Comparative analysis of marketing software programs: A Case study

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Comparative Analysis of Marketing Software Programs: A Case Study

by

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Abstract

This study is a comparative analysis of 2 different marketing and sales software programs. An economy hotel located in Albany, New York is used for the case study. The purpose of this study is to determine whether or not either of the software programs can properly market the hotel taking into consideration the components the managers at the hotel want to see in a marketing program.

Each of the programs is tested one by one using the data from the hotel and surrounding area. Once the programs are completely analyzed, a recommendation is made on which program is used for future marketing of the hotel. If neither of the programs is chosen, than a model program is created for the hotel’s use.
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Chapter I

Introduction

While browsing through a computer store, a hotel owner/manager, notices a section of computer software designed especially for developing marketing and sales plans. He thinks to himself, "This solves my dilemma on how to implement a first time marketing and sales plan for my 100 room economy hotel! I will purchase one of these software programs and let the present management staff utilize it in place of an actual marketing person. If I were to purchase an $89.00 program today, it should last me at least 3-5 years. This will save me a bundle!! Now the question is....Which of these programs should I choose to buy!" Some of the issues that this owner/manager needs to think about is whether or not all of the aspects of these software programs are applicable to his hotel. There are slight to extreme differences between one hotel and business to the next. Are these programs self explanatory enough and thorough enough to cover all aspects needed to accomplish the tasks at hand? Is it actually feasible in this case, for this hotel manager/owner to implement a marketing and sales software program in place of an actual Marketing and Sales Director or staff member?

Problem Statement

Many marketing software programs are geared toward certain types of businesses. It may be geared toward consulting, medical, non-profit, retail etc. Therefore many times
you try and implement the program to fit your own business and it is not applicable or at least some sections are inapplicable to your business. If for example you choose a software programs geared toward marketing a product, it would then be nearly impossible to adapt the program to appropriately market a service. This leads us to our case study.

Occupancy at the Econo Lodge in Albany, New York has been on a steady decline for the past 3 years. With no marketing plan or system in place this downward trend will inevitably continue. Would the Econo Lodge benefit from the use of a marketing software program? Would the software program be thorough and extensive enough to cover all of the steps and tasks that the management and owners of the hotel want covered?

**Background**

The Econo Lodge in Albany, New York is currently under major renovations. The present renovations are the first of its 17 year history. With the loss of market share resulting in economic and managerial problems, occupancy at the Econo Lodge has been on a steady decline for the past 3 years. The hotel needs a formal and effective marketing plan to go along with the new image it is trying to create. With the increased competition of hotels in the Albany area, and the decrease in the number of annual visitors, this can prove to be a difficult task. Also, to this date there has never been a budget set aside to market and advertise the hotel. This is a result of past years having sufficient occupancy to sustain the hotel. At the time that there was high occupancy there was no talk of customer relationships, service recovery or any of the procedures and systems needed to
maintain their market share. Instead the mistake made by the owners and management was to be “overconfident” in believing marketing and sales was unnecessary for their property. Today, there is a continuous struggle over trying to retain market share and increase occupancy, both of which require marketing and advertising. Goals, whether they be short term or long term for the property have never been formally established. Objectives, strategies and action plans are also lacking with the property. All of which are imperative for a hotel to have established in order to increase revenue. It serves as a map to tell you where you are, where you are headed, where you should arrive at and how you can accomplish this.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine two different Marketing and Sales, computer software programs in the context of the Albany Econo Lodge. The study will determine which of the two software programs are most applicable and beneficial for the marketing needs of the hotel. Gaps will be found and analyzed in comparing both programs. If neither of the two programs is found to be worthwhile for the Econo Lodge to use than a model will be created with all of the components needed to properly market that hotel. Missing components will be added and ineffectual components will be deleted.
Significance of the Study

To this date the Econo Lodge in Albany has never established a formal marketing or advertising plan. Therefore this type of study especially with the use of marketing and sales computer software will be the first of its kind for the property. The final recommendation or model created will serve as a standard from which subsequent marketing studies will be conducted for the hotel. In a broader scope it will also offer to the hospitality industry an example of the applications of marketing and advertising computer software for individual properties, mainly for the economy sector. It can be determined whether other hotels should follow in the Econo Lodge’s footsteps with the utilization of the software programs.

Methodology

The two types of research that will be conducted in this study are Evaluation Research and Action Research. The study will be conducted with the future perspective in mind.

In the Evaluation Research the two software programs will be examined for their step by step and overall efficiency and effectiveness. If there are any defects discovered, suggestions will be made as to how the program could be adapted to better fit the needs of the Econo Lodge. This ties into Action Research where the final product of this thesis will be to either choose one program as the “best” or to design a program to be used as a model for the future use of the hotel.
Hypothesis

The hypothesis is that neither of the two software programs chosen will be able to completely fulfill the needs of the Econo Lodge in Albany in terms of having all of the components and processes necessary to accomplish the desired marketing of the hotel.

The null hypothesis is that I will be unable to track any gaps in either of the programs and that at least one of the software programs will be sufficient to appropriately assist me in drawing up a complete marketing and sales plan for the Econo Lodge. That program or programs will be able to satisfy the needs of the Econo Lodge in terms of the completion of the marketing plan.

Definition of Terms

1. Hotel Marketing Plan: Assists managers in developing a clear direction for a set of complex interrelated activities to be carried out over the course of an entire year in regards to marketing of the property.

2. Consumer Promotion: Sales promotion designed to stimulate consumer purchasing, including samples, coupons, rebates, prices-off, premiums, patronage rewards, displays, and contests and sweepstakes.

3. Copy Testing: Measuring the communication effect of an advertisement before or after it is printed or broadcast.

4. Current Marketing Situation: The section of a marketing plan that describes the target market and the company’s position in it.
Assumptions

The main objective of this thesis is not to discredit either of the software programs but instead to show the gaps in relation to the marketing needs of the Econo Lodge. Increasing occupancy is also not one of the main purposes of this thesis. It will be assumed that all data given to me by the Econo Lodge is truthful and accurate. Also, it will be assumed that no more than the basics of computer knowledge is necessary to complete the software packages and that only limited knowledge about marketing and sales is needed.

It is also not the purpose of the researcher to draw up a complete marketing plan for the Econo Lodge but instead to make recommendations for the software program to be used in the future, if either are found to be feasible.

In terms of data collection, it will be assumed that all data provided by the Econo Lodge is complete, accurate and valid.

Scope and Limitations

In an ideal situation, focus groups would be held to determine the gaps in the two software programs. Because of the time limit allotted for the study, this will not be possible, instead, the researcher will be the one to determine the gaps.

It would also be ideal to test more than two marketing software programs. A sample of 8-10 different marketing software programs would be more accurate but again, because of the time limit and also cost factor, only two were chosen to be tested and analyzed.
This study will also focus on only one hotel, the Econo Lodge as its case study since the final recommendations are to be used for that hotel specifically.

**Long range consequence**

The long range consequence of this thesis is to assist the Albany Econo Lodge in implementing a marketing and sales plan for their future use, whether it be a manual model or a software program used. Once the proper system is in place than occupancy should increase.
CHAPTER II

Marketing

Definition

Philip Kotler and Gary Armstrong, both professors and authors of marketing define marketing as, 'A social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging products and value with others.' As you can see, the definition which was taken out of a marketing textbook is very broad with no mention of service or marketing services. In any business organization there is a need for marketing whether they are attempting to market a service or product. So why shouldn’t the definition read, “A social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging services and value with others.”

