

Original article

Tourism product innovation procedure for the Wedding and Honeymoon coordination process



Procedimiento de innovación de productos turísticos para el proceso de coordinación de Bodas y Lunas de Miel

Processo de inovação de produtos turísticos para o processo de coordenação de Casamentos e Lua-de-mel

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ABSTRACT

Product innovation is conceptualized as the implementation of new or significantly improved products or processes, which can provide the tourism sector with a high degree of added value that contributes to raising the levels of exclusivity and differentiation of the competition. The objective of this work is to design a product innovation procedure through the use of its functions and tools for the satisfaction of customers in the Wedding and Honeymoon segment at the Hotel Meliá Jardines del Rey. Theoretical methods such as historical-logical, analysis-synthesis, induction-deduction, systemic research method and documentary analysis and empirical methods such as interview, observation, survey and measurement were used. A product innovation procedure was designed that, using the product's functions and tools, generates new or improved products for the satisfaction of customers in the Wedding and Honeymoon segment at the Hotel Meliá Jardines del Rey. The proposed procedure is presented in three phases, where the function monitoring had the greatest

impact on the generation of new and improved products for customer satisfaction. The theoretical analysis of the coordination process of Weddings and Honeymoons and the innovation of tourism products allowed to assume references related to the components of the innovative activity and to reveal, from the functions and tools of the innovation of products, the relational functioning of these for the satisfaction of the clients with the new and improved tourism products.

Keywords: product innovation functions and tools; Wedding and Honeymoon coordination process; satisfaction.

RESUMEN

La innovación de productos se conceptualiza como la implementación de nuevos o significativamente mejorados productos o procesos, pudiendo proveer al sector del turismo de un alto grado de valor añadido que contribuya a elevar los niveles de exclusividad y diferenciación de la competencia. El trabajo tiene como objetivo: diseñar un procedimiento de innovación de producto mediante el uso de las funciones y herramientas de este para la satisfacción de los clientes del segmento de Bodas y Lunas de Miel en el Hotel Meliá Jardines del Rey. Se utilizaron métodos teóricos como el histórico-lógico, análisis-síntesis, la inducción-deducción, el método de investigación sistémico y el análisis documental y métodos empíricos como la entrevista, la observación, la encuesta y la medición. Se diseñó un procedimiento de innovación de producto que, utilizando las funciones y herramientas de este, genera nuevos o mejorados productos para la satisfacción de los clientes del segmento de Bodas y Lunas de Miel en el Hotel Meliá Jardines del Rey. El procedimiento propuesto se presenta en tres fases, donde la función vigilar resultó la de mayor impacto en la generación de nuevos y mejorados productos para satisfacción de los clientes. El análisis teórico del proceso de coordinación de Bodas y Lunas de Miel y la innovación de productos turísticos permitieron asumir referentes relacionados con los componentes de la actividad innovadora y revelar, desde las funciones y herramientas de la innovación de productos, el funcionamiento relacional de estos para la satisfacción de los clientes con los nuevos y mejorados productos turísticos.

Palabras clave: funciones y herramientas de la innovación de producto; proceso de coordinación de Bodas y Lunas de Miel; satisfacción.

RESUMO

A inovação de produtos é conceptualizada como a implementação de produtos ou processos novos, ou significativamente melhorados, que podem proporcionar ao sector do turismo um elevado grau de valor acrescentado que contribui para aumentar os níveis de exclusividade e diferenciação em relação à concorrência. O objectivo do trabalho é conceber um procedimento de inovação do produto utilizando funções e ferramentas do produto para a satisfação dos clientes no segmento de Casamentos e Lua-de-mel no Hotel Meliá Jardines del Rey. Métodos teóricos tais como histórico-lógico, análise-síntese, indução-dedução, método de investigação sistémica e análise documental; foram utilizados métodos empíricos tais como entrevista, observação, levantamento e medição. Foi concebido um procedimento de inovação de produto que, utilizando as funções e ferramentas do produto, gera produtos novos ou melhorados para a satisfação dos clientes do segmento de Casamentos e Lua-de-mel no Hotel Meliá Jardines del Rey. O procedimento proposto é apresentado em três fases em que a função de monitorização teve o maior impacto na geração de produtos novos e melhorados para a satisfação do cliente. A análise teórica do processo de coordenação de casamentos e luas-de-mel e a inovação dos produtos turísticos permitiu assumir referências relacionadas com os componentes da atividade inovadora e revelar, a partir das funções e ferramentas da inovação dos produtos, o funcionamento relacional destes para a satisfação dos clientes com os novos e melhorados produtos turísticos.

Palavras-chave: funções e instrumentos de inovação de produto; processo de coordenação de casamento e lua-de-mel; satisfação.

INTRODUCTION

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared the disease caused by the SARS-CoV2 virus a pandemic. One of the most affected sectors in this regard was tourism, negatively impacting economies, livelihoods, public services and development opportunities on all continents (Duarte Alonso et al., 2020).

According to the World Tourism Organization (2021), in the last quarter of 2020, international tourism decreased by 73 %, reducing by 85 % international tourist arrivals compared to 2019. While in January 2021, there was an 87 % reduction in the number of visitors compared to the same month

of the previous year and at the beginning of February, 32 % of tourist destinations had a total closure of their borders.

