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*The Grande Bretagne Hotel
A strategy plan to address challenges up
to 2021*



INTERNATIONAL
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The Grande Bretagne Hotel, a strategy plan to address challenges up to 2021

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**SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS, BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION &
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I hereby declare that the work submitted is mine and that where I have made use of another's work, I have attributed the source(s) according to the Regulations set in the Student's Handbook.



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Abstract

This dissertation was written as part of the MSc in Hospitality and Tourism Management at the International Hellenic University.

The theme of the dissertation is about the Grande Bretagne Hotel of Athens in Greece, the challenges that may occur until 2021 and suggestions how they can be addressed.



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Introduction

After seven years of severe crisis, Greece finds itself at a turning point regarding economic growth, political stability and social prosperity. OECD in its economic forecast summary concludes that the economy was stabilized in 2016 and the GDP is projected to grow by 1.1% in 2017 and 2.5% in 2018. In the same review investment is also recovering but tax increase, especially in energy, may be a hindering factor for upcoming growth, though core inflation will be practically the same (OECD, 2017).

Tourism is an industry that is thought to be the “next big thing” in Greek economy, the leading sector that will help the country get back to “normality”. INSETE, 2017 in its research justifies the aforementioned statement as from 2010 to 2016 tourism revenue grew by 38% while 90% of it was attributed to incoming foreign consumers. Moreover, HCG (Hotel Chamber of Greece) reports that the hotel market slightly grew during 2015-2016 period although this is part of a trend beginning in 2000. Since then, hotels increased by 22.6% and in terms of rooms by 31,7%. It is quite remarkable that 5-star hotels almost quadrupled, increasing their share from 1% in 2000 to 4,6% in 2016. A study for SETE in 2016 regards “high-end sun & beach” tourism the key in economic growth with revenue up to 30% of total industry revenue by 2021 while the new entrant, namely “city break” tourism (Athens and Thessaloniki) with 6% of total revenue at the same period can be sustainable and a counterbalance to the seasonality that Greek tourism industry suffers so much.

Nevertheless there is no particular study that combines these two key sectors in Greek hospitality economy. To make it clear, there is a gap in literature regarding luxurious hotels that can combine “high end” and “city break” elements. City tourism – City Break according to the international term – is an emerging trend, mainly amongst experienced travellers. It is directed at those people who do not simply wish for a “superficial” stereotyped relationship with popular urban destinations, but who seek deeper knowledge of culture, the actual lifestyle, pace and true character of a city (Visit Greece, 2017). As Athens accepts the highest amount of travelers and can combine different categories from Sun and Beach to Culture and Yachting we will select this city over Thessaloniki for our study (SETE 2017² and SETE, 2016).

In addition, Grande Bretagne Hotel is the most iconic hotel in Athens and meets demands of a 5 star residence. Operating since 1872 and being the only luxury hotel in Athens until 1938 when the neighboring King George opened its gates, Grande Bretagne is the place where all celebrities and VIPs choose for their stay in Athens. Having guested people like Winston Churchill, Aristotle Onassis, Maria Callas, Elizabeth

Taylor, Herbert von Karajan, the Kennedys, the Rockefellers, Sir Lawrence Olivier, Rudolf Nureyev, Helmut Schmidt, Valery Giscard d'Estaing, Sean Connery, Sophia Loren, Bruce Springsteen, David Bowie etc. the hotel is a landmark of hospitality in the heart of Athens.

Hence, the scope of this study is to identify the key issues that will help the Board of Directors of Grande Bretagne Hotel to formulate the most appropriate strategy in order to come up with the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for the years to come. In terms of academic precision the main research question can be formulated as follows: "What strategy should Grande Bretagne Hotel follow to meet demands up to 2021?"

The methodology to be followed regards the acquisition of both primary and secondary data so as to achieve triangulation, namely the combination of different methods and information in order to overcome intrinsic problems that may rise due to single method analyses. Taking into account the aforementioned scheme primary data were collected from some interviews with experts in the field and the resolution of key factors in the hospitality industry, especially hotels, like location and staff.

Secondary data consist of a short review of the Grande Bretagne Hotel status in terms of goals and objectives of the organization (vision and mission statements) and economic caliber and financial position. Moreover, there is a combined data analysis consisting of two parts: a) the internal analysis where the competitive advantage, the business level strategy and the Internal Factor Evaluation (IFE) Matrix are specified in order to gain a view of the organization's internal position and b) the external analysis where various tools are used to identify the external position of the hotel like Porter's Five Forces framework, PESTEL analysis, Boston Consulting Group Matrix, External Factor Evaluation (EFE) Matrix, Competitive Profile, Grand Strategy and Quantitative Strategic Planning matrices are presented.

The main findings indicate that the most appropriate type of strategy should focus on the development of a new product or service by Grande Bretagne Hotel in order to further differentiate itself among its competitors and contribute to a sustainable competitive advantage based on modern trends and future demands of the market.

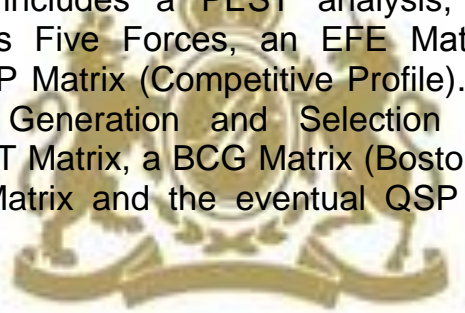
As such and although based on a particular case, the current study aims at providing appropriate implications to academics and practitioners alike, towards the formulation and implementation of the most appropriate strategies, in order to increase their performance,

quality and enhance competitiveness in such a critical sector for the Greek economy, pertaining to the tourism industry.

Literature review

There are many books and articles adopting the same methodology for formulating a strategy more or less. David and David, 2015, suggest that the development of a strategic plan has four main parts; current status of the business (vision, mission, strategy), the internal audit, the external audit and the strategy formulation and implementation.

Specifically, Vision and Mission analysis include information of the organization already established that will help us in our forthcoming analysis. The internal audit consists of the business level strategy of the hotel, an IFE Matrix (Internal Factor Evaluation) and of course we identify the competitive advantage of the studied business. Moreover, the external audit includes a PEST analysis, the famous Porter Diamond or Porter's Five Forces, an EFE Matrix (External Factor Evaluation) and a CP Matrix (Competitive Profile). Finally, we proceed with the Strategy Generation and Selection chapter where we demonstrate a SWOT Matrix, a BCG Matrix (Boston Consulting Group), a Grand Strategy Matrix and the eventual QSP Matrix (Quantitative Strategic Planning).



2.1. Luxury hotel industry in Athens

Many global leaders in the tourism industry arrive in Athens and start operating hotels under their brands creating a trend for the city as a new hot destination. Wyndham Hotels, Four Seasons for the first time in Greece, Marriott International and Ritz Carlton are some of the most famous new entrants in Greek capital resulting in an investment orgasm for the luxury hotel industry (Kathimerini.gr, 2017 and Mononews.gr, 2017). A late research from the National Bank of Greece (NBG, 2017) reports the need and will to upgrade facilities to 4* and 5* status all over the country in order to leverage more and more from the rising numbers of travellers. Consequently, the entrance of new competitors should not be underestimated by Grande Bretagne management as international firms are much more efficient than the Greek ones the organization faced until now; the development of a suitable strategy that will keep the hotel in a dominant position is unquestionable.

2.2. Current status of the hotel

Grande Bretagne is part of the Lampsa Hellenic Hotels SA which includes King George in Athens, Sheraton in Rhodes, Hyatt Regency and Excelsior in Belgrade regarding its hotel businesses. Until 2006 Grande Bretagne was the only business operated by the firm but since then the rest of the hotels were added to its portfolio.