Marketing in the 21st Century

Services versus Products

The main emphasis in the marketing community used to be on products. However, recently there has been a change where products are taking on a less important role in marketing and service is taking on a more important and larger role. Being that there are very distinct differences between the marketing of services and the marketing of products, there has been a new paradigm of hospitality service marketing that has evolved in the
more recent years. You may be asking, "What exactly is hospitality service marketing?"

To answer this it is necessary to determine what exactly a service is. A service is an act or a deed, generally performed on a personal basis. In the hospitality industry, what they are selling is the overall experience provided by individual who render "services". Characteristics of hospitality services are that they are intangible, generally produced and consumed simultaneously, there is consumer involvement in the service production, there is an absence of inventories, lack of service consistency and distribution channels. (Reid, 1989)

It is extremely challenging for someone to market a service since the nature of demand is so difficult to predict. For example, if a hotel room overbooks the hotel for a night (demand exceeds supply) it is impossible for the hotel to build excess rooms to immediately appease the guests. What they must then do is to dip into another hotel’s supply of rooms and use those. Since it is not possible for a hotel to build up an excess level of inventory, when it is booked, it is at maximum capacity with no rooms to spare. With a product, it is feasible to build an excess amount to store and use at a later date. Also, when a hotel room is left unoccupied for one night, the revenue for that room, that night, is forever lost. Whereas in the situation of a product sitting on a shelf in a grocery store. If the product is not sold one night, it may still be sold the next night. Most products are not perishable unless they are grocery items, on the other hand, seats in a restaurant and hotel rooms have a shelf life of a few hours to a night. With this understanding, it is now possible to explore difficult and complex world of hotel marketing and sales.
Trends Affecting Hospitality Marketing

There are three specific trends that have and will continue to have a strong impact on the marketing of hospitality firms such as hotel. These trends are, shrinking guest loyalty, increased concern by consumer about price-value relationship, and market segmentation (Reid, 1989)

Shrinking guest loyalty

It is a myth for marketing executives to believe that price reduction will increase patronage along with repeat patronage and brand loyalty. Today there is less brand loyalty than ever before. With the number of competitors increasing which in turn produces higher expectations of customers, it is becoming extremely difficult to maintain a strong loyal customer base. The chance of their loyalty switching to another service or brand is great so it is necessary to try

One of the best examples of companies trying to increase service/brand loyalty, especially for heavy users of their service is with the implementation of frequent flyer programs. Airlines were the ground breakers in attempting to maintain brand loyalty with individualized marketing programs. This was made possible by the advance in computer technology. Before the advancement of computer technology, it was mainly small local businesses that were able to have long used relationship marketing to keep a loyal following of customers. (Orr, 1995) On the other hand, it is necessary to avoid sacrificing service to technology. There must be a balance met to maintain both
advancement in technology and excellent service to ensure that your customers remain
loyal. (Papiernik, 1995)

Increased concern by consumer about price-value relationship

Even though price will not maintain customer loyalty, customers are more cost
conscious today than ever before. In the hotel industry there is a strong consumer demand
for affordable accommodations which provide a high value service. Therefore many
companies such as Marriott Hotels and Resorts are responding to consumer demands by
offering foodservice value and variety in many of its restaurants. They are following
pricing structures of the more casual restaurant while maintaining high value and quality.
This change was made after extensive research was conducted in terms of the demands of
their customers.

In terms of hotels, companies have responded to this type of consumer demand by
the origination of brands such as Hampton Inn and Comfort Inn. Both of these hotels
feature nicely accommodating guests rooms, limited if any meeting rooms, and limited
food service provided on site. By limiting operating and developmental expenses these
brands are capable of providing accommodations for a lower price but with high value.

Upscale hotels are able to remain competitive in the price-value battle by
continuously providing a wide array of amenities such as personalized concierge service,
health clubs on site, 24 hour room service, and in room mini bars.
Market Segmentation

The last trend affecting marketers of hospitality is the tendency of market segments becoming even more prominent. It is no longer possible to offer services uniformly to a large group of consumers since the typical market segment is now being broken down to even smaller sub segments who must also be catered to.

Knowing what the trends in hospitality marketing are is not enough, instead it is imperative that marketing strategies are used to combat the negative effect of these trends.

Marketing Strategies

Micro Marketing

There are three marketing strategies that are being implemented by successful hotel marketers to date. The strategies being, “micro marketing, strategic alliance, and electronic commerce.” With competitive challenges arising at an alarming rate, many companies will not know how to deal with these changes. (Watkins, 1997) In order to remain competitive and successful in the future these strategies need to be refined and universally applied. (Steele 1995)

Most people have heard the quote made by Henry Ford, “You can have any color car you want as long as it is black.” And it is a known fact that this is an old concept, spoken in the days of mass marketing. Today, Ford’s quote has evolved into that of markets that are segmented based on age, gender, education, income, etc. Services are adapted to the needs and wants of the different segments. However, in the 21st Century, successful service companies will build their service around “micro markets”. Sometimes,
this may mean micro marketing to one individual or a small number of individuals. Many travel agencies have been successful in offering customized tours designed to meet the specific and unique desires of small groups with a common interest. For example, casino tours, sightseeing tours, teen tours, etc. For women executives traveling alone, many hotels have set up programs designed to place solo diners together, if they prefer. (Figel, 1981)

Micro marketing is about designing products and services that can be easily customized over and over again in order to fit the end users current and future needs. By looking ahead and being proactive, it will be much easier to adapt to the 21st century where everything in terms of service will be a la carte. This style of operating will be the standard and not the exception as it is today.

**Strategic Alliances**

In the 21st century, successful companies will be asking themselves, "Who else shares our target market?" and "Who else might benefit if we are successful?" From there they will build strategic alliances with those companies in order to cut marketing cost in half and to generate sales volumes that would be impossible to reach as individual entities. Federal Express recently formed a strategic alliance with Kinko’s Copy Center. It is now possible to drop off a Federal Express package 24 hours a day at all Kinko’s locations. Both companies benefit from this exchange. Federal Express has now established sites where they can pick up and deliver Fed Ex packages all day and night and Kinko’s has been exposed to an abundance of potential business.
There are a countless number of ways that service industries can form strategic alliances with others. They do not have to both be service industries. For example a travel agency could form a strategic alliance with Sony and provide free airline-style headphones for an organization’s frequent travelers. This sets the travel agency apart from others in terms of providing a unique product/service to the companies that book flights through them and Sony gains product and brand name exposure to an upscale market.

Another name for strategic alliances in marketing is integrated marketing. American Express has developed integrated marketing with over 19,000 lodging properties that will accept their card.

There are a myriad of partnership deals yet to be discovered and tapped into. With careful research and a great deal of imagination or thinking “outside of the box” these assets can be found, put to use, and benefited from.

Electronic Advancements

One of the most important factors or advances affecting how marketing will be conducted in the 21st century is the phenomenal growth of the information superhighway and overall technology.

The expansion of computers and the Internet has made it possible to do business without actually sitting face to face. Business can be conducted via e-mail, fax machines, conference calling, or the Internet.
Overall, computers are becoming more of the norm in the hospitality industry rather than the exception. Hotels are finding it easier and more efficient to track guest histories by using data bases custom designed for this purpose. These data bases have the capability of tracking guests by address, phone number, company, guest confirmation number, etc.

Hotels are also linked together through the use of computer interfaces. For example, it is now no longer necessary for the cashier in a hotel restaurant to manually walk a guest’s breakfast charge over to the front desk in order to make sure that it is added to his final bill. Instead, the host or hostess can now post the charge right to the guests account via computer. The front desk staff checking out the guest no longer has to manually post restaurant charges to the guest folios. A transaction that normally took minutes, now takes mere seconds to complete. This is all due to the fact that hotels and all the departments inside have been computerized and linked together with an interface. For the most part, as technology expands and grows, efficiency of these processes grows at an equal rate.