The challenge facing tourism companies today involves the adoption of measures that require the adaptation of their resources, processes, and even their values. In this sense, innovative practices can help to face the current challenges of the industry, such as regaining consumer confidence, solving liquidity problems, optimizing the human and technological resources at their disposal, making the most of relational capital and making processes more efficient (De la Cruz May & May Guillermo, 2021). Once these are established in organizations, they materialize in specific and identifiable processes such as product or service development, decision making or strategic alliances (De la Cruz May & May Guillermo, 2021).

Innovation is a topic that has been widely analyzed in the literature as it has a positive effect on increasing profitability, performance, positioning and the development of competitive advantages (Duarte Alonso et al., 2020). Therefore, companies that demonstrate proactive and innovative postures may be able to recreate market opportunities. Innovation, therefore, is a path not only to economic growth but also to recovery (Duarte Alonso et al., 2020).

On the other hand, weddings and honeymoons (BLM in Spanish) have been considered as one of the potential segments for the growth and development of tourism at the international level for being a great source of revenue generation, its contribution to the economy and profitability (Aragonés Jericó & Wu, 2017). However, the same have undergone a major transformation with the arrival of the pandemic. According to statistics from the site www.bodas.net, in the year 2021, 70% of couples bet on changing the destination and choosing a closer one and only 27% made their trips to the proposed destination, deciding to shorten the date of stay. The main tourist destinations selected were in Europe (Spain, Greece and Italy), as well as the Caribbean and Asia (Maldives, Thailand and Indonesia).

Related to the above, Meliá Hotels International (MHI in Spanish) stands out as one of the international hotel companies that reaffirms the importance of the BLM segment. This hotel chain has once again been recognized for the seventh consecutive year as the best hotel company in the

world in the luxury vacation segment¹. It also has 380 hotels in more than 40 countries (www.traveltradecaribbean.es). Of these, its 33 hotels in Cuba are specialized in this segment.

In Cuba, BLM client arrivals to MHI facilities reached a figure of 1 842 in 2020, which meant a considerable decrease of 82.46 % with respect to 2019². This situation caused primarily by the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic does not detract from the importance and continues diversification demanded by this product as the flagship offering of MHI hotels. On the contrary, it calls for greater differentiation and innovation in the offer.

In this sense, innovation in Cuban tourism constitutes a determining factor for the successful improvement of this sector, influenced by the competitive advantages that facilities possess when they implement them in each of their areas and when their objectives are directed to creativity and innovation in products and services. In correspondence with the above, several researches are recorded that highlight the importance, (of the) innovation in tourism as a line of research in Cuba (Carballo Cruz et al., 2019, 2021; Jiménez Valero et al., 2012; Pérez Almaguer et al., 2021).

In this sense, MHI Cuba Division has been a paradigm in the implementation of new and improved products for customer satisfaction, preserving innovation as one of its most important values. This company currently has four hotels in the Jardines del Rey tourist destination, the fourth most important destination on the Island. These facilities, specialized in the BLM segment, operate under the Sol, Tryp and Meliá brands. However, in recent years, there have been recurring complaints and claims about the lack of variety of offers and services in BLM products, evidencing the need for renovation and improvement of competitiveness. Likewise, since 2010, customer satisfaction rates with wedding products oscillated by 11 %, while Honeymoon products decreased by 18.6 %, in subsequent years the increase in these figures was discreet and in 2020, in addition to the influence of the Covid 19 pandemic, only 278 customers were received in this segment, which meant a considerable decrease of approximately 81 % with respect to 2019, in addition to complaints about the lack of variety of the offer².

One of the facilities with the highest incidence in this regard is the Meliá Jardines del Rey, a hotel that since its opening, paradoxically, showed the best BLM indicators and displaced very well

¹ Retrieved from the Leisure Lifestyle Awards 2021 edition document review.

² Retrieved from Meliá International Cuba (2019) Documentary Review. Balance of Weddings and Honeymoons. Meliá Cuba Division.

positioned facilities such as the Hotel Meliá Cayo Coco. The above has motivated the selection of this facility to carry out this research. In addition, the hotel is known as the flagship facility of the northern cay for bearing its name, and its modern style offers greater lodging and leisure facilities for BLM clients, as well as a romantic setting, ideal for wedding ceremonies and honeymoon stays.

Based on the above, the objective of this research is to design a product innovation procedure that, using the product's functions and tools, generates new or improved products for the satisfaction of customers in the BLM segment at the Hotel Meliá Jardines del Rey.

The paper is structured as follows: initially, a section on materials and methods is presented, followed by a reference to the main concepts and related works, where emphasis is placed on the functions and tools of product innovation in hotel facilities. This is followed by a contextualization of the functions and tools of product innovation in the wedding and honeymoon scenario. Taking this as a reference, the design of the tourism product innovation procedure for the wedding and honeymoon coordination process is presented, as well as the results of its application in the Hotel Meliá Jardines del Rey, in the tourist destination of Cayo Coco. Finally, conclusions and possible future works to be developed are presented.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research is based on the dialectical-materialistic approach, a general method of the sciences that describes the logic of theoretical, empirical and statistical inquiries, supported by different methods, techniques and instruments that make it possible to approach the object of research, as described below:

Theoretical methods such as historical-logical, analysis-synthesis, induction-deduction, systemic research method and documentary analysis are used to analyze the evolution and fundamentals of tourism product innovation and the functions associated with it. Likewise, for the design and implementation of the proposed procedure, in addition to the above methods, empirical methods such as scientific observation, survey and measurement are used. Group work techniques are also employed, using parallel learning structures and the Quality Function Deployment for Product Innovation (QFDPI) matrix by Carballo Cruz (2017).

