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Strategic planning consulting: hotel case

Consultoría de planificación estratégica: caso hotelero

VEGA, Vladimir $^{\rm 1}$ MONTES DE OCA SÁNCHEZ, Irma V. $^{\rm 2}$ ABRIL, Jorge F. $^{\rm 3}$

Abstract

The objective was to design the strategy in the Joint Venture Hotel Saratoga Ltd., using its own and novel procedure, which highlights the operationalization of the values; the SWOT analysis and the link with the Balanced Scorecard. The Board of Directors was trained and an institutional diagnosis was made through plenary sessions, supported by brainstorming and analysis of the problem tree, identifying the main difficulties. As a result, the institution's strategy was updated, expressing it in concrete performance indicators.

key words: strategic planning, balanced scorecard, consulting, hotel

Resumen

El objetivo fue diseñar la estrategia en la Empresa Mixta Hotel Saratoga Ltd., utilizando un procedimiento propio y novedoso, que resalta la operacionalización de los valores; el análisis FODA y el nexo con el Balanced Scorecard. Se capacitó a la Junta Directiva y se realizó un diagnóstico institucional mediante sesiones plenarias, apoyados en la lluvia de ideas y el análisis del árbol de problemas, identificándose las principales dificultades. Como resultado, se actualizó la estrategia de la institución expresándola en indicadores concretos de desempeño.

Palabras clave: planificación estratégica, cuadro de mando integral, consultoría, hotel

1. Introduction

According to Vega (2015), the strategy is to select what should not be done and to be clear about what should be achieved, defining the what, how, when and who, but processing daily how each goal is being achieved.

Consistent with Saínz de Vicuña (2017), "a strategic plan somewhat resembles a puzzle", where it is the responsibility of businessmen, consultants in charge, and staff at large to place each piece with coherence and integrality. According to (Palacios, 2016), this process is retroactive, current, situational, strategic and

¹ Docente de Universidad Regional Autónoma de los Andes UNIANDES, Ambato, Ecuador. Doctor en Ciencias Económicas (PhD) vega.vladimir@gmail.com ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0140-4018

² Universidad Regional Autónoma de los Andes UNIANDES, Ambato, Ecuador

³ Universidad Técnica de Ambato, Ambato, Ecuador

prospective, since it looks at the past, responds to the present, takes into account political, temporal and spatial factors, and finally meets the demands of the future after carrying out internal and external analyses.

In this context, innovation is an essential tool to obtain a potential business competitive advantage, especially for those institutions that intend to internationalize their businesses (Jiménez & Aldeanueva, 2016). Undoubtedly, the current scenario in which the business world unfolds leads to transform the management mode, being essential to change the strategies to achieve the objectives, by being involved in a business fabric where the only thing that remains unalterable is transformation (Vega, 2015).

An example of the role of innovation in business is the telecommunications revolution in the context of the Internet, which has particularly impacted the tourism industry, one of the forerunners in the use of these technological advances (Carrera & Vega, 2017).

The objective of this consultancy is the design and implementation of the strategy of the Mixed Company Hotel Saratoga Ltd. (Cuba) (2013-2017), supported by a Balanced Scorecard (BSC), which is in essence a strategic management methodology focused on the definition and monitoring of the organizational strategy, which requires the commitment and leadership of the managers of each entity (Amat, Banchieri, and Campa, 2016).

The BSC does not attempt to supply daily financial measurements, but to complement them (Jiménez, 2014). According to (Rodrigues, Lima, and Aibar, 2017), it is a strategic management instrument, useful for evaluating the performance and for balancing the financial management as well as the intellectual capital of the organizations, trying to achieve competitive advantages. Consistent with (Medina, 2014), it is a fundamental element within the business management control system.

The Mixed Company Hotel Saratoga Ltd. (EMHS, Ltd.) is a joint-stock company with corporate activities of mixed capital, established within the Agreement No. 3040 of the Executive Committee of the Council of Ministers dated 27 June 1996, between the Cuban company named Habaguanex Tourist Company, Ltd., subordinated to the Office of the City Historian of Havana, Cuba (OCH), and the foreign company Saratoga Resources, Ltd.

The company has approved social adaptation, reconstruction, rehabilitation, remodeling, restoration, and subsequent exploitation of the luxurious Hotel Saratoga which is located on Paseo del Prado, in Old Havana (Cuba). This hotel complex is a neoclassical construction, built in 1880 for warehouses, being remodeled as a hotel in 1933 and reopened in 2005.