Internet

Another way hotels are entering the new millennium is through the use of the Internet. The phenomenal rate in which hotels are obtaining web sites for their marketing and advertising purposes is nearly impossible to measure. The Internet is changing the structure of distribution channels all over the hospitality industry.

As of September 1995, Choice Hotels International had a web site for 3,400 of its properties worldwide. The site offers room availability, rates and detailed descriptions of
each property. It is also now possible to book your reservation directly through the Internet. As advanced as Choice may seem with this new system in place they were not the forerunners of the hotel companies using the Internet.

In 1994, Hyatt Hotels put 16 United States and Caribbean properties on the Travel Web. This was the boost needed for other hotel chains to begin suit. From there Best Western set up a site with over 150 properties. In the same site they put the “Traveler Safety Tips” developed by the American Hotel and Motel Association in several foreign languages. Holiday Inn followed closely thereafter and were extremely successful. Without any promotion Holiday Inn received 12 reservations from Internet users during its first six hours on line. (Michels, 1995) Other hotels who jumped on the Internet bandwagon by setting up hotel sites were Hilton, La Quinta, Disney, Mandarin Oriental and Red Roof Inns. Most hotel sites have the capabilities to be able to handle in depth inquiries and reservations. They have even expanded to offer travel tips, currency exchange rates, worldwide weather reports and restaurant reviews.

Even with the astounding number of hotel services and options offered on the Internet, many hoteliers are not maximizing the Internet opportunities out there. Individual hotels should begin developing relationships with area attractions, such as museums, historical sites, and other local promotions that have sites on the Internet. For example, there are approximately 100 hotels in the Washington, DC area, as of November 1996, only three hotels were linked to the Washington, DC, Convention and Visitors Association site. With nearly 767,000 “hits” or user visits a month the other 97 hotels are missing a huge opportunity of potential guests and reservations. At this time, the charge
for a hotel to link up to these types of sites is fairly inexpensive in comparison to the exposure they can receive.

**Marketing Software**

Along with the use of Internet, marketing and sales computer software is another high tech tool which can assist hotels in marketing and sales. One such program that is geared specifically for the marketing of hotels, is "The Market Planner" created by Cindy Estis Green, president of the Driving Revenue Company. The program which retails for $1,500 consists of three sections: the plan setup, the strategic portion of the plan and the tactical portion of the system. The plan setup consists mainly of basic property data and information. The section allows hotel executives to design their plan to the specifications of that individual property. However, most marketing and sales software produced today is geared toward products rather than services.
Chapter III

Methodology and Procedures

In this study two computer software programs were chosen to be tested and analyzed. The first computer software program used was titled “Sales and Marketing Success” version 6.0 from Dynamic Pathways Company. “Sales and Marketing Success” is only compatible with Microsoft Windows 3.1 or higher. It requires at least 2MB RAM and 2MB of Hard disk space.

Sales and Marketing Success comes with one 3.5 floppy disc and a tutorial workbook with instructions, recommendations, and “street wise” tips.

The second was titled “Marketing Builder” version 1.0 which is a trademark of the JIAN Tools for Sales, Inc. JIAN is a software publisher company which provides project-specific, expert knowledge programs that work easily with Windows or Macintosh Word processing and spreadsheet programs. Some of the other software programs JIAN has developed are “Employee Manual Maker”, “Publicity Builder”, “Safety Plan Builder”. This program requires 4 MB Ram and 3MB of Hard disk space. Unlike “Sales and Marketing Success”, this particular software company designs their programs to be both compatible with IBM and Macintosh.

Marketing Builder comes with a 3.5 floppy disc along with a user’s manual with step by step instructions, examples and hints. It also includes a free update service for one year.
The personal computer used in the analyzing process of the two programs was a Compaq Presario 1510 with 32 MB of Ram. The operating system used was Windows 95.

Before either program was analyzed, basic data needed for marketing was gathered from the Econo Lodge in Albany. This included a weekend stay at the property to become familiar with the hotel and the surrounding area. Over the weekend, visits to area restaurants, entertainment spots, competitors, shopping centers and the Albany Airport were organized, with the Director of Operations of the hotel as a "tour guide". Some of the data gathered were competitive information, area attractions, contact phone numbers and addresses, site information etc. While visiting the property, informal interviews were conducted with the assistant general manager/sales manager, executive housekeeper and other front line employees to get an idea of the culture, history and projections for the hotel.

Other data gathering sources and techniques were used such as the use of the Internet. The Internet was utilized for gathering data about Albany and the surrounding area, statistics on populations, area attractions, competitors and other market place information which seemed relevant to the marketing purposes of the hotel. Phone calls and inquiries were made to Albany area advertising sources, from advertising in the airport, highway billboards, publications, etc. Marketing and sales directors from area hotels were contacted for information on their specific property. Text books, journals and other publications were also used in the data collecting process.

Once it was assumed that all of the necessary data had been collected, it was then necessary to decide what exactly the managers and owners of the Econo Lodge expected
or were looking for in the marketing programs. What components of marketing and sales were needed by the Econo Lodge's management and owners. An "ideal" program was designed with the components the Econo Lodge felt were needed to properly market their hotel.

Next, the analyzation process of the first program, "Sales and Marketing Success" commenced. Analyzing the program consisted of a combination of inserting data when necessary, researching specific sections to gather more data when needed, utilizing and constructing marketing ideas from text books, journals, deleting portions that were inapplicable, etc.

The tutorial workbook was used as a reference and aid in completing the process. The workbook contained examples and tips to be used in the program. It also was used to help guide the researcher through the program.

When entering data and constructing marketing ideas, careful thought was always used in order to ensure that they were the same ideas and data that the owners and managers of the Econo Lodge would have used. Because of the time limit reviewing each section with the managers and owners, and obtaining their constant feedback, the researcher's best judgment and expertise were used in making many of the decisions.

Once the first program was completed, it had to be exported to Microsoft Word in order to make the appearance more presentable. Once exported, extensive formatting for purely appearance sake had to be conducted since the exporting process changed the format greatly. It was necessary to export the file to a proper word processing document since the word processing abilities of the actual software program was extremely limited.
The second software program consisted of a series of templates in which data had to be inputted along with brainstorming ideas. Once more, the necessary data and marketing ideas were entered along with deleting or revising inapplicable portions of the program to complete the marketing plan. When needed, uncollected data needed for this program was researched and found with the assistance of the Director of Operations of the Albany Econo Lodge. Since the program was already designed with Microsoft Word as its word processing base it was not necessary to convert it or make major revisions in terms of format and appearance.

After both programs were completed, a comparative analysis was conducted to determine whether or not the programs successfully met the criteria needed to best market the Econo Lodge and best fit the needs of the hotel. Lastly, components that were found to be missing were designed and constructed with Excel and Microsoft Word. These components can be found in Appendix A.
Chapter IV

Findings

Both of the software programs analyzed were found to have their strengths and weaknesses. Preferred components found in Marketing Builder were found to be lacking in Sales and Marketing Success and vice versa. However both programs were found to have more faults than merit, at least in terms of what the Econo Lodge needed with marketing. That is not to say that either program would not work perfectly for another hotel or business.

