

Strategic Research of the Maritime Market

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Abstract: At the beginning of the 21st century, the research and the knowledge of the maritime market prove to be as important as the other elements of the Marketing from the maritime domain. The research of the maritime market can be considered as the first step in tackling the research problems in the Marketing from this domain, which cannot be avoided or ignored. This thing is necessary due to the permanent increase of the competition on the maritime market, to the permanent entrance of new ships and shipping companies, to the development of new transport routes.

Keywords: company; market; research; sea; transport

1. Introduction

The investigation of the maritime market demand of the client's necessities is situated on the first place in the list of the general marketing functions (Iordanoaia, 2005, p. 39). This research is made up of the following aspects [4]: The research of the maritime market. The obtaining of the information about: the transport services; the port services, the prices for the different types of repairs, activities or services, shipping lines, routes and ports; the methods and the promotion techniques used by the competition (Iordanoaia, 2002, p. 74). The way of organizing the Maritime Marketing activity. The Marketing environment specific to the sea transports. Thus, it is required that every type of company that operates in the sea transport domain, before making an important decision with major implications for its present activity, but especially for its future one, should make this research of the maritime

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market in order to gather, register and analyze the data, from which will result the necessary information to run the company (Iordanoaia, 2004, p. 2).

2. The Content of the Maritime Market Research

This research of the maritime market consists in knowing the information about the present customers, potential customers, meaning all the elements concerning these thus in table 1. It is as result from these questions the fact that we must find out the following information. The way of centralizing this information is shown in table 2. Further on, it is necessary to be known the competitive companies: the operating way of those companies; the advantages and the problems which they are dealing with; the prices or the tariffs they are using; the supplementary contractual clauses, etc.; the strong points, the weak points, etc. (Stopford, 1997, p. 7). The results of such a research can be centralized as in the table 3.

Table 1. The customers of the shipping company

CUSTOMERS / QUESTIONS	Company 1	Company 2	Company 3	Company 4
1. Who are they?				
2. Why are they interested in our services?				
3. What do we offer to them compared to our competition?				
4. When are they going to demand for our services?				
5. Which are the relationships with them?				
6. How can we keep up the relationships with them?				

Source: The author study, the original one

The maritime market research is made both in the country of origin and especially abroad (McConville, 1999, p. 15). According to the followed objective, the research can be made such as: In one or more countries. On a certain shipping route. On a certain type of goods (for example ore). On types of ships (for example container carriers), (Buchet, 1992, p. 12). The results can be centralized as in the table 4. The bigger the number of the countries, customers-companies, competitive-companies is, the faster the complexity of the research increases. In this situation in order to prevent a series of obstacles concerning the lack of information, of some documents or publications it needs a supplementary effort, intelligence and inventiveness to obtain all the information. All these imply certain costs which must be foreseen in the income and expenses budget of the company and these costs can be quite high, the nature of these can be given by: Traveling abroad. Phone conversations. Telex, fax, internet transmissions, letters (Boronad et al., 2001, p. 62). Providing the documents as the laws, the decisions, the norm acts, specialized publications, magazines, catalogues, etc. These costs are reduced according to the establishment of the contract relationships, of the development of the operations, but they can't be totally eliminated because the market must be known permanently, be able to foresee its positive or negative evolutions (Branch, 1998, p. 303).

Table 2. The centralization of the information

COMPANIES	Company 1	Company 2	Company 3	Company 4
1.Productive				
2.Exploitation of the raw materials				
3.Road transport				
4.Railway transport				
5.The type of used ships				
6.Port operators				
7.The line shipping routes				
8.The main contracts				

Source: The author study, the original one

Table 3. The competitive shipping companies

COMPANIES	Company 1	Company 2	Company 3	Company 4
1.TYPES OF SHIPS: carriers, ro/ro, container carriers, tanks, etc.				
2.CARRYING CAPACITY: fixed ships, total.				
3.THE WAY OF OPERATING: duration, technology				
4. TARIFFS/FREIGHT				
5. SPECIAL CONTRACT CLAUSES				
6.STRONG POINTS				
7.WEAK POINTS				

Source: The author study, the original one.