This hotel hires the professional services of Associate Consultants Ltd., CONAS, a consulting firm based in Havana, Cuba, established in 1991, with the mission of guiding its clients towards improvement, through consulting and auditing services based on a competitive, inclusive and innovative approach. It belongs to the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment; also associated with the Chamber of Commerce of Cuba. Both institutions, through an agreement signed between the parties in the professional services contract offer for the design and implementation of their Strategic Planning supported by a BSC, being one of the authors of this article the consultant entrusted for the development of this work.

Management of this hotel institution has a high professional level and is concerned with keeping its organizational strategy updated and aligned with all its employees, therefore, it was revised to cover the period 2013-2017, with the support of CONAS services, having taking into account that the methodology it uses, unlike

that used by other hotels, highlights the operationalization of the values; the SWOT analysis and the link with the BSC.

2. Methodology

The present investigation was developed through case study method, widely accepted in business studies, which made it possible to obtain valuable information on the environment and the problems of the hotel under study.

An observational investigation was carried out; cross-sectional, prospective and descriptive.

The consultancy was carried out in the hotel itself, during a week of January 2013, personalizing the consultant to the Cuban Consulting House CONAS, with the active and decisive contribution of the Board of Directors of the hotel under study.

It began with training in strategic planning and BSC to all members of the Board of Directors and later an institutional diagnosis was made through plenary sessions, supported by brainstorming, analysis of the problem tree and interviews with workers and managers of the hotel installation, which made it possible to identify the main difficulties to be solved by the hotel.

The procedure proposed by the consultant was used to design and implement the strategy and the BSC, which consists of five phases, which are briefly described below:

Procedure for the design and implementation of the strategy and the BSC:

Phase 0 of this procedure guarantees preparation for the design and implementation of the BSC, given the commitment of Senior Management and the staff training, which makes it possible to identify the main problems of the organization.

Phase 1 enables the elaboration of the Hotel's strategy, highlighting the updating of the MISSION and the establishment of the VISION; as well as the definition, interpretation, and parameterization of the shared values of the organization, elaboration of the SWOT Matrix, with their definition of the General Strategic Problem and their proposed solution. Also, it enables the definition of the Value Proposition.

Phase 2 guarantees the design of BSC, highlighting the Design of the Strategic Map, the BSC Matrix, and the Strategic Initiatives Plan.

On the other hand, phases 3 and 4 enable the design of the Information System and the implementation of BSC, which results are not detailed due to their strategic and confidential nature for the institution.

PHASE 0: Preparation for the design and implementation of Balanced Scorecard

- 1. Senior Management Commitment.
- 2. Process of selection of members who will participate in the strategic plan.
- 3. Preparation of work Schedule.
- 4. Staff training
- 5. Identification of the main problems of the organization.

PHASE 1: Elaboration of the Organization's Strategy

- 1. Definition of the strategic period.
- 2. Establishment, modification, or confirmation of the MISSION.
- 3. Establishment of VISION.
- 4. Definition, interpretation, and parameterization of the shared values of the organization.
- 5. Definition and evaluation of the stakeholders.
- 6. Diagnosis of the main trends in the environment.
- 7. Analysis of the critical factors of the organization.
- 8. Elaboration and interpretation of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) matrix.
- 9. Definition of the General Strategic Problem.
- 10. A proposed solution to the General Strategic Problem.
- 11. Development of the Initiatives Plan derived from the SWOT Matrix.
- 12. Definition of Key Success Factors.
- 13. Definition of the main scenarios in which the organization must develop.
- 14. Definition of the organization's Proposal of Value.

PHASE 2: Balanced Scorecard Design

- 1. Definition of the perspectives of the Balanced Scorecard.
- 2. Design of Strategic Mapping.
- 3. Design of the Balanced Scorecard matrix.
- 4. Design of the Balanced Scorecard.
- 5. Design of the Strategic Initiatives Plan.

PHASE 3: Information System Design

- 1. Design and communication of the Incentive Policy.
- 2. Definition of who, when, and how information is created, supplied, and accessed.

PHASE 4: Balanced Scorecard Implementation

- 1. Development of the early warning system.
- 2. Analysis of the strategic behavior of the organization for decision making.
- 3. Implementation of the Incentive Policy.

3. Results and discussion

Considering that the strategic period above mentioned (2013-2017) has already ended, it is possible to disclose part of these results; however, they are shown in a synthetic and summarized way for not displaying some details that continue to be strategic for the entity in its competitive context.

Taking into account that the Mission and Vision of the hotel were updated as a result of this study, they are presented as results of this study. The updated Mission describes the hotel's reason for being, that is, what it exists for and what business it is in, after reflecting on what it will dedicate its efforts to, the services it will

provide and what will truly make it different from other hotels with those who compete, being written in an objective, credible and motivating way.