A reoccurring fault in both programs was that they were strongly based on the marketing and sales of a product rather than a service. Many sections had to be completely altered or deleted to enable it to fit into the context of the Econo Lodge and its marketing capabilities and needs. With terms utilized such as “manufacturing efficiency”, “ease of use”, “installation”, “trade in value”, “technical expertise” and many other product related terms, the fact that the software programs were more geared toward marketing products was apparent. Even after revising many sections to best fit the marketing of a service and hotel, it was still not a “proper fit”. The program could be used internally but could not produce a document that could be presented to an external agency such as investors or a banking firm. An example of this is shown in the competitive roundup.
**Competitive Roundup**

The following chart illustrates how [Company]'s product compares to the competition in several different key areas.

**Competitive Roundup--Company**

<table>
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<td>Company</td>
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<td>Estimated 19[xx] Sales $[x]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advertising Effectiveness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sales Force Excellence</td>
<td>[x]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Distribution</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>[x]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manufacturing Efficiency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standing in Industry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Future Potential</td>
<td>[x]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seriousness of Competition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of Employees</td>
<td>[x]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greatest Strength</td>
<td>[x]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Key Weakness</td>
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</table>

**Competitive Roundup--Product**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Price</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>[x]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>[x]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ease of Use</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>[x]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Installation</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>[x]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>[x]</td>
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<td>Appearance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
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<td>[x]</td>
<td>[x]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>[x]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Useful Life</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>[x]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trade-in Value</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>[x]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>[x]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>[x]</td>
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<td>[x]</td>
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<tr>
<td>State-of-the-art</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>[x]</td>
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<tr>
<td>24-Hour Availability / Support</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>[x]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technical Expertise</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>[x]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repair Service</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>[x]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Efficiency</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>[x]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guarantee / Warranty</td>
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</table>
As you can see, this section is strongly geared toward comparing competitors of product manufacturers or distributors. In order to customize it to comparing services, most of the terminology would have to be altered.

Another problem with Marketing Builder was that it was geared towards companies with a very large budget to advertise and market with. With the Econo Lodge being an economy sector property it does not have the budget to market themselves as expansively and extravagantly as Marketing Builder would like it to. An entire section was based on rating a number of prospective advertising agencies that the business may want to acquire the services of. This is impractical for the purposes of the Econo Lodge since most of the advertising ideas and programs would come from management or other sources within the hotel. The hiring of an advertising agency would prove to be too costly and would not fit into the advertising budget allotted.

Many of the examples, and tips given by Marketing Builder also did not fit into the marketing of a service. Therefore, it was difficult to apply the examples given by the program, to the situations at the Econo Lodge. This could pose a problem for an hotel manager with little experience in marketing. The inexperienced marketer for the most part would have a difficult time using the examples given. This is because many times the manager would have purchased the program in the hopes that it would provide applicable and relevant examples and tips for them to use as a sort of guideline or foundation.
The researcher found it necessary to delete or alter entire portions of the program in order to structure the overall program to fit into the marketing of an economy hotel. One section that had to be deleted was on commissions and what each sales person earned in commissions for what they sold. For the Econo Lodge, or any other property the size of the Econo Lodge, this section was entirely impractical and a misfit since they did not have an entire sales team. This sections titled, “Commissions Sales Forecast and Tracking”, is also impractical in the general hospitality industry population since very seldom do sales managers earn commission on groups they book or reservations they take.

Again, it was apparent that the program was geared toward the marketing of a product. It was not only geared toward a product but it was geared towards a company with much more personnel than that of the Econo Lodge in Albany. With the General Manager and Assistant Manager usually taking care of all marketing and sales, there is very little need for an entire sales and marketing department.

A problem with altering portions of the Marketing Builder program came in the Microsoft Excel Documents. With many of the cells locked, the company made it impossible to make modifications in many of the spreadsheets. Therefore, instead of enabling the researcher to make small changes in the minor details such as the wording of a section, it forced the researcher to instead, delete the portion from the final document. Without the proper verbiage of these portions, the marketing plan could not flow or follow a logical pattern. The only way to salvage many of these documents was to convert it to Microsoft Word and change the verbiage from there. This proved to be a time consuming task.
Once the inapplicable portions of the program were deleted or altered, it left very little for the use of the Econo Lodge.

Sales and Marketing Success was found to be more “service marketing friendly” than that of Marketing *Builder*. However, it was still apparent that it was more product oriented rather than service oriented.

Sales and Marketing Success tested to be more user friendly in terms of basic terminology and structure. It was not as complex and expansive as Marketing *Builder*. The sections were more straight forward and explanatory. The tutorial workbook that came along with the software program provided detailed explanations and relevant examples that could be adapted to and applied to that of the Econo Lodge. Since the program was not a series of templates. It was easier to adapt and revise the sections that were originally product based to one that was service based. All of the text seen in the program is that of the researcher’s. Whereas much of the text seen in Marketing *Builder* was that of the software program.

The major fault of the Sales and Marketing Success program was in the word processing and presentation arena. The word processing was in dos format, rather than Microsoft Word or Works, therefore, the mouse which is used hand in hand with these programs, is ineffective in the software program. To delete and move around, the space, backspace, tab and arrows had to be utilized instead. The majority of the time spent on this program was in the formatting and word processing aspect. Once all of the sections were completed, the entire plan had to be transferred to a Microsoft Word program to format again into a presentable document. The original document before it was transferred to Microsoft Word had the appearance of a typewritten document. For
external presentation purposes, such as to investors, this would be unacceptable in today’s world of high tech graphics and other presentation materials and capabilities. The information contained within the document could be well versed and impressive, but presentation is very important. This was a fault of Sales and Marketing Success that Marketing Builder did not have. With Marketing Builder in Microsoft Word format, it took much less formatting to finalize the document.
Chapter V

Conclusions

In testing and comparing the two software programs it was found that neither was applicable in terms of components and guidance needed to properly market the hotel. Therefore, neither program would be recommended for the hotel to purchase and implement. Instead, it would prove more beneficial to use the models designed by the researcher for the managers of the Econo Lodge. The model was designed by revising and utilizing components of both software programs, and adding components desired by the managers at the hotel.

Recommendations

The researcher’s recommendation to the Econo Lodge is to not purchase or use either of the programs tested. It is recommended for the hotel to use other sources as references and for assistance in marketing and sales. If a software program were to be used it would most benefit the hotel if it was designed specifically for the marketing of hotels, more specifically economy hotels. There are a few of these types of programs out there but most of them are not available for the general public to purchase. They can only be purchased through hotel accounts. Also, they can tend to be quite costly ranging from a retail price of $1,500 and higher. Instead it may prove to be more beneficial for the hotel to instead, follow the model that was created by the researcher, which includes all of
the components desired by the managers at the Econo Lodge. This model is shown in Appendix A.

**Long Range Consequences**

This study will play an integral role in the beginning of a formal marketing and sales system for the Econo Lodge. It will be used as a model from which marketing and sales is based on for the future.

If this study had not been performed then the Econo Lodge would not have the model set up and may have wasted valuable marketing dollars into investing a computer software program to be used for marketing and sales.
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Appendix A: Ideal Program
Ideal Program Check List

The ideal program check list was based on hotel marketing and sales textbooks and the requirements of the management at the Econo Lodge. With the two, this list was compiled which consists of components most important in regards to marketing to the managers and owners of the Econo Lodge. Consideration was also taken to utilize the resources the hotel had access to. This particular inventory of components can not necessarily be used by other economy hotels unless it has been determined that it is a perfect fit in terms of marketing and sales needs. This is because every hotel property has different marketing needs. Therefore it is impossible to make a generalization on what components should be used by all hotels in marketing. Instead, this unique and specific list is what best fits the Albany Econo Lodge at this time. This check list also lists whether or not the two software programs analyzed had the same components as that of ideal program.
Figure 1-1: Ideal Computer Software Program Check List

Ideal Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideal Program</th>
<th>Sales &amp; Marketing Success</th>
<th>Marketing Builder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Market Analysis</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising Time Line</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing Calendar</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive Analysis</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price Analysis</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Data Sheet</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Penetration</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brochure Development</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Letters</td>
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<td>no</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Market Analysis

It is vital for any business to know itself inside and out before beginning to market themselves. You must know what exactly you are marketing, who you are marketing to and what your results should be. Without knowing what your strengths to be marketed are and what faults you should be improving, it would be impossible to proceed in marketing and promoting the hotel. Also, being aware of any internal threats within the hotel and external threats that may hinder the success of the property assists in enabling the hotel to be proactive instead of reactive to problems that may occur. Questions such as the ones listed in figure 1.2 should be asked.
Figure 1-2: Market Analysis Questions

Market Analysis

Customer Profile: Who is your customer?

