

## THE ADOPTION OF MARKETING BY THE IRISH HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Peter Bohan, School of Hotel, Tourism and Catering Management, Faculty of Tourism and Food, Dublin Institute of Technology

Dominic Dillane, School of Hotel, Tourism and Catering Management, Faculty of Tourism and Food, Dublin Institute of Technology

### INTRODUCTION

Given substantial research on the marketing orientation of manufacturing organizations, and its wider acceptance in non-traditional areas, research on the adoption of a marketing orientation in the hospitality sector of the tourism industry remains scant. The purpose of this paper is to explore the concept of a market orientation and to present the results of a study concerning the adoption of a marketing orientation by the Irish hotel industry.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The overall aim of the study was to examine the marketing orientation of hotel organizations in the Irish tourism industry. In the study, market orientation is measured by examining a number of key marketing variables: approach to business, market segmentation, customer feedback processes, coordination of business activities, market research, organization of marketing, and marketing planning. A postal survey was used for the investigation. A total of 207 responses was obtained, giving an overall response rate of 29%

### CONCLUSIONS

The study attempts to give some insight into the extent to which Irish hotel operators have adopted a marketing orientation. The evidence suggests that a large number of operators see themselves as operations-centred. It is clear that such an approach does not place a high degree of importance on customer needs and requirements. While many respondents claim to identify potential customers and segment markets, the low use of market research would seem to suggest a lack of customer/market focus.

Of the relatively low number of organizations who have marketing departments, most tend to exist in higher hotel grades than in group operations. However, hotel groups and higher grades only constitute a small percentage of the overall profile of the industry. For those organizations without a formal marketing organization, marketing responsibilities were generally undertaken by general managers/owner managers. It was surprising to find the relatively large numbers of marketing staff who possessed no formal marketing qualifications. Allied to the low levels of qualifications was the minimal use of training in marketing.

While in general terms the findings are somewhat disappointing, certain operators tend to exhibit a marketing orientation. Hotel groups, more than independents, operating in the top end of the market, tend to respond to market information, co-ordinate business activities, and have a clear market focus. In addition, they are more likely to record customer suggestions and segment markets.

The future development of marketing practice in the industry will depend on the acceptance of three essential characteristics:

- Ensuring that all customer contact staff are trained in the fundamental principles of marketing as a means of satisfying customer needs.
- Recognizing the need for an integrated marketing approach using marketing information on which decisions should be based.
- Top management commitment to marketing.