In the research, it is worked with 100% of the workers in the BLM coordination process and with a sample of 482 BLM clients (101 Weddings clients and 381 Honey moon clients). The type of sampling

used is probabilistic. In this case, knowing the size of the population (2120 BLM clients), the sample was determined using the formula for finite populations, considering a margin of error of 5% and a confidence level of 95%. For this purpose, the sample.exe software that responds to this formula was used.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + \frac{e^2(N-1)}{z^2 pq}}$$

Donde:

n = Sample size

N = Population

z = Value corresponding to the confidence interval

e = Sampling error

pq = Variance of the population (since this is unknown, the highest possible variance is used, which makes it possible to obtain a larger sample)

Main concepts and related work

Innovation has been studied over the years through a multitude of concepts and from different points of view, it is associated with positive changes in various branches such as technology, economics, business, sociology, arts or multiple branches of engineering (Carballo Cruz, 2017).

Schumpeter (1934), in addition to introducing several classifications of innovation, including product innovation, is considered the precursor of the subject and also emphasizes the concept of change involved, as well as the social impact it entails. In this sense, innovation is defined as a series of stages, starting with the generation of ideas, through which a product satisfies a need in the market (Schumpeter, 1934). In addition, Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) emphasize the continuous learning process, while Carballo Cruz et al. (2016) refer to the introduction of a new or improved product, with an economic and socially useful connotation of the knowledge or technology associated with its use and consumption.

Product innovation is considered to be one of the strategies of companies aimed at gaining competitiveness in the market, either through savings in production and distribution costs or through

commercial successes, such as increased sales, customer loyalty, increased market share, etc. Thus, the product understood as a physical good or as a service represents the company's image in the market and therefore becomes a key element of its competitiveness (Custódio Santos et al., 2020).

Product innovation and its most frequent materialization through incremental innovations have been discussed in the literature (Custódio Santos et al., 2020), where the predominantly linear behavior of their proposals has been evidenced. In addition, the identification of essential components in the generation of a new or improved product, such as the identification of destinations based on product innovation, the tourist experience generated and the establishment of different design processes based on this experience (Custódio Santos et al., 2020).

In the hotel context, it is also relevant to incorporate other concepts to respond to trends in the development and monitoring of new products. These include: technology, technological innovation and innovation management.

Technology, for its part, is the application of scientific knowledge to obtain a practical result, being a process that enables a company to know what it knows and how it applies it (Khalil, 2009).

Technological innovation, in the business context, refers to the introduction of improvements and changes to products and/or services, taking into consideration the optimization of resources (Hernández et al., 2017). In this sense, the importance of technological innovation for the tourism and hotel sector in particular is expressed in the improvement of work quality and efficiency, as well as in the diversification and sustainability of the offer.

On the other hand, Nieves and Segarra (2015) express that innovation management is a term of more recent use in business and the hotel sector. For Suárez and Jiménez (2007), it is a managerial activity that defines the necessary technology and available resources to technically and economically ensure the achievement of the organization's corporate objectives, emphasizing innovation and fostering the creation of new goods and services or the improvement of existing ones.

Accordingly, and taking as a starting point the work of Morin (1985), there is a set of functions associated with innovation management that have been contextualized by other authors to the hotel sector (Alfonso Alfonso et al., 2021; Jiménez Valero et al., 2012). These functions are basically summarized as: inventorying, monitoring, evaluating, enriching, optimizing and protecting.

In the case of this research, the use of the aforementioned functions focuses on the improvement and efficiency of the BLM coordination process, as well as on the performance and adaptation of the management of the work team associated with this product. For its part, tourism product innovation focuses on meeting external demands for new and improved BLM products and services, as well as technical research aspects (process specifications and customer requirements) that are carried out through various innovation management functions, the implementation of associated tools, especially the QFDPI matrix, and the involvement of the actors involved in this process.

In this paper, based on Lundvall (2007) and Cotera and Soberanes (2019), it is assumed that innovation is a determining factor in the competitiveness of hotel facilities and, therefore, in customer satisfaction. This competitiveness, in the hotel under study, is determined by the ability to develop competitive advantages in the BLM coordination process. According to Cotera and Soberanes (2019) competitive advantages are considered sustainable when they are not easily attainable by competitors. Similarly, an organization has a competitive advantage when it presents a product or service that has the same functions as another of the same type, but contains one or more aspects that are different from the rest (attributes) and this makes the customer decide to buy this one and not another (Cotera Regalado & Soberanes Martín, 2019).

