

IMPLEMENTATION OF RELATIONSHIP MARKETING CONCEPT IN POLISH TRAVEL OFFICES¹

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Abstract

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In this paper, there is presented the essence of the relationship marketing concept. There are also described results of the questionnaire survey, which estimated the level of application of marketing relationship in practice of travel agencies in Poland.

1. Introduction

Changing conditions of tourist enterprises functioning (globalization, competition intensification, development of new technologies etc.) result in the necessity to search such new methods and systems of functioning which will assure market success for these enterprises. Relationship marketing is the response to these challenges. At the background of relationship marketing application by tourist companies one may point to higher expectations from consumers and extensive administration costs involved in these companies functioning². Clients require offers better and better adjusted to their individual demands and needs, expect better quality and higher value, as well as much care in performing the service, at the same time presenting lower level of loyalty towards the seller. On the other hand extensive costs of enterprises are most frequently connected with failures in introducing new services at the market, their low value, too high distribution costs and also an improper promotional policy.

2. Relationship marketing concept

According to L. Berry "*relationship marketing means creating, preserving and enriching relations with a client, where winning a new client means just the first step in the overall marketing process*"³. While analyzing relationship marketing definitions⁴ presented in literature one can distinguish basic composite elements of such definitions, namely: creation (attracting new clients, establishing and shaping relations), development (strengthening, deepening and extending relations), preserving (supporting and broadening ties), interaction (exchange, cooperation), lasting nature (ties kept in a long run), emotional content (attachment, trust, loyalty) and the outcome (profitability, efficiency, mutual benefits).

Relationship marketing as opposed to transactions marketing does not concentrate on a singular sales act, but on preserving a lasting relation with a client. The objective of relationship marketing is to gain client's loyalty, whose satisfaction becomes the prior

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² Based on: K. Przybyłowski, S. Hartley, R. Kevin, W. Rudelius: Marketing. Warsaw: ABC Publishing House 1998, p. 237.

³ More information in: J. Otto: Relations marketing. The concept and application. Warsaw: C.H. Beck Publishing House, Warsaw 2001, p. 46.

⁴ Selected authors of relations marketing definition: M. Armstrong, J. Copuslky i M. Wolf, Ch. Grönroos, I. H. Gordon, Ph. Kotler'a, A. Payne, M. Daszkowska, K. Fonfara, R. Furtak, J. Otto, J. Penc, K. Rogoziński, M. Rydel i C. Ronkowski, T. Sztucki.

objective for all staff of a tourist enterprise, not just the marketing department dealing with capturing new customers.

3. Description and research methodology

The scope of research covered an assessment of relationship marketing application by managers responsible for marketing activities in travel offices functioning at Polish market. Owing to complexity of the research problem the study was carried out in two stages. The first consisted in an individualized extended interview. It covered the sample of 20 subjects and its main purpose was to perform a pilot type of study referring to the analyzed group and an initial test in the form of a questionnaire.

The core research (II stage) covered the sample of 285 travel offices and was conducted in the period from April 2004 till March 2005.⁵

4. Implementation of relationship marketing in the practice of Polish travel offices functioning (research results)

The basic issue in carried out research was an attempt to answer the question regarding knowledge and experiences gained so far in relationship marketing. Almost half of respondents confirm the fact that they are aware of the concept and declare its application in practice (figure 1).