What is his/her:
Age:
Income:
Sex:
Family:
Geographic:
Occupation:
Attitude

Hotel Strengths: What are the Econo Lodge’s strengths?

Hotel Weaknesses: What are the Econo Lodge’s weaknesses? What are you doing to change these weaknesses to strengths?

Internal Threats: Are there any internal threats that may hamper the progress of the hotel? (e.g. low employee morale, high staff and employee turnover)

External Threats: What external threats could get in the way of the progress of the hotel? (e.g. competition, government legislation)
Advertising Time Line

An advertising time line is beneficial in that it enables the hotel to set up some type of "plan" for the hotel to follow through out the year in terms of what promotional activities are upcoming, what the cost is, and what the due date is for payments or commitments. The time line can be used in conjunction with the marketing calendar. Former marketing attempts by the Econo Lodge were often hampered by missed deadlines. This type of mapping out process such as the time line and the marketing calendar can prevent this from happening. An example of an advertising time line is shown with figure 1-3.
Figure 1-3: Advertising Time Line

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONTH</th>
<th>WEEK OF</th>
<th>ADVERTISING ACTION/PLAN</th>
<th>COST</th>
<th>DEADLINE</th>
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<td>XXX</td>
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</table>
Marketing Calendar

A marketing calendar is similar to and goes hand in hand with the advertising timeline. It is very similar to a calendar you would use to track your appointments, meetings and any other upcoming events. However, instead of tracking personal activities it is used for mapping marketing activities. Any 12-16 month calendar can be used for this. It gives a broad overview in what events are upcoming, when deadlines are due in terms of payments, commitments etc. It is used as a quick reference to the upcoming and current marketing activities in which the hotel is committed to or needs to commit to. This calendar can assist in preventing missed deadlines.

This type of calendar and mapping system is not meant for large properties with a large number of marketing activities. It is meant to be used by a small hotel with a limited number of marketing activities to track.
Figure 1-4: Marketing Calendar

Marketing Calendar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Costs</th>
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Total: $ $ $
**Competitive Analysis**

Knowing who your competitors are, what makes them your competitor and how they affect your hotel is important. Therefore conducting a competitive analysis can prove to be very beneficial in determining how you can improve to ensure you maintain a competitive edge on your competitors.
Figure 1-5: Competitive Analysis

Who are your top 10 competitors? Rank them in order of greatest competitor to least using a ranking scale of 1 being the biggest competitor to 10 being the smallest competitor.

1) Competitor # 1-10

## Rooms:

Phone Number:

Rates (single and double):

Distance from Airport:

Transportation to and from airport:

Distance from Econo Lodge:

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Market niche:

Amenities or perks:

Do this for the Econo Lodge and then all 10 of your top competitors. From there compare the Econo Lodge’s results to that of the competitors. Where is the Econo Lodge at an advantage or disadvantage to its competitors? This type of competitive analysis should be done on a quarterly basis to ensure that the data kept on competitors is up to date and accurate.
Price Analysis

A price analysis of the Econo Lodge as compared to competitors can be done the same way as the competitive analysis. It is important to ensure that the rates of the Econo Lodge are competitive in comparison to its competitors. Being able to justify your rates to the guests and to the investors of the property is a necessity. Calling competing hotels quarterly to obtain their single, double and corporate rates is sufficient.
## Price Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hotel Name:</th>
<th>Single Rate</th>
<th>Double Rate</th>
<th>Corporate Rate</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>1-Jan</td>
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<td>1-Apr</td>
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<td>1-Jul</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-Oct</td>
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Media Data Sheet

The benefits of having a media data sheet is for easy reference for the present and future in terms of referencing past media sources used, contact names, phone numbers and any other miscellaneous information that is beneficial to know. For the time being, since the Econo Lodge has so few sources it is not necessary to break media sources apart into sections, but in the future, it would prove to greatly organize the information. For example, the hotel could now group all 8-10 of their media sources on one summary sheet. However, if marketing for the hotel progresses and expands, it would be necessary to break it apart into organized sections, such as, newspaper, radio, direct mail, etc.

It is necessary to keep an organized listing of all advertising media used, along with contact names and general notes about each media company. This is to ensure efficiency when a new marketing idea or project comes along. Being able to quickly reference the company previously used along with who the contact person is can save someone an enormous amount of time and energy which can instead be devoted to other tasks. Whether the summary is handwritten or kept on a personal computer, it is a necessary component of any proper marketing system. Along with the media data sheet should be kept a media penetration chart.
## Figure 1-7: Media Data Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media</th>
<th>Contact person/phone #</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
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Media Penetration

With each media resource used, a log on what the potential customer reach and overall household reach is needed. The reason being that it is important to know how great of a reach the agency has so you can be aware of the number of people and household you covered and how far away. It can also better assist in estimating what the return should be for a particular promotion or advertisement that was run. Media companies whether they be newspaper, radio, television, are able to chart their media reach and document it for their clients.
Figure 1-7: Media Penetration and Reach
Brochure Development

In developing a brochure for a specific property there are many factors that must be taken into consideration. Below is a list of important questions that must be answered before the construction of a brochure even begins.

1. Do you want a black and white or color brochure. If color, how many colors will you be utilizing? If black and white, how are you going to design it to be eye catching and appealing?

   - This is important since the cost of printing color brochures can be expensive. You must be sure that your budget will allow the extra cost. However, black and white brochures are rarely visually appealing or eye catching and many times do not do justice to your property.

2. Will you be designing the brochure yourself or will you have it professionally created?

   - By designing the brochure internally your property can save a large amount of money in terms of paying for someone outside to design and typeset it. Search around internally for someone who may have special skills in graphic arts or design. With the capabilities of computer software programs such as Microsoft Publisher, many times it is not necessary for the person to be an artist of any sort.
3. Will the brochure be two sided, one single page or two sided, tri fold?

- Again, cost is the main issue for this decision. Also, how you can get your message across best. Another consideration is if you will be having the brochures printed externally or internally? If internally, what capabilities does your printer enable you to do?

4. What information would you like on the brochure?

- The key is to use as few words as possible to explain as much as possible, the best as possible.

5. Do you want a color picture of your property on the brochure?

- Many economy hotels do not place a picture of their property on their brochure. This can help in minimizing cost.

6. Do you want a map on the brochure?

- A map to show the location of your property from major routes can greatly assist a tourist, or businessman who has never been to your hotel, in finding the property. However, it is not always necessary and can take up valuable space.
that could otherwise be used to insert other information about the property.

Many times a simple 2-3 lines of written directions from major routes is sufficient.

7. How many will you want printed?

- Quantity is important because it is necessary to print an accurate number to ensure that the designated areas such as local restaurant, travel agencies, and the airports are supplied with an ample stock of the brochure.