Contextualization of product innovation functions and tools for BLM customer satisfaction

The wedding and honeymoon coordination process has evolved over the years through various manifestations. However, there is no defined criterion as a concept of the segment's coordination process. In this sense, we take as a reference what is issued in the Procedures Management Manual of the hotel chain Meliá International Hotels (MIH) Cuba Division, which states that:

...is a process of Quality Management and Customer Service and is nothing more than the coordination of a wedding and/or honeymoon in which the key process areas are involved with the purpose of guaranteeing the satisfaction of the customers of this segment and the generation of income for this concept.

The stages of this process are the following: 1) Information of the reservation, 2) Contact prior to the arrival of the clients, 3) Reservation of the ceremony with notary, 4) Review of the pre-assignment of rooms and services, 5) Certification of the room and services, 6) Reception of the bride and groom, 7) Coordination meeting, 8) Execution of the Ceremony, 9) Follow-up during the

stay, 10) Feedback³, 11) Farewell to the client, 12) Sending of the Marriage Certificate, 13) Client loyalty.

When considering as the essential axis of this work the proposal of a procedure, using the functions and tools of product innovation for the BLM coordination process, the criteria of Alfonso, Franco and Suárez (2021) who adapt the functions and tools of innovation management to the hotel sector are assumed. The criteria of Carballo Cruz (2017) are also assumed as the methodological basis of the tourism product innovation procedure and the QFDPI matrix used in its implementation, and with which deployment five of the proposed functions are used throughout its nine steps:

Therefore, contextualizing the above criteria, the following product innovation functions are defined for the BLM coordination process:

- Inventory: refers to technologies that are expressed in customer requirements and process specifications in the development of BLM's coordination to develop new or improved products and services, as well as their implication for other products and services
- Monitor: to provide continuously evolving information on prerequisites, needs and preferences of BLM segment customers and competitors in terms of technology usage through the application of online *and on-site* tools to develop the BLM product and all associated products and/or services
- Evaluate: allows to evaluate the technologies that are expressed in the satisfaction of customer requirements and process specifications in the BLM coordination and that were inventoried and should be compared with those employed by the competition in order to identify the direction of improvement and mobilize the innovative potential of the BLM coordination team
- Optimize: allows to use resources in the best way to improve the quality of products and services of the BLM segment. It identifies and uses tools that influence the improvement of existing standards and that they contribute to improve the quality of products for the satisfaction of the segment's customers. It also allows exploiting the integral skills that the Hotel has for the benefit of this process
- Enrich: allows to plan and determine new projects, derived from the results of the evaluation and optimization process in the BLM coordination process and in function of the generation of

³ The application of feedback tools is understood, but the feedback is throughout the entire process.

new offers and/or products according to the internal and external requirements of the process. It consists of establishing actions to develop integral skills aimed at increasing competitiveness and establishing alliances with other facilities in the same environment (cluster)

- **Protect:** Allows legally safeguarding the knowledge, conceptions, creations or product innovations inherent to this process by means of copyright intellectual property titles, manuals, resolutions, regulations and instructions. In this case, in addition to adding the BLM product improvements to the chain's procedures manual, it is suggested to protect through the informal coordination and integration mechanism: business secret, since it is a product that can be easily copied and generalized to other hotel facilities or tourist destinations

Consequently, after the documentary review of the management manual, authors and international trends on the subject (Carballo Cruz et al., 2021), the tools to be used in each of the functions of BLM product innovation management are identified (Table 1).

Table 1 - Product innovation functions and tools for the BLM coordination process

BLM product innovation functions	Associated tools
Inventory	Computerized Reservation System SCR Outlook Express, Computerized Accommodation Management System Zun pms, Zun stock, Interhotel, @Mantener. Determination of technologies, customer requirements and process specifications with the QFDPI.
Monitor	Online tools: Reviewpro, Tripadvisor, Socialvane, Facebook, Monac, Twitter, Meliá Jardines del Rey website, Tophotels, Google, HolidaysCheck, hotel email melia.jardines.delrey@meliacuba.com <i>On-site</i> tools: corporate segment survey system, complaints and claims system (smnet.cu). Determination of competitive technical positioning index and competitive evaluation of the client with the QFDPI.
Evaluate	Coordinator's tools: BLM Planning, Coordination Meeting Minutes, STD Implementation Checklist, Technology Checklist, BLM Dossiers and BLM Catalog. Determination of the direction of improvement of process

	requirements and specifications of lesser technical importance and worse performance than the competition using the QFDPI.
Optimize	Gescal System (Quality Management System and <i>on-site</i> technologies), Quality Committee, Briefings with the coordinator, simple information meetings, process control systems using tables in the Microsoft Excel Computerized System. Determination of the direction of improvement and determination of correlations between process specifications (Spearman correlation coefficient) using the QFDPI.
Enrich	Loyalty program for repeat customers in the BLM segment, Certification Committee, training workshops, Determination of objective values and competitive advantages with the QFDPI.
Protect	Procedures Manual MHI Cuba Division, Marriage Certificate, resolutions, instructions, rules, patents and coordination mechanisms and informal integration of business secrets.

Source: Own elaboration

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this results and discussion section, the details of the proposed procedure are presented, as well as the analysis of the results of its application.