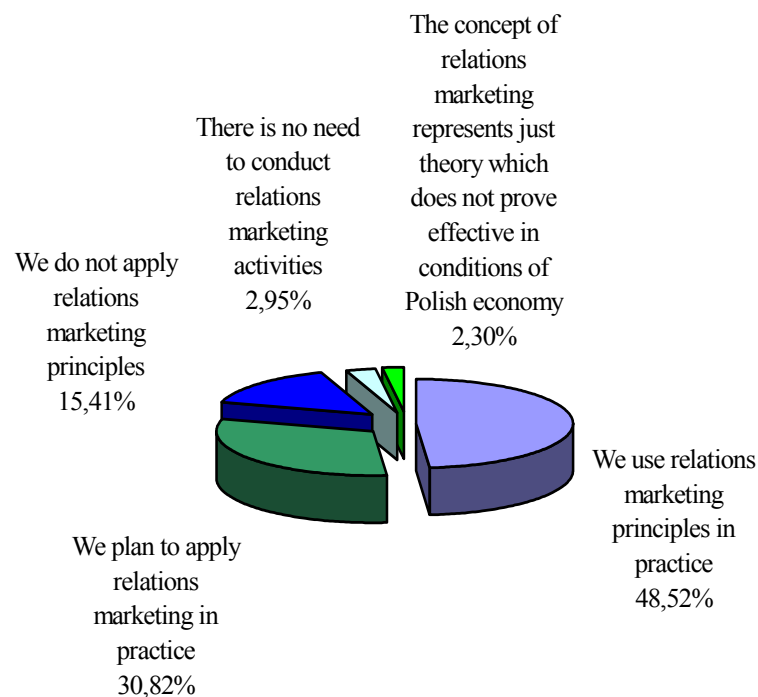


Figure 1. Relationship marketing principles implementation practice

Source: Author's compilation based on surveys

⁵ Regarding the number of studied population $N = 2629^5$, trust coefficient $(1-\alpha) = 0,9$ (i.e. 90%) and permissible statistical error (d) at the level of 3,5% the number of sample elements should $n = 305$ units.

Owners and managers of travel offices were also asked to name tools applied in building up partnership relations with clients. The marked answers did not exclude, but supplemented one another (figure 2).