The main domains in which researches are made in the Port and Maritime Marketing are the following: Measuring the maritime market to identify: the size, the potential, the foreseeing of the goods quantity, the foreseeing of the number of the ships (Iordanoaia, 2005, p. 47). The competitive companies in order to find out about their general policy, their way of acting on the maritime market, the expansion tendencies, the restriction of the activity. The international economic situation. The political and economic environment. The legislation of the countries in which the activities are proceeding. The economic efficiency in order to offer the necessary funds to the research, the costs for promotion, advertising.

Table 4. The strategic abroad research

THE RESEARCHED COUNTRIES	Company 1	Company 2	Company 3	Company 4
1. THE SHIPPING ROUTE: -PORT A – PORT B, PORT A – PORT C, PORT B – PORT C.				
2. THE TYPE OF GOODS: goods 1, goods 2, goods 3.				
3. THE USED SHIPS: carriers, container carriers, tanks.				
4. COMPETITION: the company which has the greatest rate on the market; the other companies.				
5. CHARACTERISTICS/PECIFIC: legislation, restrictions, authorities.				
6. OFFERED OPPORTUNITIES: taxes, partnerships, governmental agreements.				

Source: The author study, the original one

The process of research in The Port and Maritime Marketing can be structured in the following stages: establishing the objective; looking for the sources of the information; gathering and processing the data; analyzing and interpreting the data; drawing up and presenting a report to the company managers.

a) Establishing the followed objective, defining the problem which the company deals with and which must take care of, presents a certain difficulty due to the overtaking of this from a business and transforming it into a problem that needs to

be researched (Kotler, 1999, p. 225). In order to define a problem and to establish the objective it must take into account the following aspects: the structure of the maritime market, the service that the company is going to offer. The structure of the maritime market refers to the "physical" size of the market, the stage of development in a country or more, the number of the competitive companies, the segment of the market occupied by the competitive companies, the ways of approaching the entrance on the market (Niculescu et al, 2000, p. 32). The service carried out by the shipping company means: the number of the available ships; the type of the ship: size, capacities, nautical qualities; the way of operating: loading, unloading, stowage, trimming, etc.; the crew: training, seriousness and professionalism; the insurance of the ship; the contractual clauses; the asked price (freight).

The service carried out by the operator from the port means: direct operations for the ships; transport operations in the port or in the berth space; operations enclosed to the maritime transport service or to the port operators (Stopford, 1997, p. 8).

b) Looking for the sources of the information. In this acceptance there are taken into account two sources of information: primary data and secondary data (Prutianu et al., 2002, p. 60).

1) The primary data are those searched especially for the followed objective and these have the following characteristics: they are obtained from the people from the specialized domain as the employers, ship owners, charterers, brokers, ship commanders, commissary officers, etc; they are expensive and subjective; they need to be checked permanently; they are confidential in most of the situations; they are limited in the content.

2) The secondary data are those obtained previous the research and which are at the company disposal. The bigger costs of the primary data require the research beginning with the secondary data. The organisms, the institutes from which the data can be taken are: Governments, International organizations as United Nations Organization, International Maritime Organization, The International Organization of the Commerce, European Union., The International Bank, The International Currency Funds, The Chambers of Commerce and Industry, The Maritime and Commercial Courts, The Associations (Conferences) of the Ship Owners, The Associations of the Producers (on different branches), the international commercial organizations, banks, insurance companies, the business centers, clubs P & I, the transnational companies, the advertising companies, publications, etc.

c) Gathering and processing the data. This activity must be planned, organized and preceded with a great precision. For this reason it must be determined the rate of the disposal of the information thus: if the information was already obtained, it must be consulted these secondary data, if these don't exist, it is required their searching (Prutianu et al, 2002, p. 63). In order to be correctly appreciated the credibility and the exactness of the data, there must be analyzed the following aspects: the authors (editors), who they are; the purpose of publication (for advertising, etc.); the content and the logic of the data, etc.