Design of the tourism product innovation procedure for the BLM coordination process

The proposed procedure is understood as a set of components and activities that, logically related, emerge, self-organize and co-evolve for tourism product innovation (Carballo Cruz, 2017) in the BLM coordination process.

For its application, the following conditions must be met: customer orientation for their satisfaction with the new and improved tourism products, commitment of the management and workers to innovation and continuous improvement, constant training of the workers involved and that the facility has been in operation for at least one year.

The procedure is structured in three phases, the product innovation functions and tools for them, as well as 11 activities and the main outputs of each phase (Fig. 1).

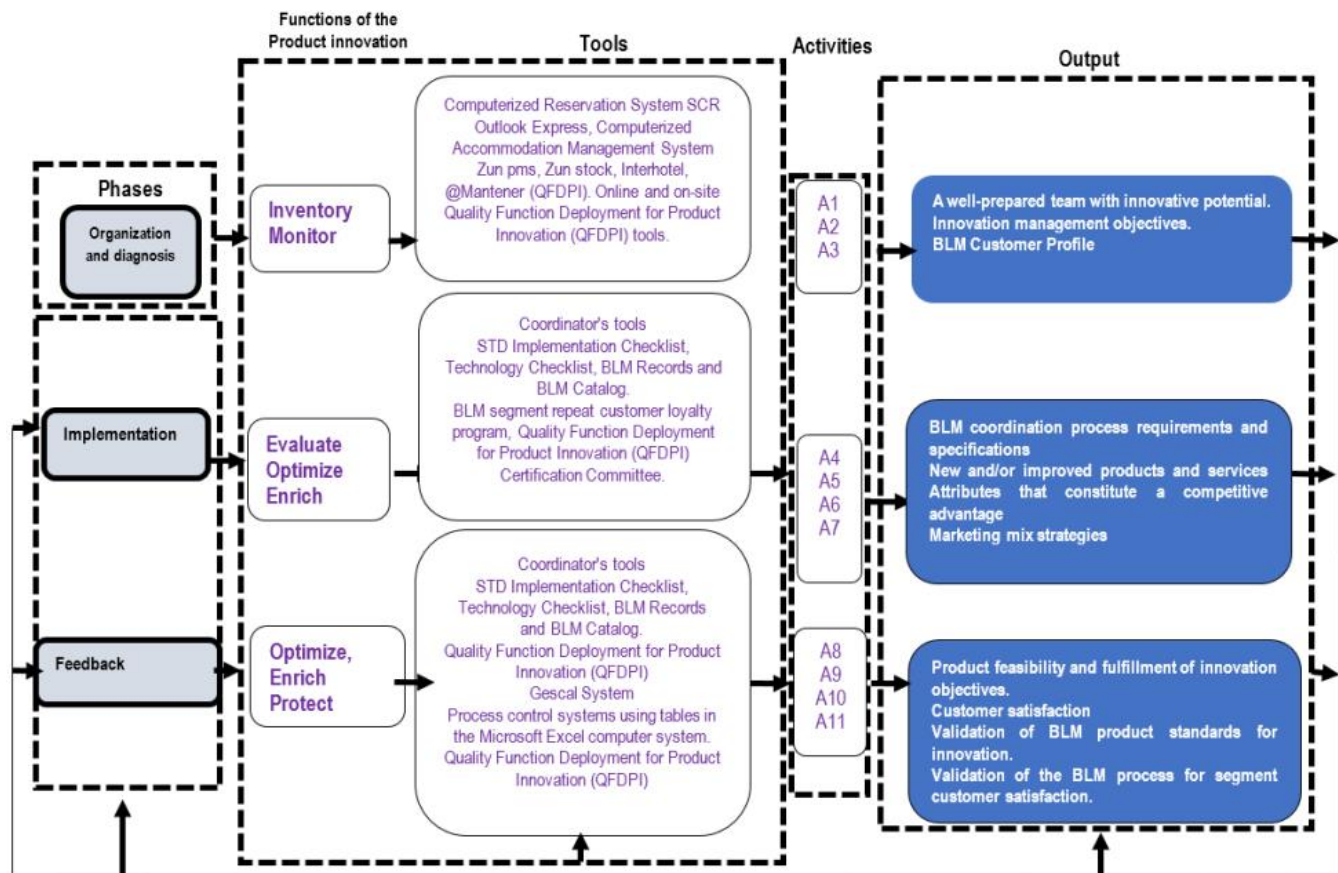


Fig. 1 - Summary of the tourism product innovation procedure for the BLM coordination process and segment satisfaction

Organizational phase

In the organizational phase comprising the activities (A1, A2, A3): selection and preparation of a work team (A1), definition of innovation objectives (A2) and determination of the BLM segment customer profile.

In this phase, it is essentially used the functions of Inventory, Monitor, Evaluate, Protect and the tools associated with them, online and *in-situ*, in order to cross-reference information, in addition to the wedding coordinator's own work tools.

In order to determine the client's profile, table 2 proposes four questions for its identification, taking into account the variables: time, space, motivations and activities of the field of analysis (TEMA in Spanish). The table is completed on the basis of the monitoring and evaluation of the work team, starting with the motivations, since these determine or modify, in most cases, the other variables.