Hotel Grande Bretagne located in Syntagma Square, the most popular region in the Greek capital claims an iconic image in the heart of Athens. Its exquisite position has built this image since the 19th century when it first opened its gates to the public. The hotel has 320 rooms 61 of which are suites and with the biggest royal suite in Athens at 400 m². Moreover, there is a personalized Butler Service and the residents can visit the multi-awarded GB Spa or find out the high quality of the GB Roof Garden Restaurant which is ideal for a romantic rooftop meal while the Winter Garden is renowned for its afternoon high tea and live entertainment. It hosts The Cellar where somebody can indulge in wine tasting, the GB Pool Bar and pay a visit to the renowned Alexander's Bar for cocktails and brandy. To this extent, Alexander's Cigar Lounge, offers a relaxed setting to enjoy fine wines, premium cigars, cognacs and liquors with friendly and discreet service. Finally, the hotel affords 1,100 square meters of exquisite function space for various circumstances and also a Concierge Exclusive that will assist guests in their stay in Athens.

In accordance with the company's six-month financial statement of 2017 room occupancy ratio of the luxury hotel industry in Athens increased by 12,3% compared to the relative six-month period of 2016, adjusting the ratio to 69,9% versus 62,2% in 2016. The average room price at the hotels decreased by 1 % versus 2016, standing at € 149, 95 as compared to € 151,48 in 2016. Therefore, room occupancy ratio of the luxury hotel industry in Athens increased by 11,2% while the total room revenue decreased by 11,3%. "Grande Bretagne" hotel recorded a 21,1% sales increase versus the relative period in 2016 and also a significant increase in revenue as shown in the figure below:

Grand Bretagne Hotel		
	2017	2016
Revenue per available room	€ 191,67	€ 152,47
Hotel occupancy rate	66,63%	59,91%
Average hotel room price	€ 287,68	€ 254,48

2.3. Vision

The preservation of the values of warm, traditional hospitality that have been imprinted on the long-standing history of the company and their best possible utilization in the context of the rapid developments that characterize today's tourism market, define the vision of LAMPSA HELLENIC HOTELS S.A. The company pursues its vision with unremitting application, pairing the expertise acquired over the years with significant know-how and high professional standards.

Emphasis on the satisfaction of each visitor, implementation of an open and sincere communication policy, unsparing investment in improving building installations, constant upgrade in the services provided, along with commitment to continuous personnel training are the company's guiding principles in its effort to achieve the desired business profit, contribute to the country's tourist growth and perform as required within the framework of social responsibility.

2.4. Mission

The company's main objectives are in keeping with the principles of this policy and aim at:

- Strengthening its position in the hospitality sector and increasing its market.
- Consolidating the position of the "Grande Bretagne" Hotel as the top luxury hotel in Greece and establishing it as one of the greatest luxury hotels worldwide.
- Consolidating the position of the "Sheraton Rhodes Resort", the first Sheraton hotel to open in Greece.
- Broadening the company's business presence in the international tourism sector, beginning with the acquisition of the majority equity holding of the "Hyatt Regency" Hotel and the "Excelsior Hotel" in Belgrade.
- Seeking out new investment opportunities such as penetrating the new markets in the Balkans, acquiring or creating new City Hotels and exploiting the realm of Real Estate.
- Cooperating with relevant Greek institutions in order to support the national strategy for international promotion.
- Offering consistently high returns to shareholders, employees, as well as visitors to the company hotels.

2.5. Strategy

In ancient Greek, the word *strathgia* («στρατηγία») meant the art of generalship, of devising and carrying out a military campaign. The English word derived from it, *strategy*, was transferred from its military origins to the business world in the years before the ubiquitous MBA, at a time when a military career was considered a good qualification for a manager (Economist, 2009)

Utilizing to best advantage its substantial expertise in the tourism sector, the in-depth knowledge of the hospitality market as well as the well-established name of the historical “Grande Bretagne” Hotel in the domestic and international market, the Management pursues a dynamic, methodical strategy in order to cope with the increasing demands of the ever-changing tourism sector.

The fundamental objectives of this corporate strategy include:

- Further strengthening the reputation of the “Grande Bretagne” Hotel and consolidating its position at the lead of the Luxury Hotels in Greece.
- Giving the “Grande Bretagne” Hotel prominence as the ideal springboard for incentives in the European and American market.
- Offering competitive services in the Luxury Hotel sector
- Extending the portfolio of services provided with innovative, quality hospitality programs.
- Strengthening ties with an extensive network of strategic partners (companies, airlines, travel agencies etc).
- Selecting, training and judiciously assessing the company’s human resources.

Methodology

The methodology followed for the purposes of the current research entailed a combination of primary and secondary data collection. Primary data regarded interviews with practitioners from the tourism industry with some indicative questions in order for us to obtain their insight as to the sector’s state, future expansion potential and their perception with regard to the importance of strategy formulation in hotels’ future competitiveness. Secondary data includes the collection and analysis of several publicly available company and hotel reports, sites, financial statements etc. in order to gain some further insight that

would be further analyzed through the use of the traditional strategic management tools to reach our conclusions.

Prior to the application of various tools and the conduction of the internal and external analysis of the organization there were some interviews taken from experts in the industry. The questionnaire that was used as a guide to the interview was in the form of Conventional Unstructured Interview (CUI), which is the most used personnel interview, refers to an informal conversation between the candidate and the interviewer, who formulates the questions according to the course of the conversation and without following any previous script (Dipboye, 1992; Goodale, 1982) and contained questions such as “What are the key traits of a successful hotel?”. The people interviews hold positions as Food & beverage assistant manager, Front Office manager (Concierge, Guest relations, Reception) and general manager. These interviews would next serve as a guide to reinforce the results that we would obtain from the use of several strategic management tools in order to reach conclusions as to the most appropriate type of strategy during the strategic formulation process.

The main attributes that came up regard information that is substantial and act as a benchmark for hotels are: a) Location (physical advantage of the facility), b) Amenities (Goods and services apart from accommodation) c) staff (managers to low-level personnel).

Position	<i>Q1: Key traits of success</i>	<i>Q2: Key traits of luxury hotel</i>	<i>Q3: Uniqueness</i>	<i>Q4: Weaknesses</i>	<i>Q5: Opportunities</i>
F&B assistant manager	Location, facilities, room division, pricing	Amenities, chefs, f&b quality	Famous chef or restaurant, ball rooms	Decrease in spending, dependent of price fluctuation of food	Economy increase, extended services like catering
Front Office manager	Location, personnel, product quality	service, customization, loyalty	Personal relationship with frequent customers	Recognizability, seasonality	Tourism increase,
General manager	Location, management, amenities, brand name	Meet standard expectations, staff commitment	Brand name related to uniqueness the hotel offers	Taxation, currency risks, politics like Brexit, seasonality	City break, new markets, social media

Data analysis

As mentioned in the previous section, the data analysis consists of analysis of the interviews and analysis using traditional strategic

management tools as presented below in order to combine the data required and reach conclusions in a more accurate way.

Internal analysis of the hotel

3.1. Business level strategy

Given the abovementioned information we shall try to classify Grand Bretagne strategy according to Michael Porter's Five Generic Strategies framework (David and David, 2015). According to Porter, businesses derive their competitive advantage from three unique bases: cost leadership, differentiation and focus, namely Generic Strategies. Cost leadership targets large markets and depends on low-cost production that target price-sensitive customers with the lowest price in the market (type 1) or best-value strategy that offers a product at the best quality/value ratio (type 2).