Table 1
Mission and Vision of the Hotel
MISSION OF THE MIXED COMPANY HOTEL SARATOGA Ltd.
To market a unique hotel product in a setting of genuine architectural and historical-
cultural value, with an exclusive service designed for demanding clients.
VISION OF THE MIXED COMPANY HOTEL SARATOGA Ltd.
We are a unique hotel product located in the sociocultural and heritage environment
of Havana which was chosen for its quietness, and comfort. We take pride in the
outstanding professionalism of our team always achieving the expected financial
results in harmonious coexistence with the community.
Source: own elaboration

The reflection on how the hotel should be seen by customers, by its staff, by partners, and by the community, allowed to define a comprehensive Vision of the organization, which made it possible to establish and characterize the businesses in which it will compete and position itself. in the future.

The hotel's organizational values were also updated as a result of this study, in addition to its conceptualization and its way of measuring, which was not previously defined.

	Organizational Values of the Hotel.
Value	Interpretation of the Hotel Staff
Discretion	To regulate the human behavior and handling of information according to
	professional ethics as well as good image, and hotel security.
Efficiency	To keep in mind the minimum savings of resources in each action and each
	case, without affecting the quality of the service.
Loyalty and Sense of	To consider as their own the results of the hotel by giving their best in each
Belonging	working day with honest and devoted behavior.
Professionalism	To work ethically with the ability to solve the tasks ahead in a clever,
	creative, and effective way; and to stay current with the latest trends
	related to their activity to achieve customer satisfaction.
Empathy	Ability to be sensitive to the feelings and needs of others, assuming their
	perspectives.
Ethical behavior	Full control of the activity carried out which has to be reflected through
	efficient use of the resources at their disposal, achieving concrete
	outcomes in the expected plans.
Teamwork	Integration of efforts, knowledge, and experiences in the collective
	fulfillment of the assigned tasks.
	Source: own elaboration

Table 2

Source: own elaboration

It was defined that all organizational values would be measured by the immediate superior manager of each employee, through their monthly performance evaluations.

		Analy				otel. S	ourc	e: ov	/n ela	boratic	n			-			
			OPPORTUNITIES THREATS											-			
ANALYSIS SWOT OF THE HOTEL		Insertion of the hotel in the new regulatory framework	Automatic systems and internet development	Automatic systems and internet development Latest advanced technologies applied to hotel management Favorable relations with the national tourism companies Advance in the restoration of old Havana Advance in the restoration of old Havana Media S-O Subtotal An economic, financial, political, and social crisis		The prestige of near competitors (accommodation and gastronomy)	Extreme centralization and bureaucracy	Absence of specialized personnel available to hire	Shortcomings of suppliers (quality, Price, and stability)	Media S-T	M. Total	Subtotal	Total				
		01	02	03	04	O5			T1	T2	T3 T4		Т5				
	STRENGTHS	Offensive Strategy S- Defensive Strategy (Area of power) O (Area of protection)											S- T				
S1	Motivated staff	1	0	2	2	3	1,6	8	1	3	0	1	1	1,2	1,4	6	14
S2	Trained staff	2	3	3	3	1	2,4	12	1	3	1	2	1	1,6	2,0	8	20
S 3	Reliable accounting	2	0	1	2	0	1,0	5	0	0	1	0	0	0,2	0,6	1	6
S 4	Autonomy to market	2	2	2	3	1	2,0	10	3	2	3	0	3	2,2	2,1	11	21
S5 Hotel prestige		1	1	1	3	1	1,4	7	0	3	0	0	1	0,8	1,1	4	11
	Media S-O		1,2	1,8	2,6	1,2	1,5		1,0	2,2	1,0	0,6	1,2	1,2	1,4		
	Subtotal	8	6	9	13	6		84	5	11	5	3	6			30	114
	WEAKNESSES	Reorienting Strategy (Curb zone or Self-locking)						-0				rategy area)				W- T	
W1	Low network bandwidth	0	3	3	2	0	1,6	8	0	3	0	0	0	0,6	1,1	3	11
W2	Dissatisfaction with the staff dining room	0	0	0	0	0	0,0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,0	0,0	0	0
W3	Poor acoustic insulation of the rooms	0	0	0	3	0	0,6	3	0	3	0	0	0	0,6	0,6	3	6
W4	Inadequate information flow	0	1	1	1	0	0,6	3	0	1	1	0	1	0,6	0,6	3	6
W5	Insufficient teamwork	1	0	0	2	0	0,6	3	0	2	0	1	1	0,8	0,7	4	7
	Media W-O	0,2	0,8	0,8	1,	0,00	0,7		0,0	1,8	0,2	0,2	0,4	0,5	0,60		
	Diffrence	1,4	0,4	1,0	1,0	1,2	1,0		1,0	0,4	0,8	0,4	0,8	0,7	0,8		
<u> </u>	Subtotal	1	4	4	8	0		34	0	9	1	1	2			13	47
	Total	9	10	13	21 urce: 01	6	Ļ	118	5	20	6	4	8			43	161