d) Analyzing and interpreting the data. After all the data were gathered, they must be analyzed and interpreted according to the purpose which the research was made for. The primary and the secondary data can have some limits, that's why it is required that the person that makes the research, the specialist in port and maritime Marketing, should adopt a realistic, pragmatic attitude from which he can start the accomplishment of the analysis, synthesizing the essential data and then should make their interpreting, from which, afterwards, it will result a very precise report. Some permanently variable elements can influence the study of the data, these can be: The meaning of the words, of the clauses or phrases incorrectly translated or just approximately. There is a certain obstacle in translating some sailor's phrases used in the shipping jargon. As concerns the correctness of the translations of some official I.M.O. documents, for example, it is specified very clearly that in some cases the interpreting of the situations and their explanations in English language has a great priority and the justification of their misunderstanding or of their incorrect translation doesn't have juridical validity. The people's attitude with which they have the discussions, the ambiguity or their lack of interest can influence the research. The customers' attitude towards the services, the contracts or the previous deals, can have a great influence upon the research. The Marketing specialists consider that in order to be able to ignore these variable elements, the one who makes the research, the company specialist, must prove the following qualities: to have a skeptical attitude towards the obtained data, to try to check the exactness and their opportunity; to prove imagination and creativity in processing and adapting the information. To have a high degree of general knowledge and a great ability of understanding the cultural disputes which appear on the maritime market. As a result, he must have the correct understanding of the policies and the practices of the companies which operate on the maritime market, the attitude and the social customs, the meaning of the language, the leaders' attitudes, etc.

e). Drawing up and presenting a report to the company managers. This report has a certain degree of confidentiality, addresses only to the company managers, the only one which can be disposed to be presented to other departments or people, too. Certain “sensitive” problems must be discussed and kept into the company because they can affect some relationships with the third persons.

3. Conclusions

The purpose of this research must be the one which will help the ship owner to make the right decisions. On the basis of the Marketing report, the managers of the shipping companies and those from the port services domain must make the right decisions. If the decisions don't rely on a market study elaborated scientifically, the risks are great and “the luck is an accident which happens only those who are competent” as Albert Greenfield said (Zyman, 2001, p. 51). For these reasons, the research of the maritime market is very important; it must be made permanently by the competent people who are loyal to the shipping company, too. When the experts of the business company gets some limits, limits according to the difficulty of the obtained information about the maritime market, they don't need to break the rules to obtain these information. In a marketing research an expert always have to find out those legal solutions that could not be contested in any national or international legislation. There are many managers who affirmed that “is important to have the information, not the way you obtain them”. But in reality when you work in domain and you are involved in always your efforts will be rewarded, without breaking the rules. Many ship masters are carrying information, even they don't know this. These have access to some documents of the company where the work or worked, they have been participate to different inform or improvement courses and they come to a head of political company knowledge. Nowadays there are many ship masters that are working for a period in a company and after they choose another one from different causes.

The exploration of the whole knowledge about the companies they had been worked in it is not a legal one. They can tell whatever things about how they had worked there, how they can resolve their client's problems or how they kept a relationship with the clients. From this it is easy to understand which is the first source of information for a marketing expert in a maritime navigation company. In some other situations the published dates of a company conformed to the present rules, are enough to hear which is its position on a market or which are their

incomes. A marketing expert has to be prepared such as to see through the presented ciphers in the company accountant books keeping.

The most important source of information in an accountant book-keeping is represented by the costs of the company, because at least we don't give interest to the last year business profit, only how they can reduce the costs and how it could mention a low level of these costs. In situation of the obtained information are not sufficient to obtain a realist report I recommend "to come back to the base" that means the marketing expert should retake each every step of the research and to look forward to realize much more amplified examinations, more and more detailed. Sometimes some of them lost important information, because these can't appear in their praises with something, but at least it is proved that only these were the most important. Finally I appreciate that the future of a maritime navigation company starts with marketing information obtained from the maritime market and this future depends by those who should search for and find them.

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