Differentiation (type 3) is the second base for Porter and emphasizes on products that unique in the market and target consumers who are willing to buy regardless of price.

Finally, Focus considers small groups of consumers as ideal and can be either a combination with Cost leadership (type 4) or a combination with Differentiation (type 5). In this case, Grand Bretagne falls into the Type 5 strategy as it is part of the Marriott International management since 2016, which David and David, 2015 identify as an archetype of the type. To this end we identify the competitive advantage of Grand Bretagne Hotel below:

3.2. IFE Matrix

Cheng (2013) outlines five major income streams apart from room sales:

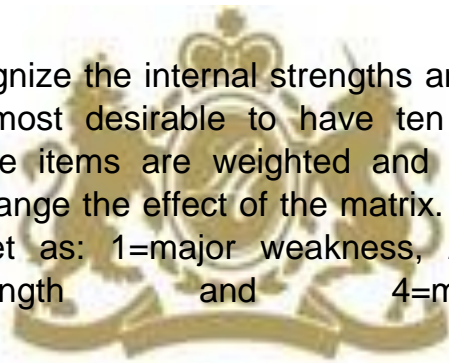
1. Food and Beverage (F&B) is one of the major sources of income. Restaurants, coffee shops, bars can be quite profitable as they do not lean only on residents of the facility but also customers from the city within.
2. Exhibitions and Conventions are popularly held at hotels as they provide long-term collaboration between the facility and the incoming customer.
3. Entertainment and charity such as cinemas, concert halls, charity galas can be another source of income should they be operated properly.

4. Commercial and Shopping Complex is indispensable especially when it comes to luxurious hotels where rents for shops inside the facility can amount significant revenue.
5. Car-parking Service can be another option although most of the time, parking lots is used to facilitate hotel residents rather than “outsiders”

Cheng, 2013 argues that the optimum size for metropolitan hotels is around 500 rooms. On the contrary, a study from PwC, 2016 suggests that hotels with 300-rooms perform marginally better in terms of operational profitability than hotels with 300+ beds, but show a very small difference in the return of invested funds. Furthermore, Cheng, 2013 states that belonging to a renowned hotel chain may give an advantage due to brand awareness and customer loyalty.

Below you can find attached an IFE matrix and its analysis related to the internal evaluation of the Grand Bretagne Hotel.

IFE is a tool to recognize the internal strengths and weaknesses of the organization. It is most desirable to have ten items per category. Nevertheless, as the items are weighted and summarize to 1 any deviations do not change the effect of the matrix. Ratings range from 1 to 4 which interpret as: 1=major weakness, 2= minor weakness, 3=minor strength and 4=major strength.



Internal Factor Evaluation (IFE) Matrix			
Key Internal Factors	Weight	Rating	Weighted score
Strengths			0
Location	0,3	4	1,2
History/Brand name	0,1	4	0,4
Management (Marriot)	0,03	3	0,09
Exhibitions and Conventions	0,03	4	0,12
Leader in Athens 5* hotels	0,08	4	0,32
Synergies with King George	0,05	3	0,15
Expansion of offices	0,02	3	0,06
Top chefs & pattiseurs	0,06	3	0,18
Increased Revenue	0,07	4	0,28
Weaknesses			
F&B sector decrease	0,07	2	0,14
Currency risks	0,01	1	0,01
Seasonality	0,1	2	0,2
Low recognizability social media	0,04	1	0,04
Entertainment and charity	0,02	1	0,02
Car-parking Service	0,02	1	0,02
Total	1		3,23

With the total score ranging from 1 to 4, namely from lowest to highest internal position, Grand Bretagne Hotel's position is quite impressive as a 3.23 score proves that it has a strong internal organization reflected so in the matrix.

According to the matrix, Grand Bretagne seems very strong in terms of location and brand name as it lies in the most popular place in Greece, Syntagma Square just right to the Parliament and shares great recognizability due to its historic route in the capital city of Athens. Its increased revenue and dominant position in the luxury market in Athens give it an edge over competitor capable of performing various projects as borrowing has become very difficult and expensive in Greece nowadays.

On the other hand, the organization's main challenges are seasonality and the decrease of the Food and Beverage sector. The first is a problem of Greek tourism industry generally and the scope of the study is to address such tasks; the latter is caused by an increase of F&B VAT due to the economic crisis, problem which should also be in the interests of this study.

3.3. Competitive advantage

Johnson et al., 2014 declare competitive advantage as the part of a strategy statement that describes how the organization will achieve the objectives it has set for itself in its chosen domain.

Porter, 1996 argues that operational effectiveness, although necessary to superior performance, is not sufficient, because its techniques are easy to imitate. In contrast, the essence of strategy is choosing a unique and valuable position rooted in systems of activities that are much more difficult to match. Porter thus traces the economic basis of competitive advantage down to the level of the specific activities a company performs.

With regard to the hotel industry, Cheng, 2013 argues that industry growth in major cities, capitals or financial centers is high at present partly due to the travelers from tourist groups, business and independent leisure travelers, resulting in low levels of jockeying. Furthermore, as there are no switching costs, fixed costs are high in the market therefore high room occupancy rates are very important in order to maintain a competitive position. Consequently competition would be very fierce in a situation of oversupply of hotel rooms. Nevertheless, the main concern for the industry is whether there is a potential threat in the wider neighboring area of the hotel that could be a significant option for customers to choose.

To this end, Grand Bretagne considers its competitive advantage to be its *expertise in the tourism sector, the in-depth knowledge of the hospitality market and the well-established brand name both in the domestic and international market.*

External analysis of the hotel

4.1. PESTEL analysis

PESTEL analysis or framework (Johnson et al., 2014 pp 34) is divided in six categories each for every environmental factor that affects our organization. It is an acronym for Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Ecological and Legal environment in which an organization exists and operates.

Political accounts for the role of the state and other political forces, *Economic* accounts for the macro-economic environment such as

inflation, exchange rates etc. while *Social* refers to cultural and demographic effects. *Technological* regards the impact that technological improvements have in the industry we are or wish to operate in accordance with the *Ecological* category where matters such as pollution, “green” production, recycling etc. are discussed. Finally, the *Legal* aspect is the last significant part of the tool that can cause major changes in our business’s plans, i.e. the prohibition of glyphosate pesticide from the EU deprived Monsanto of a profitable product globally successful.

For this study, it seems that Grand Bretagne has little exposure in the Political category as most of the hotel industry (Johnson et al., 2014 pp36). On the contrary, political instability in adjacent regions like Middle East, Turkey and Northern Africa seems to help tourism growth in Greece as the industry became more competitive throughout the economic crisis.

Economic stability of the company is unquestionable as the annual economic report declares and is in accordance with the projections of both the Ministry of Finance and OECD for economic growth in the years to come. Nevertheless, there is little impact of the general economy on the hotel industry, on the contrary tourism industry contributed over 7% of Greek GDP in 2016 (PWC, 2016).

Moreover, Social type may cause alterations in the domestic market due to refugee influx and population decrease that could deescalate the value of the services offered particularly in the downtown of Athens which is heavily threatened by.

Technology is a valuable tool for the years to come as social media rise in the marketing sector as a reliable source of customers (Grand Thornton, 2015). Grand Bretagne Hotel under the auspices and steady management of Marriott International is adapting quickly to these conditions. The agreement between Marriott International and TripAdvisor offers a great opportunity to catch up with the trend of the era about mobile and internet booking (Reuters.com, 2015).

The ecological footprint can give not only support to the corporate responsibility of the organization but also save resources for the operation sector. Acts of the Ministry of Energy and Environmental Planning like “Exoikonomisi kat’oikon” show a turn towards building improvement and a change in the legal framework may affect the operation of the business (kathimerini, 2015).