 Table 3

 Analysis SWOT of the Hotel. Source: own elaboration

Source: own elaboration

To make the SWOT Matrix that is exposed in Table 3, after determining the main Opportunities, Threats, Strengths and Weaknesses of the hotel, the crossover between them was carried out using a Likert scale with

values between 0 and 3, where a value was assigned 0 when there was no relationship, 1 when the magnitude of the relationship was moderate, 2 when it was strong, and 3 when it was considered very strong.

Subsequently, the vertical and horizontal sums were made, highlighting that the Strength that allows the most to take advantage of Opportunities and defend against Threats is Autonomy to market (21 points), while the Weakness, which, by attenuating, could have more benefit in its interrelation with the environment is Low network bandwidth (11 points).

For its part, the most profitable Opportunity is Favorable relations with the national tourism companies (21 points) and the most defensible Threat is the prestige of near competitors (accommodation and gastronomy) with 20 points.

Taking into account that the quadrant that achieved a greater number of points was the one corresponding to the intersection of the Strengths with the Opportunities (84 points), the type of main strategy that was defined was the offensive type (Power Area).

From the results obtained in the SWOT Matrix, the authors carried out the following analyzes:

- Strengths that will have a better impact on the environment, once they are enhanced:
 - ✓ Autonomy to market.
 - ✓ Trained staff.
- Weaknesses that will have a better impact on the environment, once they are mitigated:
 - ✓ Low network bandwidth.
 - ✓ Insufficient teamwork.
- More usable opportunities
 - ✓ Favorable relations with national transfers.
 - ✓ More advanced technologies applied to hotel management.
- More defensible threats:
 - ✓ The prestige of nearby competitors (accommodation and gastronomy)
 - ✓ Shortcomings of suppliers (quality, price, and stability)
- Less defensible threat:
 - ✓ Absence of specialized personnel available to hire.

Type of Strategy that must predominate: Offensive Strategy

GENERAL STRATEGIC PROBLEM:

If low bandwidth and insufficient teamwork are not improved; and nearby competitors (accommodation and gastronomy), as well as the insufficiencies of the providers (quality, price, and stability) still stalk; then, the Vision

of the MIXED COMPANY HOTEL SARATOGA Ltd. will not come true even if autonomy to market is strengthened and personnel is trained.

SOLUTION TO THE GENERAL STRATEGIC PROBLEM:

The solution lies in strengthening autonomy to market and having trained personnel, as well as decreasing the low bandwidth and insufficient teamwork, intending to mitigate the prestige of nearby competitors (accommodation and gastronomy) and the insufficiencies of suppliers (quality, price, and stability), in addition to taking advantage of favorable relations with national transfers and the most advanced technologies applied to hotel management, to make real the Vision of the MIXED COMPANY HOTEL SARATOGA Ltd.

Table 4 Balanced Scorecard matrix of the Hotel.											
Perspective	Strategic issue	#	Objectives	#	Indicators	Measurement Tools	Goal	Manager			
Financial	To reach the expected economic and financial results	1	To comply with the main indicators of	1	% of cumulative compliance of earnings before income tax	Income statement and budget	100% or more	Economic Sub- direction			
			the 2013 budget	2	% of compliance of energy sources		100% or less				
				3	% of compliance with the average wage- productivity coefficient		100%				
				4	Billing cycle	Financial Analysis	60 days or less				
				5	The average income per occupied room	Income statement					
Client	Unique hotel product located in the socio- cultural and heritage environment of Havana	2	To be recognized by clients as a unique hotel in the socio- cultural and heritage environment of Havana.	6	Level of recognition by the client as a unique hotel located in the socio-cultural and heritage environment of Havana	Customer satisfaction surveys	4 (Likert scale of 1 - 5)	Commercial Sub- direction			

