

**MASTER STUDENT'S CORNER**

## **The importance of print and visual media in the promotion of hospitality enterprises**

**Anamaria Răvar<sup>1</sup>**

**Department of Tourism&Geography, Academy of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Romania  
Master student**

---

**ABSTRACT**

As the development of tourism cannot be realized without the selling of tourism products and services, and this selling is not possible in the absence of promotion activities, the marketing activities in the field of tourism are essential to ensuring the success of tourism activities.

The current paper illustrates the importance of print and visual media in the promotion and communication of tourist destinations and accommodation facilities. Flyers, brochures and catalogues create a link between the service provider and the end consumers, informing and educating them, creating notoriety, facilitating acquisition and stimulating demand.

**KEYWORDS**

tourist marketing, print and visual media, hospitality

**JEL Classification**

L83, M13, M31

---

**Introduction**

Launching tourist ventures involves overcoming two major hurdles: first, the venture must be financed; and second, demand must be generated. In particular, the marketing of tourism and hospitality ventures provides special challenges, the ability to reach the target market and convince them to travel to remote locations being a critical success factor (Dolli, N.; Pinfeld, J.F., 1997). Thus, the main issue related to the marketing of tourist services is not their production, but their sale and promotion, so as to ensure that all the consumers' needs are comprehensively satisfied. (Nistoreanu, P., 2006).

It is in this context that both the producers as well as the suppliers (intermediaries) of tourism services should take into consideration the fact that a touristic product is sold only if there is a demand on the market for that particular product. This means that suppliers have the possibility to either offer what is requested on the market, responding to the consumers' needs, or to stimulate or generate the demand for a certain product so as to facilitate the selling of that product. In both cases, however, the producers and suppliers need to apply a promotion strategy, through which potential clients may be informed with regard to the offer on the market, as well as induce the clients' desire to consume a certain product.

---

<sup>1</sup> Author's contact [anamaria.ravar@yahoo.com](mailto:anamaria.ravar@yahoo.com)

Over the years, there has been a tendency for marketing activities to specialize not only in the field of tangible goods, but especially in that of services. In the tertiary sector, the marketing activities expanded tremendously over the past years, due to the dynamism characteristic to the services market, but also due to the nature of services themselves, which are characterized by intangibility, heterogeneity, perishable character, and impossibility to separate their production from their provision and sale.

### **Challenges and opportunities in travel and tourism marketing**

Moreover, the marketing activities in tourism are influenced by several factors related to the nature of the offer and demand: the prevalence of the emotional factor in the acquisition of tourist services; the complexity and heterogeneity of tourist services; the dependency on other services provided by complementary enterprises; the influence of distribution channels and the seasonality of tourist activities. (Stăncioiu, A., 2004)

Tourism and travel marketing encompasses the policies promoted by an enterprise, determined by the necessity to study the demands of the tourism consumers, so as to adapt the offer to the exact needs of the customers and thus ensure the maximization of tourists' satisfaction as well as of the enterprises' turnover and profits. Touristic marketing involves a good knowledge of the tendencies existing on the market and their evolution, providing the appropriate products according to the customers' needs, while taking into consideration the structure of the market segments and target customers. Moreover, tourist marketing implies establishing a price and tariff strategy, a distribution strategy, the use of efficient promotion instruments, and estimating the sales according to the seasonal fluctuations of the demand.

Although it is possible to assume that each individual might become a consumer of tourism and hospitality services at some point of time, the range of products and experiences that tourism can offer are much too great for generalization. What matters, therefore, is gaining knowledge of the existing and potential tourists' motives, preferences and behaviours regarding the various niche markets that exist, and who can be attracted to a given tourist product (Page, S.J.; Getz., D., 1997).

The promotion activities necessary for the marketing of touristic products are the more difficult as the products are more complex, and the customers' perceptions more diverse. The elaboration of a promotion strategy for a touristic product or area needs to take into consideration the components of the marketing mix - such as the product, price, distribution and promotion policies - and comprises several stages, including carrying out a market survey, choosing the target customers, establishing the offer, the price and the means for its distribution and promotion (Kotler, P., 2006).