8. What quality of paper do you want the brochure printed on? Glossy surface or plain?

- Whether or not you decide to have the brochure designed internally or have it created professionally, by initially answering these questions, time and money can be greatly saved. This is because backtracking during the development process can prove to be costly and time consuming. With wasted materials and labor, it would prove beneficial to have a set plan entirely in place before the actual design and production process began.
Association’s Name
Street Address
City, State & Zip Code

Dear Sir or Madame:

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce the Albany Econo Lodge to you. We are a newly renovated, 100 room hotel located off Exit 2W of I-87. Our hotel is located minutes from the best shopping and restaurants in town. Our location is very conducive to all the area colleges, Albany airport, local government offices and area attractions. If your association is ever in the Albany area and in need of accommodations, please give us a call and we will be happy to accommodate your group. We will ensure that all of your needs are met by our wonderful staff.

As the General Manager/Sales Manager of the Albany Econo Lodge, I invite you to stop by and visit our hotel at any time.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

XXXXXXXX
General Manager/Sales Manager
Appendix A. Sales and Marketing Success
Marketing Plan

Albany Econo Lodge

1997-1998

June 1, 1997

By Judy Y. Lin
CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

The information, data and drawings embodied in this marketing plan are strictly confidential and are supplied on the understanding that they will be held confidentially and not disclosed to third parties without the prior written consent of the Albany Econo Lodge.
BUSINESS SUMMARY

COMPANY AND CONTACT

Company Name: Albany Econo Lodge  
Contact: Mr. Warren Sackler  
Address: 1632 Central Avenue  
            Albany, New York 12205  
Telephone: (518) 456-8811

BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

The Econo Lodge in Albany, New York is a 100 room economy hotel. The hotel franchises its name from Choice Hotels International Corporation. The hotel mainly caters to the traveler whether it be for pleasure, business or government. "Spend a Night, Not a Fortune" is a common logo seen with the Econo Lodge name. Econo Lodge is mainly viewed as affordable lodging that is clean and comfortable. Today, the Econo Lodge name is the fifth largest lodging chain in the nation and the second largest in the Choice Hotels International system.

Along with its 100 guest rooms, the hotel has a front lobby where continental breakfast is served every morning, plenty of free parking, 24 hour messaging service, and newly renovated and upgraded rooms. Being a limited service hotel, the Econo Lodge does not have meeting room space, food and beverage services or an extensive array of amenities. The building is 17 years old and is in the process of going through extensive renovations to bring the facility up to the standards and regulations of today in terms of handicapped
accessibility, technology, fire and other safety codes. The management/employee structure of the hotel is as such:

```
General Manager
  /   /
/  Assistant GM/Sales Manager  Maintenance  Executive Housekeeper
     |      |       |
     Front desk staff  Staff  Housekeepers
```

SITUATION ANALYSIS

The Econo Lodge has experienced a steady decline in occupancy over the past 3 years. For 1996, the hotel ran an overall average of 44%. The 1996 industry average for the economy hotel sector in Albany was 52.7%. The RevPar for the Econo Lodge in 1996 was $19.20. The 1996 industry average was $22.21. As you can see the figures from the Econo Lodge fall below the industry average for Albany. The figures for the beginning months in 1997 reflect even lower percentages. These low figure are due to increased competition in the economy hotel market segment, and a decrease in annual visitors to the Albany area. Another factor in the decline of guests is the lack of sales and marketing performed by the hotel's staff. To this date there has yet to be a formal marketing and sales plan drawn up for the use of the hotel. There has also yet to be a budget set aside for the marketing of the hotel. There is very little in terms of advertisements, billboards, brochures and other advertising media for the hotel.
A few of the Econo Lodge's strengths in comparison to its competitors are the pricing of its rooms, interior entrances, cleanliness of rooms, in room movies, and renovated rooms.

Weaknesses of the property are the lack of advertising media, poor signage, poor visibility from the main road (Central Avenue) and appearance of lobby.

MISSION STATEMENT

To provide and become known for providing affordable lodging that is clean and comfortable. Be renovating the entire property to make it more visually appealing to the travelers passing by in hopes of attracting them to stay at the hotel.

A new main road will be built directly passing in front of the Econo Lodge by the summer of 1997. This will greatly increase visibility and accessibility of the property.

OBJECTIVES

1. One objective the hotel would like to reach is to see the profitability of the property increase within the next three years. It is also an objective to make a return on the renovation investment put into the hotel.

2. Customer satisfaction is a major objective of all hotel staff from the front desk staff to the housekeeping staff. Making regulars feel more comfortable at the hotel since it is many of their "home away from home" Creating data bases with guest histories to make check in, check out, reservations and any other frequent guest tasks more efficient for both the guest and the hotel staff.
3. Another objective is with hotel marketing and sales. Marketing and sales should become one of the basis of the hotel functions, especially among top management. Visiting and attending trade shows with potential guests and other aggressive sales and marketing techniques are all in the picture.

STRATEGIES

The main objective discussed previously, "To increase overall profitability for the hotel and to see a return on investment in terms of renovation costs" should be reached by implementing the objective stated directly after it. (Guest histories, marketing and sales)

Other strategies to improve profitability and occupancy could be the partnering of area businesses and organizations. These are also included in marketing and sales.

THE FRANCHISE

As of May 31, 1996, Choice Hotels International had over 3,600 hotels open under their franchise. There are currently more under development at this time. Today, Choice Hotels is the world's leading hotel franchise company. Choice has seven principal hotel brand names: Comfort, Quality, Clarion, Sleep, Rodeway, Econo Lodge and Main Stay Suites. Franchise name contracts mainly run for 20 years.

More specifically, the Econo Lodge name is on 659 properties across the world. There are 110 more under development. This makes a total of 768 properties to be open and developed with the Econo Lodge flag.

An advantage of being part of the Choice family is the financing programs available for renovation, including the purchase of furniture, fixtures and equipment, all under
competitive interest rates. Choice assists hotel developers in securing such financing through the development of comprehensive loan packages.

Other advantages of franchising under a Choice name are; the powerful worldwide reservation system "Choice 2001", national advertising, and pre-opening training and orientation. Also, required standards in terms of service, facilities, etc. must be kept in order to remain under the chosen Choice name.

Disadvantages to being part of any franchise company could be the constraint in management and creative issues in relation to franchise requirements and standards. Also, the 20 year franchise agreement can be binding.

UNIQUENESS OF THE SERVICE

The Econo Lodge is geared toward economy travelers. At the present time the major clientele is the government travelers on a per diem who is staying from Sunday evening and checking out either Tuesday or Wednesday morning. This niche nearly fills the hotel on the nights of Sunday and Monday. Once these government guests have checked out of the hotel, the hotel barely reaches 40-50% occupancy. Most of the government travelers are receiving negotiated discounted rates because of their frequent stay status.

The major competitors in terms of services and prices of the Econo Lodge are the Red Roof Inn, Swiss Chalet, and Microtel. The Econo Lodge charges a lower price per night than most of its competitors. Another feature of the hotel that the competitors lack are the interior entrances which shows that the Econo Lodge is concerned about the safety of its guests. By cutting down on the number of entrances into the hotel, the coming and goings of guests and visitors is monitored much more closely.
MARKET RESEARCH AND ASSUMPTIONS

MARKET SEGMENTS

Of all the key market segments in today's mix of lodging guests, the Albany Econo Lodge mainly caters to the "Individual Business Traveler". More specifically, the government personnel. The main characteristic these travelers look for in lodging is the location of the property. Proximity to local business firms, hospitals, schools and universities, government offices, association headquarters, clubs and unions is vitally important. With the Econo Lodge located only a few miles from the Albany airport, and government offices, it is apparent why these government workers choose to stay at the Econo Lodge. The hotel offers negotiable rates, free continental breakfast and free local phone calls, all of which rank high in the mind of these travelers in terms of amenities and services.