Regarding the Legal sector, the establishment of a Ministry of Tourism in 2012 has led to less bureaucracy, more efficient scheduling and concentration of services in a particular agency. No serious concerns emerge about the hotel industry up to date.

4.2. Porter's five forces

As of 1979 Michael E. Porter of Harvard University published its famous article "How competitive forces shape strategy" (Porter, 1979) that since generated the widespread strategic tool named after him. Porter did not consider price as the only factor that drove decision making but also acknowledged five other factors of the external environment that have a significant impact on an organization's operation and the industry overall.

The aforementioned forces are: threat of new entrants, threat of substitutes, bargaining power of suppliers, bargaining power of buyers and industry rivals.

The threat of entrants depends (Porter, 1979) on six major factors: economies of scale, product differentiation, capital of requirements, costs disadvantages independent of size, access to distribution channels, government policy.

Due to high capital costs, economies of scale are needed in order to minimize the effect of high fixed costs that are present in the hotel business industry. Capital requirements are high to enter the industry along with costs disadvantages that cannot be addressed by economies of scale such as location, management and staff quality. Distribution channels is a concern should the new entrant does not operate in the industry generally but the involvement of a so called "hotel chain" would overcome such hindrances due to high awareness and experience. Lastly, the exit barrier is high as the initial investment requires a vast amount to enter the market; hence the option to abandon the industry in case of failure could prove very costly for the possible investor.

As for the Grand Bretagne Hotel, the threat of new entrants is limited due to the lack of nearby opportunities. Although Athens is a trending spot for new investors, the luxury hotel market is saturated downtown making no real threats than the already existent competitors (PWC, 2016).

Suppliers (Porter, 1979) may be very powerful should they: possess valuable resources indispensable to the operation of the industry, are more concentrated than the industry they are selling to, are not obliged

to contend with other products, and are a threat of possible forward integration toward the business's market and finally the industry is not an important customer of the supplier group.

As for Cheng, 2013 the major supplier that can be vital is labor, particularly experienced and trained personnel that are in high demand in the industry regardless of the level of the hotel.

Buyers (Porter, 1979) are also a powerful group as customers are usually the main body of this force. Therefore they can squeeze down prices, demand better quality, ask for unique services etc. Power lies in seven reasons: Concentration or purchase in large volumes, the products it purchases from the industry are standard or undifferentiated; the products it purchases from the industry form a component of its product and represent a significant fraction of its cost; it earns low profits, which create great incentive to lower its purchasing costs; the industry's product is unimportant to the quality of the buyers' products or services; the industry's product does not save the buyer money; the buyers pose a credible threat of integrating backward to make the industry's product.

As buyers are not literally buying hotels rather than buy service of residence there is little threat of backward integration (Cheng, 2013). Even international hotel companies prefer to operate or manage rather than buy the facilities themselves. Therefore, the bargaining power of buyers is little generally but can be quite intriguing due to oversupply or if the hotel is targeting large tourist groups as in the case of tour operators. In our study the high end target group of Grand Bretagne poses little bargaining power should the facility retain its standards.

The threat of substitutes

The main threat here (Porter, 1979) is that similar products or services may reduce market share as consumers look for lower prices with more or less equal quality and experience. Even if the market is growing, the industry may not take advantage of this as there are alternatives.

Substitute products that deserve the most attention strategically are those that (a) are subject to trends improving their price-performance trade-off with the industry's product, or (b) are produced by industries earning high profits. Substitutes often come rapidly into play if some development increases competition in their industries and causes price reduction or performance improvement.

The main threat nowadays is shared-economy organizations like AirBnb that may get a large market share. This is not the case for luxury hotels as AirBnb customers choose this channel in order to save money rather than spend. As a result there are no real substitutes for deluxe hotels so far.

Industry rivals

The competitors in an industry may become fierce rivals as they battle for better positioning using all means of action like, better pricing (price war), advertisement, new products etc. Sometimes rivalry may become intense if: competitors are numerous or are roughly equal in size and power,; industry growth is slow; the product or service lacks differentiation or switching costs; fixed costs are high or the product is perishable; capacity is normally augmented in large increments and exit barriers are high (Porter, 1979).

Competition is rising in Athens as the city becomes more popular destination for high end market groups. To this extent the holding corporation of the hotel tries to exploit its dominant position in the luxury hotel market with the development of new facilities like King George Hotel and former King's Palace iconic building (moneytourism , 2017), as location is a key factor in the hotel industry.

4.3. EFE Matrix

The EFE Matrix evaluates the external opportunities and threats and capitalizes on the information obtained from the PESTEL analysis above. Similar to the IFE Matrix factors are allocated in both the Opportunities and Threats division. The ideal number is 10 items for each category although allocated weights as in IFE matrix result in an overall sum of 1. Ratings range from 1 to 4 to assess how the organization's current strategies respond to the factor (David and David, 2015). Therefore, responses are: 4= superior response, 3=above average response, 2= average response, 1=poor response.

Extrenal Factor Evaluation (EFE) Matrix			
Key Internal Factors	Weight	Rating	Weighted score
Oppurtunities			
City break	0,2	2	0,4
Extend services,hospitalities etc	0,08	3	0,24
Tourism rising in Greece	0,3	4	1,2
Synergies with 3rd hotel in square	0,08	3	0,24

Greek economy increasing	0,1	4	0,4
Threats			
New entrants	0,06	4	0,24
New "neighbourhoods"	0,07	3	0,21
Tax increase	0,08	3	0,24
Brexit	0,03	2	0,06
Total	1		3,23

As seen before, tourism industry is growing in Greece with “City break” being a new trend that was not considered before. While customers seek short escapes in the winter season, hotels could exploit such an opportunity to leverage and somewhat deal with seasonality issues that trouble the industry. So far Grand Bretagne does not seem to properly tackle the situation. However, as tourist numbers grow year by year and Greek economy reboots offering political stability and fiscal ease, Grand Bretagne Hotel could face new entrants in the area adequately but should not underestimate the creation of new “hotel neighborhoods” that will try to attract customers originally heading for Athens historical downtown.

Apart from traditional locations like Syntagma square or Lycabettus hill there are new areas that provide high standard facilities like Omonoia square or southern suburbs near Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center with the Syggrou Ave hotel area (Kathimerini, 2017, Capital, 2017 and Euro2day, 2017) .

Tax increase is still a major concern for all businesses in the country, especially the fluctuations in F&B VAT that affect organization’s finances as described in the annual and semi-annual reports of the company. Nevertheless, Grand Bretagne sustains an above average and dominant position in this hard but promising market as the 3.23 mark of the matrix suggests (Oliver Wyman, 2017).

4.4. CP Matrix

Following the same motive as previous matrixes, CPM delivers critical factors that are weighed and equal to 1. These factors are rated for the organization studied and the two key competitors in the industry. Ratings range from 1 to 4 showing the response its organization has with the lowest rating -1- dictating poor efficiency and the highest rating-4- ultimate efficiency.

