, Cuba.

Method: the study was conducted during the 2022-2023 period in a three-star hotel in Havana, Cuba. Seventy-seven workers participated, and validated measurement instruments were applied to evaluate the mentioned intangible assets.

Results: the findings revealed intermediate levels in most intangible assets. Organizational learning and internal marketing were at a medium level. Innovation was stronger in the marketing area than in the technological one. Organizational commitment was medium-high, and resilience was assessed as favorable, although limited by external economic factors. Staff dedication and group cohesion were identified as strengths. The main weaknesses lay in work-family balance, support for learning, and technological innovation.

Conclusions: the analysis highlights that organizational commitment constitutes a valuable and difficult-to-imitate resource for the organization. Likewise, group resilience is identified as a key factor for facing crises in the tourism sector. It is concluded that an integrated management of these intangible assets represents a fundamental strategic path for consolidating the competitive advantage of hotels in Cuba.

Keywords: Intangible Assets; Competitive Advantage; Hotel Sector.

RESUMEN

Introducción: en el sector hotelero contemporáneo, la ventaja competitiva está fundamentalmente sustentada en la gestión de activos intangibles. Este reporte de caso evalúa específicamente el aprendizaje organizacional, la innovación, el compromiso, el marketing interno y la resiliencia en un hotel tres estrellas de La Habana, Cuba.

Método: el estudio se realizó durante el período 2022-2023 en un hotel de tres estrellas en La Habana, Cuba. Participaron 77 trabajadores y se aplicaron instrumentos de medición validados para evaluar los activos intangibles mencionados.

Resultados: los hallazgos revelaron niveles intermedios en la mayoría de los activos intangibles. El aprendizaje organizacional y el marketing interno se situaron en un nivel medio. La innovación fue más fuerte en el área de marketing que en la tecnológica. El compromiso organizacional fue medio-alto, y la resiliencia se evaluó como favorable, aunque limitada por factores económicos externos. Como fortalezas se identificaron la dedicación del personal y la cohesión grupal. Las debilidades principales residieron en la conciliación trabajo-familia, el apoyo al aprendizaje y la innovación tecnológica.

Conclusiones: el análisis destaca que el compromiso organizacional constituye un recurso valioso y difícil de imitar para la organización. Asimismo, la resiliencia grupal se identifica como un factor clave para enfrentar las crisis en el sector turístico. Se concluye que una gestión integrada de estos activos intangibles representa una vía estratégica fundamental para consolidar la ventaja competitiva de los hoteles en Cuba.

Palabras claves: Activos Intangibles; Ventaja Competitiva; Sector Hotelero.

INTRODUCTION

In the current context, competitive advantage in the hotel sector depends increasingly on intangible assets (IA) rather than material resources.⁽¹⁾ Elements such as organizational learning, innovation, employee engagement, internal marketing, and organizational resilience are intangible assets that generate competitive advantage, which, in turn, are interrelated.⁽²⁾ This case report describes the evaluation of intangible assets in a hotel facility during 2022-2023.

CASE REPORT

A 3-star hotel located in Havana, Cuba, was selected as the unit of analysis. The sample consisted of 77 workers. Five instruments validated in the national and international context were applied, which allowed for the evaluation of the five intangible assets that generate competitive advantage: organizational learning, innovation capacity, organizational resilience, organizational commitment, and internal marketing.

RESULTS

- Organizational learning: medium level (overall average $\approx 3,7/6$), highlighting strategic leadership and integrated systems, but with weaknesses in financial support and work-family balance.
- Innovation capacity: greatest strength in marketing strategies (average $= 5,1/7$), while technological innovation was limited (average $= 4,47/7$).
- Organizational commitment: medium-high level, with a predominance of dedication (mean $= 5/6$) and vigor ($4,9/6$).
- Internal marketing: intermediate level ($3,7-3,8/5$), with strengths in internal and external communication, but weaknesses in task adequacy.
- Organizational resilience: favorable results (averages between $4-5/6$), with strengths in group cohesion and weaknesses in financial solvency.

DISCUSSION

The findings show that the hotel facility studied obtained intermediate levels in most of the intangible assets analyzed. The results coincide with previous research in the Cuban hotel sector, which shows strengths in strategic leadership and internal communication, but also difficulties in work-family balance and technological innovation.^(3,4,5)

Organizational commitment stands out as a differentiating factor, given that the enthusiasm and dedication of workers represent a resource that is difficult for competitors to imitate. On the other hand, resilience is a challenge in the context of the crisis in the tourism sector, which makes it possible to sustain learning and innovation initiatives.⁽⁶⁾

This case report highlights the importance of intangible assets as generators of competitive advantage in complex environments⁽⁶⁾ and the need for organizational policies that strengthen knowledge management, technology, and workplace well-being.⁽⁷⁾

CONCLUSIONS

The hotel facility under study has an intermediate level of development in intangible assets, with strengths in organizational commitment and group resilience. The main weaknesses identified are related to financial support for learning, technological innovation, and work-family balance. The integrated management of these intangible assets represents a strategic way to sustain competitive advantage in the Cuban hotel sector.

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