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Competitive Intelligence Research in Hospitality and Tourism: A perspective article

Abstract

Purpose: This study critically reviews competitive intelligence (CI) research and offers suggestions for future research in the hospitality and tourism (HT) field.

Methodology: The study reviews and synthesizes current CI research in the HT field.

Findings: The study findings suggest that CI research in HT is at an embryonic level, since researchers have not used the same terminology on what CI is, how CI is implemented, and what should be included in CI framework. Hence, researchers should address the link between operation and CI practices. Also, new studies discussing business espionage and ethics in CI practices are needed because the related studies are rare.

Implications: The study offers specific theoretical and practical implications for CI research.

Originality: This study provides a perspective on future developments of CI research in the HT field.

Introduction

We live in a competitive environment that is characterized by uncertainty and dynamic changes where knowledge is one of the strongest assets for organizations to gain a competitive advantage. Hence, the issue becomes how organizations should collect, analyze, and process knowledge in order to develop strategic, operational, and tactical solutions, and how/why organizations make informed decisions about their competitive environment. Researchers have used competitive intelligence, competitor intelligence, business intelligence, environmental scanning, and market intelligence interchangeably in order to structure steps related to data collection and knowledge production and dissemination that could be used by practitioners.

While the goal of all these methods is same (i.e., acquiring knowledge), having many definitions generates confusion for researchers, practitioner, and readers, despite the fact that competitive intelligence covers all these terms (Koseoglu, Ross, & Okumus, 2016). Therefore, clearly defined approaches for researchers and practitioners alike are needed. In this respect, this study aims to discuss CI in the hospitality and tourism (HT) field. First, we discuss evolution in CI research. Second, we present a perspective on future developments of CI research in the HT field. Finally, conclusions are provided.

Past perspective 75 years of developments 1946-2020

Drucker (1993) argues that knowledge used to be applied to tools, processes, and, products; however, following WW II, it became an important resource shelving other forms of capital. Grant (1996) also explained knowledge to be the most strategic resource of the firm. Considering the importance of knowledge and the firms' need to scan external and internal environments, utilizing knowledge management tools opened new venues in CI research.

CI studies in the HT field started with discussions on environmental scanning, which includes collecting data related to companies' external environment via conceptual and empirical papers (see Koseoglu et al., 2016; Okumus, 2004). However, there are some efforts to move the focus of environmental scanning studies through CI studies in HT (Korte, Ariyachandra, & Frolick, 2013; Lau, Lee, & Ho, 2005; Mohammed, Guillet, & Law, 2014) since CI has more comprehensive content and context than environmental scanning (Koseoglu, Chan, Okumus, & Altin, 2018). In destination management, Ritchie and Ritchie (2002) developed a marketing information system framework for destination marketing activities. Similarly, Sheehan, Vargas-Sanchez, Presenza, and Abbate (2016) argued that destination management organizations should act as an "intelligent agent" to collect knowledge from various sources to develop competitive

and sustainable strategies. Mariani, Baggio, Fuchs, and Hoepken (2018) also investigated big data and analytical technique as a business intelligence source and found this research field to be fragmented extensively. Recently, two studies have addressed CI practices in HT. The first study, Koseoglu et al. (2016) identified strategic and tactical levels in CI practices by developing a CI model, including seven interrelated steps for small businesses. This study showed found that hotels engage in CI practices at the tactical level rather than the strategic level focusing on their competitors' practices with short term approaches without structured applications. The second study highlighted how businesses do not integrate their CI practices with their operational level practices, and their proposed model outlined how all employees to should involve in CI processes (Koseoglu et al., 2018).

Future perspective: 75 years 2020-2095

CI is a vital concept for any organization. Hence, strategy literature in this area addresses what type of CI practices organizations use, how organizations can use CI practices, what CI practices contribute to organizations' performance. However, CI literature in the HT field has not had the same fertility compared to the generic strategy field, which brings researchers to new research venues in the HT field. Future studies should focus on how technology can help CI practices, as well as on creating new pools on sustainability, business ethics, and corporate responsibility activities. On the other hand, future studies can focus on not only micro-level (firms) CI practices, but also macro-level (destinations) CI practices. Future studies can design destination CI frameworks for new and established destinations. Another very important part needed for development in the future is the integration of CI and big data, virtual reality, augmented reality, and artificial intelligence terms to manage CI practices effectively. Future studies can develop advance CI apps or software to better employ CI practices in the strategic

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3 management process. Finally, ignorance of ethics by practitioners in CI practices is observed.
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5 Therefore, future research studies also need to look at ethical issues in CI practices.
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10 **Conclusions**

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12 This study has critically reviewed (CI) research and offered suggestions for future
13 research in this area. CI practices are crucial for HT businesses. CI literature in the generic
14 strategy field is advanced. On the other hand, the CI literature in the HT field is still in its
15 infancy stage. Hence, to shift this concept as researchers, we need to use the same language. In
16 other words, we use the same term for CI. As seen in Bulger (2016), in the HT field, researchers
17 should use CI for all similar concepts, referring to where knowledge is gathered in the primary
18 and secondary intelligence pools. First pool includes competitor intelligence, economic
19 intelligence, business intelligence, customer intelligence, and competitive technical intelligence;
20 and the secondary pool includes the adjacent intelligence, which supports the primary
21 intelligence. Consequently, we need to address the nature of these pools for our field by
22 developing CI frameworks. On the other hand, we should discuss how we can integrate these
23 intelligence activities with analytics of the data gathered from intelligence practices. In addition
24 to these issues, future studies should focus on several key CI areas, including the role of big data
25 and artificial intelligence, business espionage and ethics, sustainability and CSR.
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