

12.3_Intro

Report A

Survey of customers' opinions and attitudes towards Robins Tours

Introduction

For a long time, Robins Tours has been a highly successful business. However, because the company has lost market share recently, it is important to know what the customers think of the services provided. This report will describe a survey undertaken to find out customers' attitudes towards Robins Tours. Recommendations will also be made as to how the company can improve its customer care.

Method

A written questionnaire *was designed* to find out perceptions of Robins Tours' quality of service and how Robins Tours *was seen* in relation to its competitors. Two thousand questionnaires *were sent* to a random sample of Robins Tours bus customers, of which 150 *were returned*. In addition, 130 people *were interviewed* while waiting at bus stops during one day in June. 70% of the whole sample *were women*.

Findings

Firstly, on the negative side, a large majority (79%) of customers said that Robins Tours' vehicles were too old. Only a small minority (10%) rated them as good quality. Although 43% of the respondents thought that Robins Tours' services covered enough routes in and outside the town, 57% did not agree. In addition, a significant minority (45%) stated that the services over the past five years had deteriorated. Finally, most of the respondents (71%) wanted Robins Tours to provide more frequent bus services.

However, the survey also revealed some positive aspects. Firstly, most respondents said that the services were punctual (60%) and that the staff were polite and helpful (70%). Moreover, although a small minority considered that the services were unreliable, an overwhelming majority (80%) were satisfied with the reliability. Secondly, in comparison with other

companies, a very large majority thought that the discounts were good. Finally, a significant number (55%) preferred Robins Tours to other companies.

Discussion

It is clear from the results of this survey that Robins Tours is perceived by its customers in some unfavourable ways. It seems that the vehicles are felt to be too old and on the whole the services do not meet the needs of the customers.

On the other hand, there were many positive opinions, especially about reliability and helpfulness of staff. Overall, it seems that Robins Tours is still preferred to its competitors. However, even where the majority view was positive there is still room for some improvement.

A limitation of the research was that only 7.5% of the questionnaires were returned, which is a low return rate.

Conclusion

To conclude, this survey has revealed some weaknesses, and to a more limited extent some strengths, in Robins Tours. To remain competitive, Robins Tours needs to invest in new vehicles, and increase its range of services. Consequently, financial backing will have to be found to enable a sufficient level of investment. One strategy could be a new share issue offered to investors. Alternatively, the company could consider going into a joint venture with another business.

The company needs to take action as soon as possible. If nothing is done, the company could go out of business. However, if improvements and good decisions are made, the company should be able to build its market share and ensure its success.

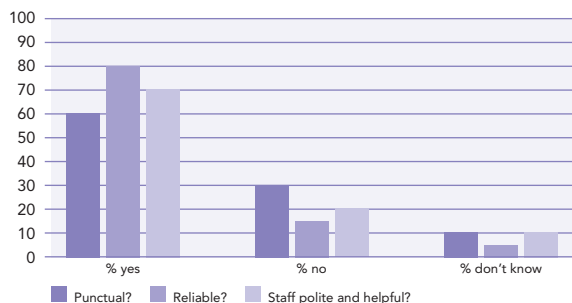


Figure 1: Robins Tours service quality

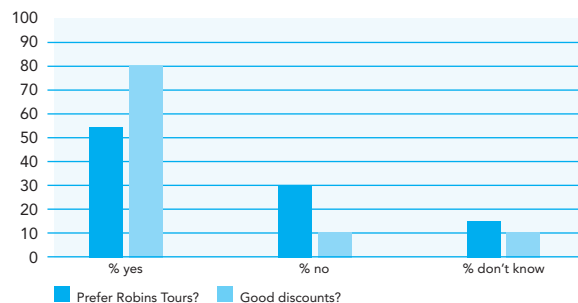


Figure 2: Robins Tours compared to other companies

12.3_Intro Report B

Literature search to discover business strategies undertaken by successful transport companies**Introduction**

For a long time, Robins Tours has been a highly successful business. However, recently the company has lost market share to other bigger competitors. In order for Robins Tours to consider opportunities for developing and building its operation, it is useful to know what activities other successful transport companies are engaged in. This report will describe an investigation into three such companies. Strategies for the development and improvement of Robins Tours will be suggested.

Method

In order to find out the business activities of some successful transport companies, a survey of their websites was undertaken during the first week of June. The companies which were investigated were FirstGroup, Go-Ahead Group and Stagecoach Group.

Findings

Key Findings are as follows. Firstly, all three companies started as small bus companies and are now large public limited companies listed on the London Stock Exchange. They have all diversified and taken over other transport companies. They use the latest technology for passenger information and also for environmental concerns on emissions. They have a strong focus on safe, secure and relaxing travel.

In terms of business strategies, there are some individual differences. Go-Ahead Group went into joint ventures with companies in Europe and the USA. It diversified into aviation services but sold these in 2010. FirstGroup went into trains in 1996. It also bought up bus services in the USA. Stagecoach Group started in Scotland and gradually expanded its bus services all over the UK as well as running trains.

Discussion

Although overall the picture is quite complex, what is clear is that these companies have strong financial backing through stock market flotation, which has enabled them to take over other companies. Internationalisation has increased the opportunities for expansion. Joint ventures with other companies have also given the companies the logistical advantages of connections with other networks as well as helping with access to up-to-date technical developments. A heavy emphasis on meeting the needs of their customers has also contributed to their success. Finally, having very clear aims – for example, to increase the specific number of bus journeys undertaken, to improve safety and security targets, to meet emission controls – is clearly crucial.

Conclusion

To conclude, it is clear that transport businesses which have prospered and grown are now offering a wide range of services, including non-transport services. In addition, in order to maintain success, a company needs to have strong financial control and to consider strategies such as joint ventures, internationalization and flotation on the stock market. In our opinion, Robins Tours should consider such strategies and look closely at the methods adopted by its competitors. Unless action is taken urgently, the company is in danger of going out of business. However, there is no reason why the company should not have a bright future if the right decisions are taken.