The two immediate competitors for Grande Bretagne are the NJV Athens Plaza located next to King George and the newly built Electra Metropolis on the other side of Constitution square in Mitropoleos str. Based on their annual reports and relative information from the media we conclude to the matrix below:

Competitive Profile Matrix							
		Grande Bretagne		Athens Plaza		Electra Metropolis	
Critical Success Factors	Weight	Rating	Score	Rating	Score	Rating	Score
Location	0,35	4	1,4	4	1,4	3	1,05
Facilities	0,08	4	0,32	2	0,16	4	0,32
Social media	0,03	2	0,06	3	0,09	3	0,09
Brand name	0,08	4	0,32	3	0,24	2	0,16
Market share	0,08	4	0,32	1	0,08	1	0,08
Pricing	0,07	2	0,14	4	0,28	2	0,14
Capacity	0,05	4	0,2	1	0,05	3	0,15
Quality service	0,1	4	0,4	2	0,2	3	0,3
Extra income streams	0,09	3	0,27	1	0,09	3	0,27
Financial position	0,07	4	0,28	1	0,07	2	0,14
Total	1		3,71		2,66		2,7

Cheng, 2013 suggests that the two crucial factors that enable hotels to differentiate themselves are location and quality of service. Quality of service is addressed as efficient management along with experienced and trained staff. Additionally, other sources of income apart from room sales contribute to hotel revenue especially in metropolitan areas, like Food and Beverage or Exhibition and Conventions as mentioned before.

It is quite evident that “Location” is a major contributor to this matrix and the hotel’s position in the market overall. Grande Bretagne sustains the ultimate position in Athens on the crossroads in front of Greek parliament making it an iconic building in Greece. On the other hand, Athens Plaza is quite favorable in terms of location as it lies almost next to Grande Bretagne thus sharing the same rating while Electra Metropolis is the least favorable of the three as it does not have a direct view in the famous square and access is a little more complex than the other two.

Furthermore, quality service is exceptional in Grande Bretagne as it employs famous chefs and artisans like *pâtissier* Arnaud Lahrer and management is quite satisfying due to collaboration with Starwood

Hotels and Resorts Worldwide, LLC now part of Marriott International providing top expertise in the industry. At the same trail, Electra Metropolis is renowned as the new jewel of the successful “hotel chain” Electra resorts and hotels. On the contrary, Athens Plaza is not that successful as its financial position, its extra income streams and its market share reveal.

In addition, as noted before hotels generate profits not only from market sales but also from other sources like F&B section, conventions, banquets/catering etc. In this extent, Grande Bretagne and Electra Metropolis exploit as much as possible their extra facilities with roof gardens and shop-in-shop (for GB) while Athens Plaza does not provide a view to Acropolis or has a roof-garden, something critical when it comes to Athens downtown which has little exposure to free space, therefore NJV Athens Plaza is not that competitive with its indoor offerings compared to its major competitors.

Lastly, the impact of brand name and public awareness is very important as all three hotels do not include an international brand in their names so as to take an advantage of it. In this case Grande Bretagne Hotel remains the leader as the most iconic structure in Athens in terms of hospitality with its historical background.

To conclude, Grande Bretagne Hotel is not only the best among the surrounding competitors but can be an example of operation as its mark of 3.71 (nearly perfect) dictates.

5. Strategy Generation and Selection

5.1. SWOT Matrix

The SWOT matrix develops four different strategies based on the key internal and external factors that have to do with the business. The first strategy S-O (David and David, 2015) combines the Strengths an organization has in order to exploit the opportunities that lie in the industry or wider. It is the most desirable state of company for managers to be and they execute the other three types to reach at that level. The second strategy is W-O where an organization takes advantage of a trend in the industry even if it does not have the internal ability. Therefore, joint ventures and strategic partnerships are the most common outcome from this quadrant. Furthermore, S-T options are

used to avoid external threats with the help of the already established strengths the company has. Lastly, the W-T is the least desirable strategy as usually businesses in such need deal with survival matters rather than operate in developing concept. Below we deploy and analyze a SWOT matrix relevant to Grand Bretagne Hotel.



SWOT Matrix			
		INTERNAL	
		STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
		Location	F&B sector decrease
		History/Brand name	Seasonality
		Leader in Athens 5* hotels	Low recognizability social media
		Increased Revenue	
EXTERNAL	OPPORTUNITIES	S-O Strategies	W-O Strategies
	City break	Advertise in US	City break helps during winter
	Greek tourism growing	Divide focus with King George	Social media expert together with King George
	Synergies with 3rd hotel in square	Create new experience of luxury	
	Greek economy growth	Offers for loyal customers	Data interpretation dept
	THREATS	S-T Strategies	W-T Strategies
	New "neighbourhoods" New entrants	Improve convention facilities & offers	Bargain with suppliers for better prices
	Tax increase	Improve pricing	F&B offers to attract customers
	Brexit	Tours outside hotel	`

It is quite remarkable that Grande Bretagne although a dominant power in the market still has potential to expand its operations. The most intriguing strategies to follow would be to create a new experience as to what means luxury (S-O strategy), focus on local customers (W-O strategy) and organize tours and activities outside the hotel (S-T strategy).

The creation of a new experience is a demanding task but at the very high level of Grande Bretagne operations innovation is something to seek for. As the organization has increased revenue it could finance a new project either through its own finances or through borrowing based on its balanced annual reports. The rise of "City break" trend and the growth of Greek tourism industry offer a great opportunity to leverage on.

Similarly, the decrease of the Food and Beverage sector is a chance to focus on local residents that in most times are not considered as potential customers. This could help counter balance revenue losses and even create a new market with a new service or product.

What is most intriguing is the introduction of a tour related to the hotel but not conventional as a visit to the Acropolis or the Stavros Niarchos Cultural Foundation.

Other strategies like advertisement in the US, social media experts, data interpretation, improved pricing etc. are part of the general strategy of the holding management company, namely Marriott International that can provide sufficient know-how at economies of scale. Potential discounts for the F&B may help financial boost but could harm brand name and customers' perception over the hotel's quality.

Consequently, the three aforementioned strategies are selected as the most unique and custom-oriented for Grande Bretagne Hotel and the Greek industry.

To be more specific, the generation of a new luxury experience is very important especially for US travelers that the hotel wishes to reach at. According to the *L.E.K. 2017 Luxury Travel Study* (skift, 2017), a survey of more than 2,000 U.S. travelers, luxury for many consumers is less about the highest level of service and more about a particular type of experience.

It is evident that the standardized luxury hotel does not satisfy the targeted group anymore in spite of the existence of a concierge. Therefore, the development of a new product/service in this case is vital for Grand Bretagne Hotel.

To this extent come tours and activities not related to the hotel building. Possible entrants may offer unique experiences like a daily trip to Epidaurus Ancient Theatre, a day in the Glyfada Golf Club of Athens which can also be facilitated by the Concierge service. What could prove exciting is a visit to some local vineyard during the distilling period of the unique "ouzo" or a visit to a farm of sheep for manufacturing "Greek yogurt, feta cheese etc." The hotel could exploit Greek feasts and traditions to its benefit and create something memorable and distinct in the customer's heart.

What are neglected so much are the local customers meaning residents in the city that do not think of other aspects of the hotel rather than residence. Though Grande Bretagne offers a variety of F&B, exhibition, shop-in-shop options, public awareness and intention to visit the hotel is limited. Hence, the development of the local market is a potential strategy to be implemented.

5.2. Growth-Share or Boston Consulting Group Matrix

This matrix was firstly introduced in 1970 by the Boston Consulting Group Company (BCG, 2014) and especially its founder Bruce Henderson as a radical and helpful tool for customers of the company to

categorize their position and act proportionately. It includes four quadrants, where the horizontal axis regards the market share of the organization and the vertical one the industry growth rate. As seen in the figure, there *Cash cows* where the market share is high but the industry growth is slow, there are *Stars* where market share and industry growth is high making it the most desirable position and then come *Question marks* that are organizations with a small market share but in a growing industry, thus making them potential *Stars* and finally the *Dogs* quadrant which represents the position of low market share in a declining or slow growing industry making it very difficult for the organization even to survive.