The second segment the Econo Lodge attracts are the people attending special events in the area, mainly the horse races at Saratoga Springs. Albany is about 20 miles from the race track. Saratoga Springs has a great shortage of hotel rooms during their race season (summer months). During these months the Econo Lodge runs a high occupancy, many nights completely selling out.

Segments to be examined and marketed to in the near future will be the local universities/colleges and sports groups. With visiting sports teams on a limited budget
there is a great potential for filling rooms with the players and coaches by offering them discounts off of the normal rack rates.

INDUSTRY/TECHNOLOGY ADVANCES

A major change that will be occurring in the Albany area is with the complete addition and renovation of the Albany Airport. The project is expected to be completed by October of 1998. With the addition of new wings the airport will approximately double the number of incoming and outgoing flights. This could greatly increase the number of visitors to visit Albany whether it be for business or pleasure. This is a great opportunity for the Econo Lodge to attract some of these visitors with airport advertising; an opportunity not being taken advantage of by the hotel at this time.

COMPETITION

Major Competitors:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property Name</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
<th>Number of Rooms</th>
<th>Single Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Red Roof Inn</td>
<td>459-1971</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>$48.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swiss Chalet</td>
<td>459-5670</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>$42.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microtel</td>
<td>782-9161</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>$35.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other area competitors and their phone numbers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property Name</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Best Western</td>
<td>458-1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort Inn</td>
<td>569-5327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Days Inn</td>
<td>459-3600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard Johnson</td>
<td>569-0281</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

A few of the potential markets and contacts that have yet to be considered by the Econo Lodge are the local shopping plaza's and malls, restaurants and bars, car rental agencies, attractions (local museums, theaters), and hospitals.

With all of the large malls and shopping centers in the Albany area and more specifically near the Econo Lodge, it could prove to be very beneficial for the hotel to negotiate some type of "referral service" with the mall. Ways in which this can be accomplished is with the Customer Service Centers inside the malls. Brochure's from the Econo Lodge can be displayed there for out of town guests in assisting them to decide where to stay for the night.

Central Avenue is filled with restaurant of all types. A referral type of service could also be arranged with these eateries. Both parties could benefit from this system. Travelers who are already staying at the hotel could be referred to the restaurants who in turn refer out of town customers to the Econo Lodge. It is extremely important for the hotel to take advantage of these low cost marketing opportunities.

This same type of referral system could work between the Econo Lodge and car rental agencies, hospitals, museum's etc.
MARKETING STRATEGIES

TARGET MARKETS & CUSTOMERS

The Albany Airport market is a chosen market to be explored because of the upcoming expansion of the airport. The new expansion will bring more people through the airport and into the Albany area. With these additional people there is a great opportunity to attract them to the Econo Lodge with proper advertising in the airport.

PROMOTION AND ADVERTISING STRATEGIES

The first advertising media that will be implemented is with the Albany Airport. The company that handles all advertising within the airport is "Interspace Airport Advertising". The Econo Lodge has yet to place any type of advertising in the airport. Interspace Airport Advertising handles all billboards, phone boards etc. The phone board is already used by many of our competitors. The first plan of action would be to have an ad for the hotel put on the phone board, the second would be to have a board put up by the luggage claim or else along the walls of the terminal. The coverage that would be come from this type of advertising would be of great benefit and value to the hotel. The downside is that it is fairly costly.

A source of advertising within the airport that would be relatively inexpensive and easy to implement is at the Albany County Tourist Information Booth. All around the booth and next to the booth are brochures of area attractions, restaurants, lodging, shopping,
etc. If the organization is a member of the Albany Visitors Bureau they may place their brochures free of charge in the booth. The only cost for the hotel would be the printing of the brochures. However, before this can be done, a brochure must be designed and developed for the hotel. At this time the hotel has a brochure that includes three other Econo Lodge properties across the country. The properties being: Clearwater, Florida, Plattsburgh, New York, Watertown, New York and the Albany location. One brochure including all of these properties cannot properly advertise each specific property. It is also much more difficult to revise and update in case one property has additions or any changes. A customized brochure that could possibly be used by the hotel is shown on the next page.
Econo Lodge
Albany, New York

Map

I-87 Exit 2W (State Road 5)
1/2 Miles to Hotel

Area and Regional Attractions:
Empire State Plaza, New York State Museum
SUNY Albany, National Baseball Hall of Fame
Saratoga Springs Race Track, Schuyler Mansion,
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Area Shopping:
West Gate Mall, Latham Circle Mall, Colonie Mall,
Latham Outlet Village, Crossgates Mall, Stuyvesant Plaza

1632 Central Avenue
Call (518) 456-8811
Fax (518) 456-0811
1-800 424-4777 Reservations only
ALBANY, NY
Minutes from the airport
Services/Amenities
100 Guest Rooms
Nonsmoking and Smoking Rooms
Handicapped Accessible Rooms
Choice of King Bed or Double Beds
Free Parking
Roll-a-way cots & cribs available
Each guest room features:
Color TV with HBO
Telephone
Refrigerator
Air conditioner
Free continental breakfast
Free local phone calls
Fax machine available
Much, Much More!!
1632 Central Avenue
Call: (518) 456-8811
FAX (518) 456-0811
1-800 424-4777
Reservations only
The second advertising strategy would be to put an ad in the Traveler Discount Guide. This is a publication put out every quarter (4 months) that publishes discount coupons, maps, advertisements and information about the area. The guides are distributed at Welcome centers, rest areas, and information Booths. The guide for the northeast includes New England, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware.
Appendix B: Marketing *Builder*
Market Analysis

Market Segment

Key points in defining the market segment for economy sector hotels are cost conscious, perceived quality conscious, and lack of brand loyalty.

Strengths

In terms of strengths, the Econo Lodge has several distinct advantages over the competition. First is its marked advancement in reservation technology. With the use of the Choice 2001 worldwide reservation system, it is far more advanced in linking all Choice properties together for the convenience and simplicity of those calling in to make reservations.

In the corporate arena, the Econo Lodge is supported by Choice Hotels International. With Choice being one of the largest hotel companies in the world lending it’s name to hundreds of properties all over the world. It is easy to see why being part of the Choice family lends the Econo Lodge to name recognition everywhere.

Choice Hotels International has over 3,600 hotels under their franchise, with more being built and converted at this time. In relations to brand recognition, Choice Hotels offers its hotels national advertising.

Weaknesses

There are a few weaknesses that the Econo Lodge does suffer from. One major weakness is the lack of visibility from the main road (Central Avenue). The hotel is blocked by a large restaurant built directly in front of it. This restaurant greatly obstructs the visibility of the hotel from the main road.

By 1998 we should be able to position ourselves in order to become very accessible and visible to those traveling by us, thereby reducing this weakness completely.
Opportunities

The upside potential for increasing our occupancy during the latter part of the week and weekends in the corporate, transient markets over the next two years is extremely feasible with new companies positioning themselves in Albany and in close proximity to the hotel.

Also, with the construction of the main road leading directly in front of our hotel, the exposure and visibility we will receive will greatly enhance the chance of increasing occupancy on a regular basis.

Unexploited Opportunities

Further opportunity for our hotel exists in the leisure market(s).

By developing the marketing to this segment and attracting more families on leisure travel, we could increase our weekend occupancy substantially.