		3	To achieve high overall customer satisfaction	7	General satisfaction of the client	Customer satisfaction surveys	4.5 (Likert scale of 1 - 5)	Commercial Sub- direction
		4	To be placed on top of Trip Advisor as a city hotel	8	Position on Trip Advisor as a city hotel	Trip Advisor web	1	Commercial Sub- direction
		5	To achieve a high % of occupancy	9	% of the accumulated average occupancy	Accommodation statistics	70%	
Processes	Chosen for its tranquility	6	To be recognized by the client for the tranquility of the hotel	10	Level of recognition by the client for the hotel tranquility	Customer satisfaction surveys	4.5 (Likert scale of 1- 5)	Commercial Sub- direction
	Chosen for its comfort	7	To be recognized by the client for comfort in the service	11	Level of recognition by the client for the hotel comfort	Customer satisfaction surveys	4.5 (Likert scale of 1 - 5)	Commercial Sub- direction
	Chosen for its exclusivity	8	To be recognized by the client for the exclusive service	12	Level of recognition by the client for the comfort in the service	Customer satisfaction surveys	4.5 (scale of 1 - 5)	Commercial Sub- direction
	Harmonious coexistence with the community	9	To satisfy the expectations of the community	13	Community satisfaction of good relationships with the hotel	Community survey	4.5 (Likert scale of 1- 5)	Commercia Sub- direction
Learning and Growth	The team stands out for its professionalism	10	To achieve a highly qualified Human Capital	14	Level of recognition by the client for the professionalism of the Human Capital	Customer satisfaction surveys	4.5 (Likert scale of 1- 5)	Human Capital Sub- direction
		11		15	The average value of professionalism value	Performance assessment	100%	
	Stable team	12	To guarantee the stability of Human Capital	16	Stability of Human Capital	Staffing analysis	95%	

The Balanced Scorecard Matrix made it possible to articulate the perspectives and strategic issues with the objectives that were raised from them, as well as with the indicators, measurement tools, goals and responsible personnel as managers in each case.

The measurement frequency of all the indicators was defined as monthly in all cases, except for the indicator % of the accumulated average occupancy, which was monthly.

From the Balanced Scorecard Matrix, it was possible to design the Balanced Scorecard itself, for which Microsoft Excel was used, showing an early warning system for each indicator, supported by a traffic light system through conditioned cells where the color Green reflected indicators that were being satisfactorily met, yellow for partially met indicators, and red for non-met indicators.

A large number of hyperlinks related to each indicator were created, navigating through them by clicking on the respective cells of the workbook prepared in Excel, thus displaying the cascades of indicators that showed the cause-effect relationships, as well as the charts and dynamic monitoring tables.

As a result of this study, the Hotel's Value Proposition was determined, defining it as: SARATOGA HOTEL Ltd.: an oasis of peace in an environment distinguished by its patrimonial, cultural, and humanitarian wealth, which you can experience through us.

As stated in (Vega & Lluglla, 2019), in the business world it is common for the design and implementation of the BSC to be carried out through the advice of specialized consulting firms, as occurred in the present study.

In a similar study of Balanced Scorecard design, but carried out in the Buffet's restaurant belonging to the CGC Group (Greeven, 2008), among the shortcomings that were identified are the little control and the lack of financial indicators, which did not occur in our study, given that the Mixed Company Hotel Saratoga Ltd. had experience in strategic planning and if it had adequate control that included financial metrics.

According to (Fatima & Elbanna, 2020), there is little research on BSC in the hotel and tourism industry and they carry out a meritorious study of 106 top-level magazine articles on BSC, of which 37 belong to this industry. it reveals that relatively few studies examine the implementation of the BSC through longitudinal case studies.

The Sustainability Balanced Scorecard (SBSC) concept is approached by (Kang, Chiang, Huangthanapan, & Downing, 2015), to evaluate the perceived importance of the relationships between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and business performance to support the objectives of hotels, which is not addressed in the case of our study and is a topic of great interest.

The result obtained from the consultancy corresponds to the objectives proposed therein, which was backed by the uppermost management level of the entity.

4. Conclusions

BSC is a valuable tool that provides a holistic view of the Hotel, representing its essential mechanism of the Information System that supports the management control system, in its mission to improve its level of competitiveness.

The design and implementation process of BSC is laborious and needs the participation of all the staff of the organization; particularly its Board of Directors. Especially, prior training in these matters facilitates the development of the strategic exercise.

The design and implementation of the strategy along with its BSC, and under the procedure proposed by the author, represent management tools that reflect the organizational strategy in a coherent structure, through linked objectives, aligned in perspectives, measured with indicators, and supported by the proposed initiatives.

The results of the consultancy carried out by the author, at the Mixed Company Hotel Saratoga Ltd. have been favorable, providing the hotel with an updated strategy, and supported by a valuable BSC.

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