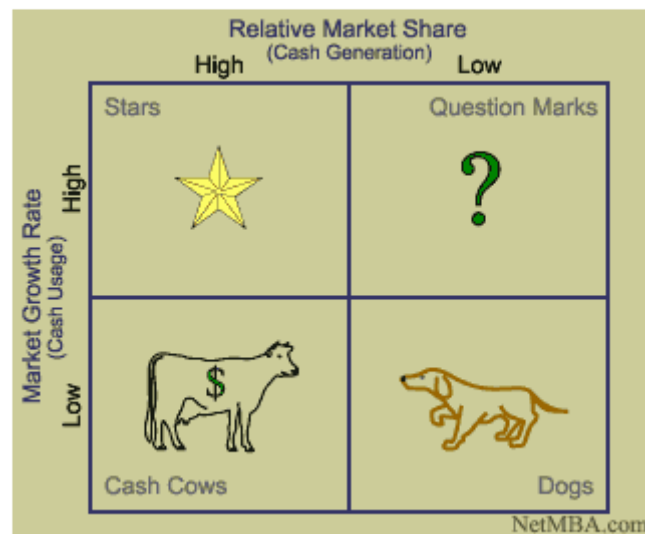


Figure 1: *The Growth-Share Matrix*

As Grande Bretagne has proved to be a significant player in the region of Athens and the leader in its category the formation of the renowned BCG Matrix was expected to place it in the “Star” quadrant.

It is quite obvious as the Grande Bretagne Hotel is the market leader in its category and projections about the hospitality sector are positive as we detected before. Therefore, the placement of the business in the “Star” quadrant meets the demands of the initial BCG Matrix in 1970.

David and David, 2015 state that “Star” quadrant refers to an organization with the best long-term opportunities for growth and profitability. Suggested acts include forward, backward and horizontal integration, market penetration, market development and product development. Since, differentiation is an integral part in a changing world, the introduction of a new product or service would be ideal.

Contrary to this, Boston Consulting Group has made a revision on its early matrix development. A study of the firm (BCG, 2014) indicates that the state of an organization from one quadrant to another is more flexible than it was in the '70s and '80s. Based on this, they suggest that organizations should follow a new "reading" of the matrix where market share is no longer a direct predictor of sustained performance, namely it is not a rigid part of the competitive advantage of a business as it used to be.

Taking into account the latest version of BCG Matrix, the analysts suggest that the organization's actions should focus on four practical imperatives:

Acceleration: Evaluate portfolio frequently and plan short-cycle strategies rather than long-term ones.

Balance exploration and exploitation: This means that Question Mark investments should increase and be tested often and quickly in order to minimize the damage of a potential Dog outcome. Additionally, exploit Cows efficiently by improving profitability through better operational function and keep Dogs short-term just enough to get feedback of bad investments.

Select rigorously: Select investments based on data sources and research analyses.

Measure and manage portfolio economics of experimentation: Meaning the constant quantitative evaluation of the Question marks and the cost of investment (and failure) in Question Marks is overpowered by the rise of potential Stars.

With respect to the aforementioned notices, Grand Bretagne Hotel should invest in a Question Mark in order to sustain its competitive advantage. This can be reflected as product or service development for the business.

5.3. Grand Strategy Matrix

Grand Strategy Matrix is a pretty tool to choose a strategy and has similar logic to BCG matrix. In this case the two main dimensions are the competitive position and the market growth. According to the six-month financial statement (LAMPISA, 2017) Grand Bretagne Hotel runs with a 21.2% sales increase compared to previous year following the overall trend of growth in Greek tourism. From what we discussed before, Grande Bretagne Hotel is in a strong competitive position as it is

the market leader in Athens. Hence, the matrix is formed as delivered below.

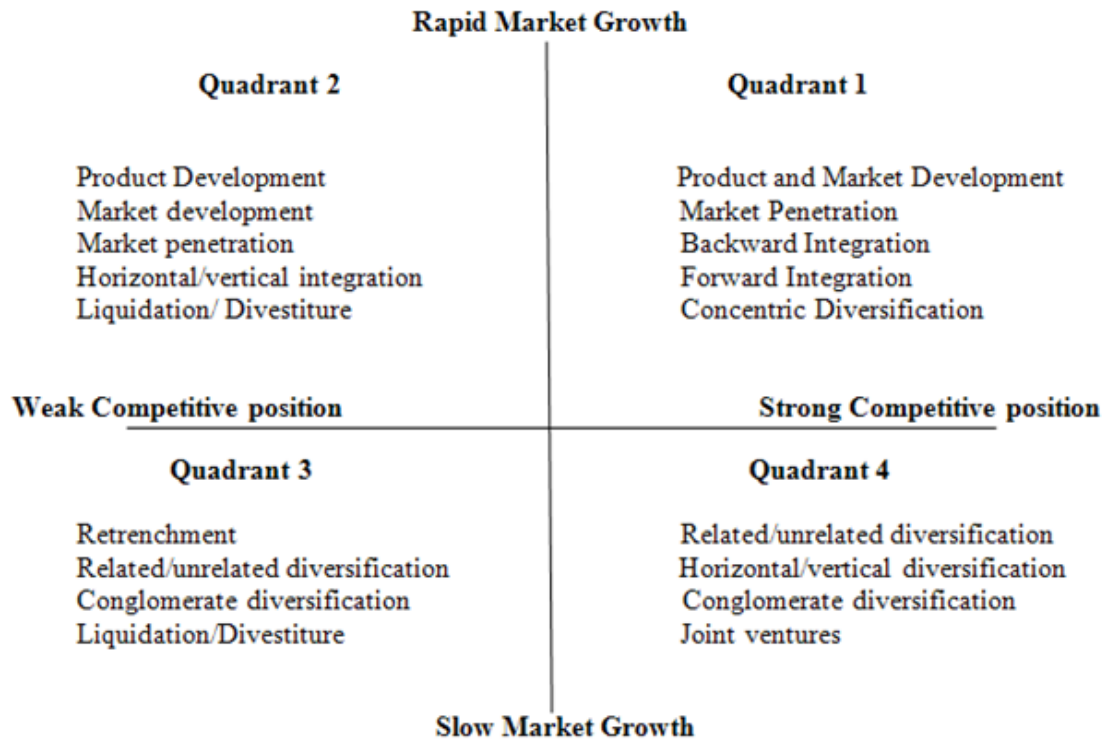


Figure 2: *Grand Strategy Matrix*



Grande Bretagne Hotel lies in the Quadrant I and the suggested strategies are almost the same with those suggested by the BCG Matrix, namely forward and backward integration, market penetration, market and product development and concentric diversification.

Forward and backward integration include the investment in related business activities such as acquiring a supplier or distributor. As delivered in previous chapters, suppliers are not a threat nor do they offer an integral part of the organization. Market penetration regards the increase of the market share, a position which Grande Bretagne Hotel already possesses. Diversification is not suitable for the business itself but for the holding company which is not the goal of this research. As a consequence, market and product/service development is the selected strategic option which comes in agreement with the BCG Matrix results and comments too.

5.4 Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix (QSPM)

Despite the fact that there are various tools to assess the internal and the external status of an organization, things are more complex regarding tools that help decision making on strategy selection. Analytical Hierarchy Process (Saaty, 1980) is a popular technique in decision making and is based on mathematic and psychological judgments with the inclusion of various factors, weights and ratings as seen in the matrixes before. On the other hand, the quantitative strategic planning matrix is also a high-level strategic management approach for evaluating possible strategies only one tool that helps decision makers in order to choose a specific strategy (Garthinda and Aldianto, 2012). The difference between the two tools is that QSPM is simpler in execution especially for the scope of this study.