Table 2 - Elements for determining the contextualized BLM profile

SEGMENT	TIME	SPACE	MOTIVATIONS	ACTIVITIES
Persons or groups of persons, age range	When	Where	Why or what for	How to
	Tourist season and length of stay	Tourism space or process	Reason for action	Activities
Segment 1				
Segment 2...n				

Source: Own elaboration

From the contextualized profile, customer characteristics are obtained that influence the subsequent generation of ideas, identification of requirements and specifications of the new or improved product for the BLM coordination process.

Implementation phase

The implementation phase comprises activities A4 through A7 (Fig. 1). They comprise: the generation and sifting of ideas for new or improved BLM products (A4), determination of product requirements and specifications (A5), as well as determination of attributes that constitute competitive advantages (A6) and finally, deployment of marketing mix strategies (A7).

In this phase, the Evaluate, Optimize and Enrich functions and the corresponding tools are used, in addition to the Idea Relative Importance Index (IIRi) and the QFDPI matrix, as well as the Zabortinsky Matrix (Carballo Cruz, 2017) for risk analysis.

For the generation and sifting of ideas (A4), the Idea Relative Importance Index (IIRi) of Carballo Cruz (2017) was used. As part of this, possible ideas to be developed are listed, reviewed and redundant ideas are eliminated or combined.

The work team rates the level of importance of each idea on a scale of 1 to 3, where 1 is the minimum importance and 3 the maximum. Once these values are issued, the Relative Importance Index of each idea i (RII_i) is calculated and those with an importance above or equal to the average are selected:

$$IIRi = \frac{(CAI_i \times 3) + (CIM_i \times 2) + (CBI_i)}{N \times 3}$$

Where CAI is the number of high importance ratings, CIM is the number of medium importance ratings, CBI is the number of low importance ratings and N is the number of experts or team members.

Based on the final sifting of the ideas (A4), the Zobotinsky Matrix (Carballo Cruz, 2017) is used to evaluate the risks associated with them. Those ideas which risks are moderate or low are selected, although it is possible to select ideas with high risks if actions are established to reduce or eliminate their impacts.

For the determination of customer requirements and specifications of new or improved BLM products (A5) and the determination of competitive advantages of new or improved BLM products (A6), the QFDPI matrix is proposed.

In this matrix, customer requirements (CR) and product specifications (PS) are related. The CR refer to the specific preferences of tourists and the PDs are the attributes or capabilities that the facilities possess to satisfy these preferences with the new or improved products. In this case, the Technical Importance of the PD that satisfy the CR is calculated:

$$IT_{EP} = \sum R_{EP,RC} \times P_{RC}$$

IT_{EP} is obtained from the weighted sum of the values of the relationships between the PE and the CR ($R_{EP,RC}$), using the importance or weight of each CR (P_{RC}) as a weighting factor.

The QFDPI matrix, as a new functionality, contains the Competitive Technical Positioning Index of the Product Specifications with respect to the direct competition:

$$IPTC_{EP} = \frac{(CM_{EP} \times 2) + (CI_{EP} \times 1) + (CP_{EP} \times 0)}{CC_{EP} \times 2}$$

Where: CM_{EP} : number of ratings of better than the facility under study, CI_{EP} ratings of equal, CP_{EP} : ratings of worse and CC_{EP} is the number of competitors. Direct competition is rated Better (2), Equal (1) or Worse (0) than the hotel facility under study. A value closer to 0 of the $IPTC_{EP}$ indicates a better competitive positioning of PEs for the hotel facility or complementary offer in question.

Spearman's correlation coefficient is also calculated to determine the relationships between the specifications. This relationship is analyzed in terms of strong and weak correlations in terms of satisfying the CR. PEs with positive relationships favor tourism product innovation and may constitute competitive advantages. Those with negative relationships generally hinder it and are a direction for improvement or should be replaced.

In A7 to determine the competitive advantages of new and improved products, the team should consider:

- a. The most technically important product specifications
- b. Product specifications with positive correlations for product innovation.
- c. Customer requirements and tourism product specifications contained in the above requirements and, in turn, have superior performance to direct competition.

In A8 (determination of *marketing* mix actions for new and improved tourism products), the traditional *marketing* mix variables are considered.

Feedback phase

The feedback phase contains four activities (A8, A9, A10, A11). These include: determination of economic feasibility and customer satisfaction with new and improved BLM products (A8), validation of BLM product standards for innovation (A9), validation of the BLM coordination process (A10), and BLM segment customer loyalty (A11).

In this phase, the main functions used are Optimize, Enrich and Protect. For their implementation, tools described in the MHI Cuba Division Procedures Manual are used, such as the segment's repeat customer loyalty program, the Quality Committee, the Certification Committee and training

workshops. In addition, a documentary review is made of the minutes of meetings such as *briefings* with the coordinator, management councils, councils, process control systems through tables in the computer system of the facility, as well as examples of marriage certificates, resolutions, instructions, standards and patents related to the BLM process.

In A8, product revenues and costs are analyzed, as well as compliance with innovation objectives and the performance of customer satisfaction with BLM's new and improved products. In A9, the results of standard certifications are used through an Excel checklist created by the chain's quality corporate and through BLM's planning. In A10, the phases of the BLM coordination process are legally implemented through the use of the MHI Cuba Division, 2015 Procedures Manual and the process flowchart.