Threats

Internal Threats

Internal threats to our hotel include high employee turnover, lack of structure marketing and lack of up to date front office equipment.

External Threats

External threats to our company include government restrictions on per diem employees, new construction of economy hotels who would add to out competitor base.

Responsible Party

The General Manager is responsible for addressing these threats.
Customer Profile

Our main customer profile is as such:  
- male  
- age 28-35  
- government employee  
- per diem allowance  
- cost conscious  
- appreciates special attention and services

Most of our frequent guests are men who are working for the government in some sort. Whether it be that they are working for a senator, congressman, etc. They are usually not the more well known government officials. They are given a per diem which is for their lodging, food and other traveling expenses. Typically they like to be treated with special care and attention, especially the very frequent guests. Sometimes the special care means a late checkout, particular rooms, express check ins and check out. Most of this segment is health conscious, exercises frequently, married with at least one child at home, and the majority are from New York State. They typically earn a yearly salary ranging from $34,000-$45,000.

Customer List

List current and updated frequent guest list.

Competition

Our competitor's strengths are their visibility from Central Avenue, shuttles to and from the Albany Airport, marketing system in place, located in close proximity to the airport.

Our competitor's weaknesses include higher rates than the Econo Lodge and many are in need of major renovations whether it be in the lobby area, rooms or external renovations. Another weakness is their lack of internal entrances which causes safety concerns.
Top 20 Questions

1. What type of business do you have? 100 Room Economy Hotel
2. What is the purpose of your business? Lodging
3. Who are your target customers? Economy business traveler
4. What is your primary product / service? Economy lodging
5. What is the primary function of your product / service? Provide lodging
6. What are three unique benefits of your product / services? Price, safety, cleanliness
7. What is your reason for being in this business? XXXXXXXXXXXX
8. What led you to develop your product / service? XXXXXXXXXXXX
9. Who is your competition? Other hotels providing the same service to the same segment.
10. How is your product different from that of your competition? Newly renovated, more safe, better service.
11. What are the top three objections to buying your product / service immediately? INAPPLICABLE
12. What is the pricing of your product versus your competition? Lower prices (rates)
13. When did you first offer your product or when will your product be available? XXX
14. Is this product/service used in connection with other products/services? car rental agencies, restaurants, area attractions etc.
15. Are you making any special offers to distributors or customers? Not at this time
16. What is the key message or phrase that describes your business? “Spend a Night, Not a Fortune.”
17. What are your current plans for advertising and promoting your product/service? Airport advertising, new brochure, billboard, travel publications.

18. Do you have datasheets, brochures, diagrams, sketches, photographs, related press releases or other documentation about your product/service? Brochure and data sheets

19. How will your marketing assist the growth of your business? Provide greater coverage for greater exposure.

20. Do you have the marketing and sales management expertise needed to achieve your business goals? No. That is why we purchased this software program.
Marketing Communications

The Econo Lodge's marketing strategy is to enhance, promote and support the fact that our hotel provides a better value for our guests than our competitors.

The overall marketing communications plan for our product is based on the following fundamentals:

**Economy lodging**

**Individual Commercial Segment**

To prove the value of the Econo Lodge we can

**Hold an Open House and give tours of the property once all renovations are complete:**
invite local media, travel agents, current guests, etc.

**Provide incentives for untapped markets to come and stay at the hotel.**

Marketing Strategy

Positioning

In order to determine the exact positioning of our hotel in relation to its competitors, focus groups should be held with our transient guests. Until then it would be impossible to accurately position the hotel.

In terms of market segmentation advantages, we can use price/value appeal to arrive at a winning position here.

Repositioning our hotel as a "destination" location may open us up to a new market segment.

We can reposition our competitors by promoting the differences and the positives as opposed to our competitions.
Direct Response Mail

We will be exploring the benefits of incremental, coordinated direct mail programs in the last two quarters of 1997. We anticipate a strong profit potential as we strengthen our direct response capabilities. We will be approaching this scientifically, as we improve our customer targeting ability. We propose two 500 piece campaigns, each preceded by a 100 piece test.

All direct mail activities this year will be directed to our existing customer base. In addition, we will gather external lists.

Advertising and Promotion

Radio time slots will be purchased along with print ads to attempt to raise awareness of our property within the Albany and surrounding area.

The Econo Lodge recognizes the key to success at this time requires extensive promotion. This must be done aggressively on a wide scale. To accomplish our sales goals, we require one advertising agency. Advertising will be done independently and cooperatively with Distributors, retailers and companies with whom The Econo Lodge has joint marketing / sales relationships.

Objectives

Position The Econo Lodge as the leading economy sector hotel in the Albany market.

Increase company awareness and brand name recognition among travel agents, corporate travel planners and potential customers.

Generate qualified sales leads and potential new distributors for field sales organization.

Develop, through market research, significant information to create immediate and long-term marketing plans.

Create product advertising programs supporting the newly renovated property position.

Coordinate sales literature, and direct response promotions in order to increase awareness.

Media Objectives

Maximize efficiency in selection and scheduling of published ads in publications to cover all of our markets.
Media Strategy

Schedule adequate frequency of ads to impact market with corporate image and product messages.

Where possible, position advertising in or near articles on industry and other appropriate editorials.

Utilize U.S. editions consumer, trade, and specialty publications.

Take advantage of special high-interest issues of major publications when possible.

Maximize ad life with monthly and weekly publications.

Advertising Campaign

The best way to reach our potential customers is to develop an intense advertising campaign promoting our basic premise – “Spend a night, not a fortune.”

To maintain / establish the Econo Lodge image, the delivery and tone of our statements will be subtle and not over done.

Ads will convey the look and feel of a “home away from home” property.

Ideally, after becoming familiar with our product, the customer will call and book a room at the hotel or else call and inquire more about the property.

To eliminate the biggest objections to immediate action, our advertisements must address the fact that the property is newly renovated and improved.

Accordingly, the Econo Lodge has created a system of research and response to insure the maximum benefit from advertising dollars.

Promotion

In addition to standard advertising practices, we will gain considerable recognition through press releases, trade programs and public relations strategies.

The number of trade shows attended will be increased from 2 to 4 each year. These shows will be attended independently and with companies with which the Econo Lodge has joint marketing / sales agreements.
Reports and papers will be published for trade journals and technical conferences.

Consumer will be encouraged to call the 1-800 number and clip discount coupons.

**Direct Mail**

Direct mail will be sent to new markets such as collegiate sports teams. In addition to using direct mail to distribute our products, we will exercise our direct customer communications through negotiated rates. The direct mail objective is fully for profit.

**List Management**

We are building our capabilities in database marketing. We have brought our customer list in house for this first phase, as we develop our database sophistication. Our registration cards and periodic customer surveys will help us understand our customer, and measure the success of our marketing, sales and product activities.

Profile overlays or other lists that we buy will fill in our awareness gaps. This in-house presence will provide our staff with tools that streamline their operations, while they update our customer knowledge on a daily basis. We plan to develop a customer information system that will aid and will help us make sound decisions by providing historical answers to the marketing questions we pose.

**Sales Support Collateral Materials**

Candy Dishes with the Econo Lodge imprinted on it

Updated brochures

**Advertising Budget**

For the next 12 months advertising and promotion will require 2.0% of our total sales in addition to the 3% paid to Choice Hotels International for corporate advertising. On an ongoing basis we will budget our advertising investment as 5% of total sales.
Press Release

The Econo Lodge will develop a series of press releases on the entire renovation process of the property. There will be a press release for three stages of the process. Before, during and after. An 8x10 black and white glossy photo of the end results of the renovations will be included to try and catch the eye of editors.