The quantitative strategic planning matrix, from now on QSPM, is a tool that was first presented by David, 1986 and its main goal is to assess the attractiveness of different alternative strategies to be followed by an organization. It can be exercised at any organizational level from corporate to business and even functional/ departmental. It uses input from previous analyses, namely matrixes developed above such as IFE, EFE, BCG and CPM to setup the final stage matrix. Similar to other matrixes, QSPM requires expert judgmental decisions and should be based on expert's opinion to ensure the applicability of chosen strategies (Nasab and Milani, 2012).

The basic formation includes key external and internal factors and strengths and weaknesses from previous matrixes, the alternative strategies identified above and the weights of each factor as depicted in each original matrix.

Now instead of ratings there is the introduction of *Attractiveness Scores* (AS) that indicate the relative attractiveness of each proposed strategy with respect to the factor examined (David and David, 2015). However, if the factor is irrelevant to the strategy alternative then there is no rating. If the factor is relevant then AS take rates from 1 to 4, namely 1=not attractive, 2=somewhat attractive, 3= reasonably attractive and 4= highly attractive. Attractiveness regards the possibility of each strategy alternative to capitalize on the strength, improve weakness, exploit opportunity and avoid threat. Should a factor is not rated in a particular alternative the same should apply for the rest of them. The QSPM developed for Grand Bretagne Hotel is the one shown below:

Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix						
Key Factors	Weight	Vineyard visit		Local market development		
		AS	TAS	AS	TAS	
Oppurtunities						
City break	0,2	0	0	0	0	
Extend services,hospitalities etc	0,08	3	0,24	2	0,16	
Tourism rising in Greece	0,3	4	1,2	1	0,3	
Synergies with 3rd hotel in square	0,08	0	0	0	0	
Greek economy increasing	0,1	2	0,2	3	0,3	
Threats						
New entrants	0,06	4	0,24	2	0,12	
New "neighbourhoods"	0,07	4	0,28	2	0,14	
Tax increase	0,08	2	0,16	1	0,08	
Brexit	0,03	3	0,09	3	0,09	
Total	1					
Strengths						
Location	0,3	3	0,9	4	1,2	
History/Brand name	0,1	3	0,3	4	0,4	
Management (Marriot)	0,03	0	0	0	0	
Exhibitions and Conventions	0,03	4	0,12	3	0,09	
Leader in Athens 5* hotels	0,08	2	0,16	3	0,24	
Synergies with King George	0,05	0	0	0	0	
Expansion of offices	0,02	0	0	0	0	
Top chefs & pattiseurs	0,06	4	0,24	3	0,18	
Increased Revenue	0,07	3	0,21	2	0,14	
Weaknesses						
F&B sector decrease	0,07	3	0,21	3	0,21	
Currency risks	0,01	0	0	0	0	
Seasonality	0,1	4	0,4	3	0,3	
Low recognizability social media	0,04	0	0	0	0	
Entertainment and charity	0,02	4	0,08	4	0,08	
Car-parking Service	0,02	0	0	0	0	
Total	1		5,03		4,03	

Following the results and suggestions by the tools used before there were selected two possible strategic choices, the development of a new product/service like a visit to a local vineyard or distillery where customers can come along with something unique as the production of the famous *ouzo* (Product development) and the decision to open up to the local residents of the city that interact little with the organization so far apart from specific events like conventions or galas (Market development).

To be more specific, the first option of a Vineyard visit gains more from various factors thus making it less vulnerable to future fluctuations. Tourism growth is of substantial weight of 0.3 and it delivers a score of 1.2, the highest and most influential in the matrix. It is evident that the tourism growth will enhance the market numbers thus creating more opportunities to launch a successful program based on foreign customers. Seasonality is also a significant factor in the matrix and both strategies seem equal at this point. Nonetheless as winter is coming Greeks start to save money for: Christmas, new school season, tax payments etc therefore the search for more flexible and economically

viable target groups leads to the slight upgrade for the first strategic option. New entrants that are projected to come in the near future should not be addressed in traditional ways as this would give no competitive advantage and real differentiation for the hotel. The already established brand name, the network and experience in Greek culture is something that cannot be acquired at once.

With regard to the previous arguments, the Vineyard visit fulfills better the Product development as potential customers seek for new experiences that would expand the tourism season apart from sun & beach and would help the hotel distinguish in a growing market of potential entrants as mentioned in matrixes before.

Although the second option of Market development demonstrates better results in relation with the major strengths of the hotel like Location, Brand name and Market share over the Product Development strategy it is inferior in all other aspects with significant weight like Tourism growth in Greece, Extra hospitalities, Seasonality and Increased Revenue and less significant but critical weight like Top chefs and pastry chefs, New entrants and New neighborhoods. Especially the latter ones could bounce back and open up the market to new players in the board as Athens is becoming more and more attractive to international competitors that seek to make an edge in the city. What seems to be strength or an opportunity for this strategy could easily be imitated by competitors with offers, discounts, marketing events that would attract new customers and subsequently give opposite results eventually.

The matrix slightly projects the adoption of the first option with a total score 5.03 versus 4.03 for the second one. To this result we deliver recommendations in the following chapter.

Discussion of Findings

With regard to the results provided by all matrixes before, Grande Bretagne Hotel is undoubtedly the leading organization for hospitality in Greece, particularly in the deluxe level. It is indicative that all matrices imply the notion towards the adoption of a Differentiation Strategic Option as the appropriate solution for the Grand Bretagne Hotel. Its dominant position in the market among its close competitors, the strong internal performance and the efficient address of external threats suggest that the Grande Bretagne Hotel should pursue an aggressive strategy supported by all analyses. The final matrix promotes the

development of an innovative service of leisure that entails both a unique experience related to the organization but also the country it operates in.

The need for hotels to differentiate among competitors in an ever-changing environment requires the adoption and development of innovative ideas. Apart from business travelers, most consumers do not travel frequently, usually twice a year.

Therefore, brand awareness is limited compared to everyday brands such as Amazon, Starbucks etc. which are the benchmark for customers' expectations now on. Personalization is the trend in every industry nowadays and this also expected from tourism organizations. Not every resident wishes for leisure, night out activities, cultural entertainment etc. and the need to customize each stay and make it an experience not to be forgotten is apparent more than ever. Social media tend to be a source of information about possible customers as Instagram, Snapchat and Facebook can raise awareness through posts, like, shares etc. (Deloitte, 2017; Oliver Wyman, 2015).

What is also a trend currently are Online Tourist Agencies (OTAs) (Oliver Wyman, 2015²) like TripAdvisor or Booking that have developed recently and play a huge role in tourism operations. These businesses do not offer simply booking services for residence but also car rentals, tour guides and sightseeing suggestions. Grand Bretagne Hotel takes advantage of its Marriott International collaboration as the multinational corporation has sealed a deal with TripAdvisor and benefits from bookings and exposure to the digital world.

To this extent, Grand Bretagne Hotel should offer a new product/service in the market to maintain its dominant position in the capital city of Athens.

The buzz over a shift in luxury is growing on and on. Nowadays people identify luxury as an experience (Forbes, 2016), a story, an adventure rather than a standardized accommodation with expensive services and helpful personnel. What is now needed is simplicity, the authenticity of the local people (National Geographic, 2017); their culture, their habits which can be described as an "eye of the insider". In a world that is becoming smaller thanks to mobile communications and innovative transportation new destinations arise. These possible threats try to differentiate themselves by offering something unique to the public, experiences (ILTM, 2017). While millennials are taking up over the baby boomers, the need for easy access and booking, the trend for social

media posts and likes but also an urge for the genuine side of life is more than ever changing the shape of tourism industry. As a matter of fact, our projected strategy of developing a new service of Grand Bretagne Hotel that will distinguish it from competitors derives from this very philosophy.