Finally, in A11, the actions contained in the customer loyalty program are implemented through the Hotel's online tools, such as Reviewpro, Tripadvisor, Socialvane, Facebook, Monac, Twitter, the Meliá Jardines del Rey website and e-mail melia.jardines.delrey@meliacuba.com and through *on-site* tools such as the segment's corporate survey system, the complaints and claims system and the Customer Assistance Hotline.

Main results of the product innovation procedure for BLM's coordination process at the Hotel Meliá Jardines del Rey

In the facility under study, a work team was formed, led by the BLM coordinator and made up of employees of the strategic and key processes involved in the provision of services for the product in question. The objective of the work or product innovation was to diversify the BLM product in order to increase the income and satisfaction of BLM customers at the Hotel Meliá Jardines del Rey.

Taking into account the above, under the brand image of "Adore Cuba" are introduced:

- Two new wedding and honeymoon products: Symbolic Wedding for the domestic and international market and Memorable Wedding as an economical package for the Meliá division
- Two improved products: Free Wedding with guest requirements and days of stay and Vow Renewal product

In addition, extra products that are not included in this action because they are improvements to the wedding and honeymoon products are introduced, which are the following: (1) Photography and

video service, (2) Florist service, (3) Musical group service, (4) Beauty-SPA service, (5) Private cocktail service, (6) Attentions (personalized drinks), (7) Romantic dinners, (8) Romantic breakfasts, (9) "Cuban Passion" set (includes Havana Club bottle and Cuban handmade chocolates), (10) "DELUXE" Cake, (11) Wedding Pass from 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. (for guests), (11) Wedding Pass from 2:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. (for guests), (12) "Cuban Pass" set (includes Havana Club bottle and Cuban handmade chocolates), (13) "DELUXE" cake, (14:00 hours to 22:00 hours (for guests staying at the Hotel), (12) Wedding Pass from 14:00 hours to 22:00 hours (for guests not staying at the Hotel).

The competitive advantages offered by these new or improved products are associated with BLM product attributes (RC and EP) with superior performance to direct competition (Table 3).

Table 3 - Attributes that constitute competitive advantages in BLM's new and improved products for outperforming direct competition and strong positive correlations for tourism product innovation

EP and CR superior to direct competition
1. Honeymoon bonus values
2. Personalized wedding and honeymoon coordinator service
3. Preparation of personnel
4. Specialized A & B services
5. Thematization of decoration
6. Previous contact wedding coordinator
7. Wedding breakfast and romantic dinner theming
8. Diversified private cocktail services
9. Group wedding dinner
10. Romantic discovery

Source: Own elaboration

At the Meliá Jardines del Rey Hotel, the analysis of the new and improved products shows an increase in profits in years 1, 2 and 3 (Fig. 2 and 3). In year 1, profits are lower since the products being marketed were the previous ones. In year 2, there was a recovery in profits due to the implementation of the new products, in addition to the extra offers. In year 3, there was a new

growth, even when the company was closed due to the passage of Hurricane Irma, revenues continued to rise, given the consolidation of the already improved products and above all due to the determination of the highly competitive work team.

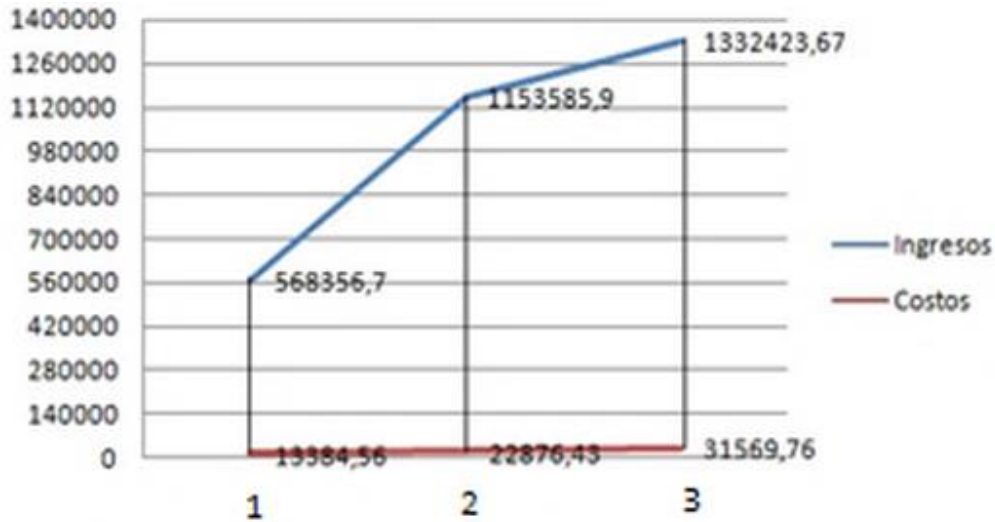


Fig. 2 - Profitability analysis of new products. Total revenues and costs in thousands of pesos