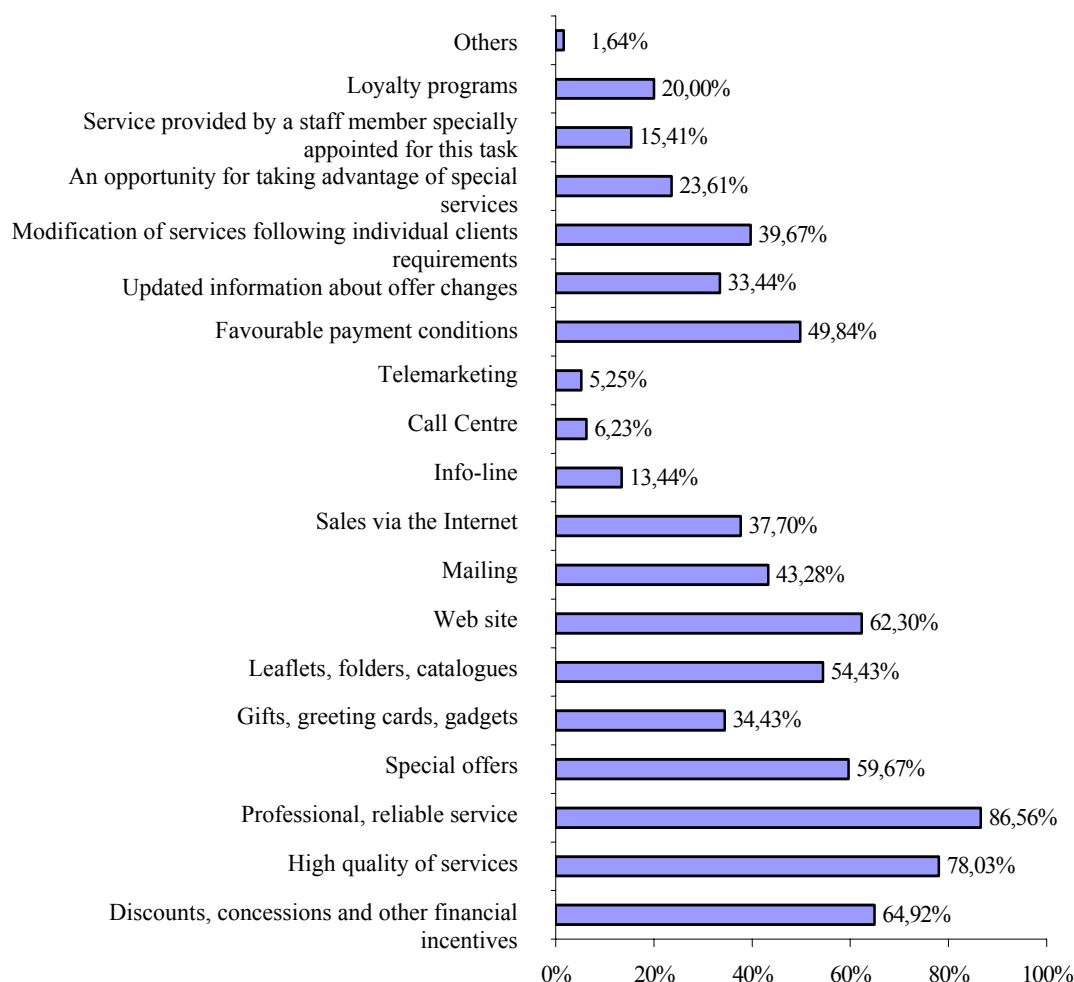


Figure 2. Application of tools for building up partnership relations with clients

Source: Author's compilation based on surveys

Travel offices which do not apply relationship marketing principles were asked to give reasons which stop them from taking up such activities. Main reasons for abandoning the implementation of relationship marketing concept by travel offices is presented in figure 3.

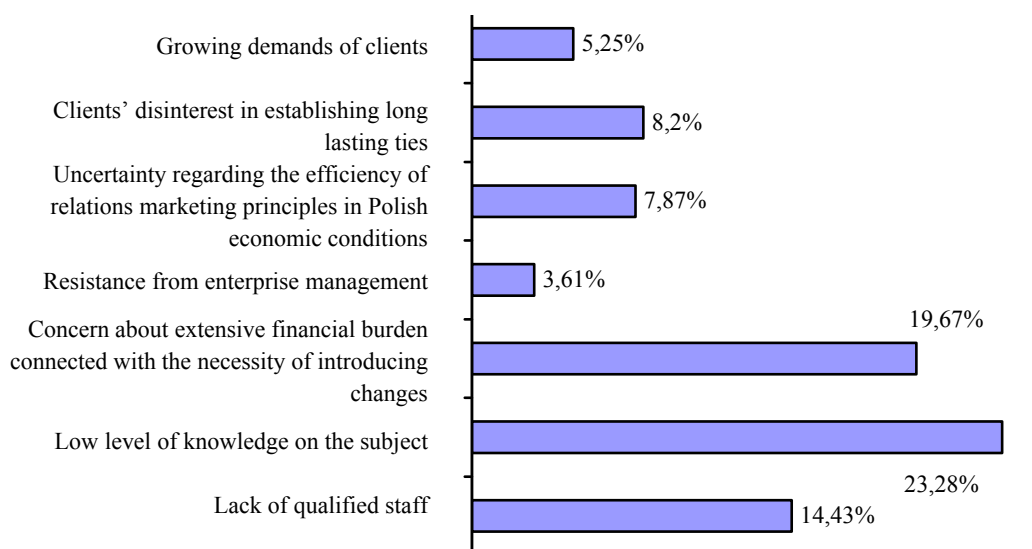


Figure 3. Reasons which stop travel offices from applying relationship marketing in practice

Source: Author's compilation based on surveys

5. Conclusions

Research results prove that over 75% of travel offices in Poland apply or intend to implement relationship marketing in practice. Among the most frequent reasons given for abandoning activities related to relationship marketing there are the following: lack of sufficient knowledge regarding the subject, no qualified staff which could implement, in practice, relationship marketing principles as well as insufficiency of adequate financial resources.

The most important tools in the process of building up and strengthening lasting relations between travel offices and clients are the provision of professional and reliable service and high quality of offered services. Catalogues and folders sent to selected clients were pointed to as another major tool for creating relations. Also the Internet and all other tools taking advantage of its potential open new opportunities in creating and strengthening ties with clients. These tools allow travel offices for approaching their customers in an individualized way, as well as support the process of building up their loyalty. Once applied they should result in the client staying with a given travel enterprise for good and make abandoning it financially unprofitable.

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