A tour in general, that would include an activity that only Greeks have, seems exceptional with regard to market trends and the capabilities of the hotel. It would solve seasonality problems and give a momentum of repeated sales. Surprisingly, it would induct a loyalty feeling to the customer projected as love and affection. The project could be named with a general term like “Inner Greece” and could adhere to different seasons and activities respectively.

Late autumn where tourist numbers start to fall, the production of the famous *ouzo* by local distillers is an experience unique in the world as there is no other place in the world to do so. The inclusion and warmth it offers, as Greeks gather together and organize somewhat of a feast every day and night during production telling stories about the past, little secrets of distilling and of course sing and dance would prove as the ideal experience for customers seeking *stories to tell*, getting in touch with the locals, learning their stories and eventually building a bond with the people. The latter could prove much more valuable than any loyalty program exercised so far by the hotel as people mostly identify themselves by life events and places they lived in rather than money and objects.

Furthermore, feta cheese production is another option where customers would take part in it and make their own cheese, another artisanal product that is trademark of Greece. Apart from manufacturing, it would give an ecological footprint with the inclusion of countryside life among the herds, thus creating a pioneering project according to what is now perceived as luxury. This would enhance the feeling of belonging and love as introduced by Maslow in his famous *Hierarchy of need's pyramid*.

At the same level, olive harvest and olive oil production is a great opportunity for capitalization as it gives a close connection between the customer and the destination but is also a trademark of Athens as it was the gift of Minerva, goddess of wisdom to her beloved city. Local groves around Attica can deliver such an experience as Greeks harvest mostly by hand and the extraction of olive oil takes place even in homemade workshops in the villages nearby.

What is pioneering with the abovementioned suggestions is that the standardized merchandizing of local artisanal products that are sold in the shop-in-shop style for Grand Bretagne but also for most of the luxury hotel brands cannot cope with the real experience of creating your own product. To this extent, the hotel could deliver the related product (ouzo, feta, olive oil) that was produced during the tour in a customized package that would bond the consumer with the product, the city, the hotel.

Among other products honey production, horse riding or any other leisure activity of the Greek countryside could endorse the effort of Grand Bretagne to offer unique services to each clientele.

As projected before by many experts (BCG, 2014 and BCG, 2016), the digital era is part of modern tourism management and every action should take it into consideration nonetheless. The development of related mobile application, social media account and a website would boost the project. For the younger customers like millennials are becoming more important to business sustainability, their adherence to technology should not be underestimated. The intention of posting every little thing, manifesting their every moment is the new *word of mouth* and can overcome big advertisement campaigns with less sources and better outputs (Deloitte, 2017). Consequently, the combined development of the project “Inner Greece” both in the digital and the real world is non-negotiable.

As the Grand Bretagne Hotel proves to be the archetype of the luxury hotel in Greece, the current study could be very helpful for both academics and practitioners. Regarding the academic society, Grand Bretagne Hotel is the benchmark for researches in the hotel sector in Greece, particularly for luxury city hotels. The leading role of the organization is a standard for all luxury businesses that look forward succeeding in the trending hospitality market of Athens. As for practitioners and people working in the industry the abovementioned results dictate a turn towards customized services in a digital context rather than the operation of a standardized type of hospitality. However, these strategies can be efficiently supported only if the organization holds a strong position in the market or can secure sufficient resources to finance such projects.

Conclusion

The growth of Greek tourism industry is unquestionable. The emergence of new destinations and concepts can give Greece an advantage over previous popular, traditional options like Rome and Paris as Athens is becoming the center of Eastern Mediterranean. Direct flight connection with Beijing and New York establish the Greek capital as a major destination in the world and in that direction the tourism industry in the area can capitalize on.

Grand Bretagne Hotel, a landmark of Athens, is the leading 5* hotel residence. Its strong position in the market is detected through the Internal audit chapter with the help of competitive advantage identification and the Internal Factor Evaluation Matrix (IFE) based on the current status of the hotel demonstrating a healthy organization capable of coming up with difficulties from the external environment. An external environment thoroughly examined in the related chapter with the assistance of well-known tools like EFE, BCG, SWOT analysis, Competitor Profile matrixes is quite encouraging for the ability of the organization to come up with external challenges in every aspect.

In spite of these positive attributes, Grand Bretagne Hotel still has to address rising challenges in the global market. The development of a new service that would differentiate the organization among others is of great significance. To this point, the use of the Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix assisted the effort to choose between different and equal strategic options. Followed by the latter, the adoption of a new project called "Inner Greece" that would give GB Hotel an innovative advantage over its competitors was inevitable. Specifically, the deployment of an activity related to Greek everyday life embraces the attitude for genuine experiences that high-end customer's desire. Proper marketing, especially through digital channels like the social media, opening to new markets like the USA and the exploitation of local personnel in benefit of the hotel would complement the project.

The analysis of the Greek luxury hotel sector, specifically in Athens, demonstrated the need for a new market orientation and service delivery. In a world where younger generations with different aspects and expectations than the previous ones turn up as potential consumers, hotels must adjust and offer something unique.

Although it may seem as a paradox due to the fact that social media have made people estranged, they seek for true experiences, personalized services and an essence of belonging that can cover up the emotional gap that the digital era created. Therefore, the introduction of new services related to local communities will give hotels an edge over standardized travelling and establish them in the market far easier than big money campaigns with doubtful results.

In conclusion, the key research question as depicted in early chapters, namely “What strategy should Grande Bretagne Hotel follow to meet demands up to 2021?” could be addressed by the “*Product Development*” solution and particularly the development of a tour related to the agricultural heritage of rural Attica.

It is quite evident that Greek tourism is growing and the emergence of city break and high end tourism can boost revenue and face seasonality problems. The influx of new travellers should be an opportunity to upgrade Greek facilities and the Greek tourism product generally by targeting high end consumers rather than crave for great numbers in arrivals. This should be followed by SETE (Greek Tourism Enterprises Association) in collaboration with public policies that enhance these actions.

The study could be a pattern for strategic plans for hotels in the city break area (Athens, Thessaloniki) with related adjustments according to the organization examined. The main idea of Greek branding should be customized experiences integrated with the local community and marketed digitally, giving a full extent to the trends rising.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study was executed without the acute information required conducting a more thorough internal analysis and is mainly based on data from the external environment. Although we conducted some interviews with Managers from within, this data was restricted due to the limited sample size that is always a restriction in all studies. In addition, the study was carried out within a particular point in time and is not longitudinal in nature. This in combination with the economic crisis might have affected the nature of our findings. Another limitation lies in the fact that we examine a particular context: the Greek. Future research would benefit from insight from other sectors and other countries as well and also realize some comparative analyses.

Moreover, the selection of weights and rankings lies on the judgment of the researcher and cannot be considered totally valid as this is the case for all strategy plans. The scope of the study, namely a Master's dissertation, does not address the problem to a greater extent and was limited to the resources and goals included. In future, researchers could consider more variables that might affect the formulation of appropriate strategies. In addition, emphasis should be placed on the appropriate implementation of strategies, since strategy formulation always fails if implementation is not in accordance with it (Johnson et al., 2014)



Appendix

Questionnaire for the exploratory part of the study



This questionnaire regards the master's dissertation of Sophia Gkatsikou, MSc student in Hospitality and Tourism Management at the International Hellenic University in Thessaloniki. The scope of the questionnaire is academic and no personal information is required from the participants.

Job position:



1. What are the key traits of a successful hotel?
2. What are the key traits of a luxury hotel?
3. What makes a luxury hotel unique and sets it apart from others?
4. Could you mention the major weaknesses of the hotel industry?
5. Are there further opportunities and extension in the sector?

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