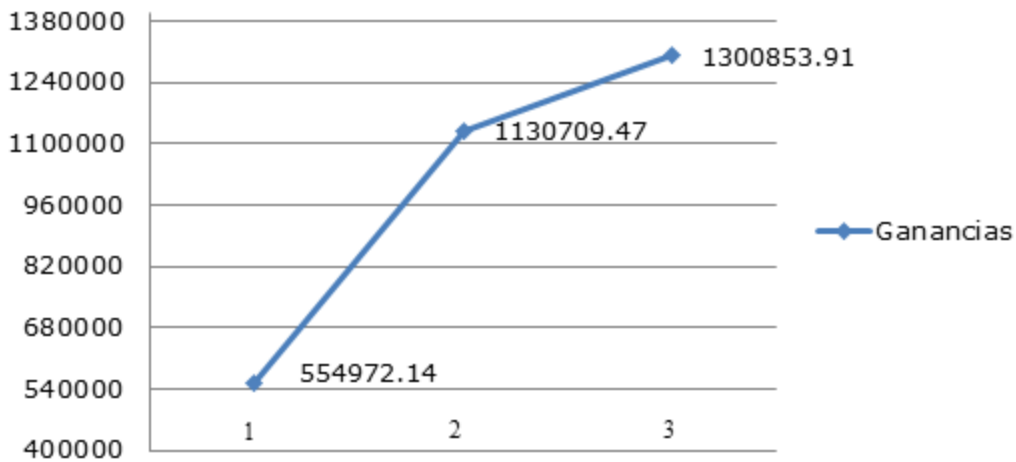


Fig. 3 - Earnings in thousands of pesos (BLM Report, Year 1 - 2)

According to the results of the corporate surveys, it was confirmed that 98% of the segment's customers are satisfied with the quality-price ratio of the new or improved BLM products, which represents a 19% increase in satisfaction compared to year 1 (Fig. 4). Cross-checking these results

with those provided by the online tool Reviewpro, at the end of year 3 the satisfaction rate was 90.06 %, showing an increase of 16.56 % satisfaction compared to year 1 (Fig. 4).

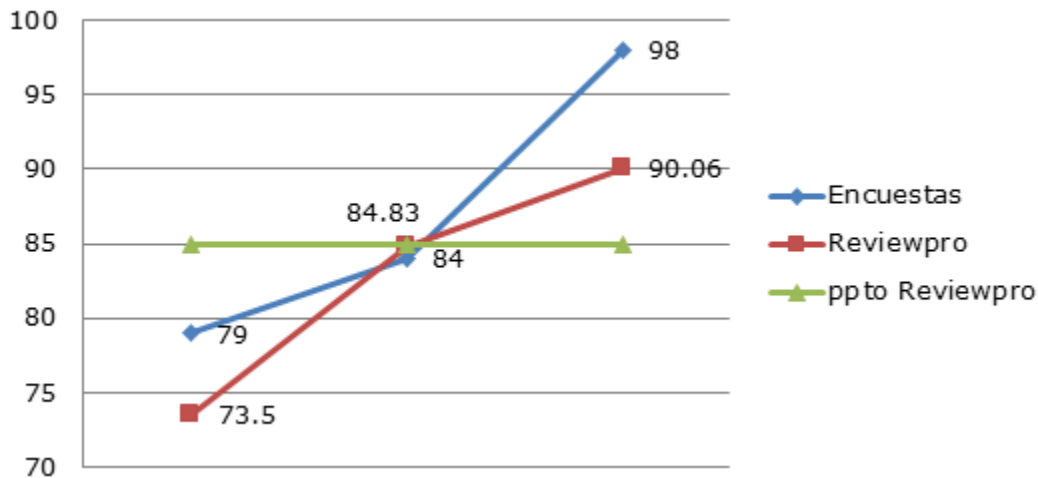


Fig. 4 - Results of BLM segment customers' satisfaction with the quality-price ratio of the new and improved products

The theoretical analysis of the coordination process of Weddings and Honeymoons and the innovation of tourism products allowed to assume the references related to the components of the innovative activity and to reveal, from the functions and tools of the innovation of products, the relational functioning of the same for the satisfaction of the clients with the new and improved tourism products. The proposed tourism product innovation procedure, considering the functions and tools of innovation, articulates three phases, where the monitoring function has the greatest impact on the generation of new and improved products for the satisfaction of BLM customers. Likewise, the proposal allowed the development of two new and two improved BLM products at the Hotel Meliá Jardines del Rey, as well as 12 extra services associated with the same, which contributed to the satisfaction of 94.45% of the clients at the end of year 3, demonstrating the practical validity of the proposal.

With the procedure, through the generation of the new and improved products, income of 1,332,423.67 pesos was obtained with the minimum possible cost of 31,569.76 pesos and profits amounted to 1,300,853.91 pesos at the end of the last year. With the implementation of the proposal in the BLM coordination process of the Hotel Meliá Jardines del Rey, 98% of customers are satisfied with the quality-price ratio of the new or improved products.

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Conflict of interest:

Authors declare not to have any conflict of interest.

Authors' contribution:

Asiel González Crespo: Literature review. Development of the proposed model. Development of the case study. Article writing.

Edianny Carballo Cruz: Development of the proposed model. Interpretation of the results of the case study. Article writing.

Elme Carballo Ramos: Development of the proposed model. Analysis of the results.

All the authors reviewed the writing of the manuscript and approve the version finally submitted.



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