Tourism marketing is used either for complex services offered by travel agencies and touroperators, such as package holidays, or for individual services - transport, accommodation, events, catering. In the case of individual services, the hospitality industry is probably the most aggressive in terms of market studies, distribution and promotion. World-wide hotel chains now have their own electronic reservation systems and are able to organize transnational advertising campaigns, constantly eroding the competitiveness of travel agencies which no longer have the same negotiation power as intermediaries between customers and accommodation facilities.

### **Communication and promotion of services through print and visual media in the hospitality industry**

Tourist services are relatively expensive and are acquired less frequent than other goods and services as they satisfy not basic needs, but the desire to belong to a certain social group or class, to enrich one's

knowledge and experience, to be esteemed and reputable. For this reason, communication and promotion is particularly important in hospitality. Hotels offer experiences, which the customer cannot see, touch, feel or try prior to the acquisition of services.

In this context, a good communication strategy is able to provide the customer with a tangible image of the intangible services he or she is about to experience. A hotel may use a variety of communication means, such as advertising and publicity, sale promotion, public relations, participating at fairs and exhibitions, sponsorship and the development of a skilled sales force (Lupu, N., 2010).

The hospitality industry is highly competitive and it is important for hotels to continually attract new guests regardless of the season. Thus, hotels spend large amounts of money each year on strategically placed advertising. Prints and vision media play a key role in the marketing of tourist services in general and accommodation services in particular as they are used both to inform potential customers as well as to promote the sale of specific services. A picture is worth, indeed, a thousand words, and a large number of hotels and destination resorts are now taking advantage of the image-filled medias of print, Internet and television to entice potential vacationers. (Warta, T., 2011)

In fact, no other industry uses the same amount of prints (brochures, flyers, folios, catalogues) as the tourism industry. Large-scale design and distribution of print materials and visual media is one of the industry's distinctive characteristics as print and vision media are being used not only by hotel chains but also by individually-operated accommodation facilities.

Print and vision media are materials whose production and distribution costs are included in the marketing budget and which are offered freely to potential and current customers with the purpose of informing the customers and stimulating the demand for the products and services described.

According to Victor Middleton, print materials have seven main functions in the tourism industry. They *create notoriety* as they inform the potential customer with regard to the offer of the service provider (1). They *promote the sale of tourist services*, using messages and symbols which stimulate the customer's need to acquire a specific service (2). They *facilitate the acquisition process* as they provide the customer with information regarding the reservation procedure (3). They *replace the tourist product* in the mind of the customers, offering them a tangible image of the services they are about to acquire (4). Furthermore, print materials represent a *proof of the service being consumed* and a *reference for future acquisitions* (5). Brochures and folios *facilitate the consumption and use of the service* as they inform the customer about all the facilities he can benefit from during his stay (6). Last but not least, print materials *educate* the customer, especially in the case where they are use for presenting natural or cultural attractions (7). (Middleton, V., 2001)

If fliers and folios are often enough for 2 and 3-star hotels, upper-category hotels generally use brochures through which they establish a brand identity that customers will recall when they are ready to make a room reservation. (Lupu, N., 2010). Brochures and catalogues offer substantial print space that can provide timely information relating to special promotions, room rates, restaurants and pictures of the hotel itself.

According to professionals in the hospitality industry, planning is a vital component in the process of developing a successful hotel brochure. An initial and very important step is to establish a concept for the brochure that identifies the exact message the hotel wants to communicate to its customers. Other critical steps include choosing the size and number of pages the brochure will contain, and an outline that identifies the contents of each page (Canfield, A., 2011).

A brochure has the key role of *emphasizing exceptional hotel features*. A generic brochure may be used to raise awareness of the hotel, but highlighting the hotel's competitive advantages through

focused information will certainly attract the attention of prospective customers. Furthermore, it is essential to use informative engaging content so as to reduce and even eliminate the need for further research. A customer will make a booking faster if he is already accustomed with information about the rooms, different amenities, check in and check out times, pool hours and pet policies. The informative content must be accompanied by high-definition photographs, which should include a full front shot of the outside of the hotel, along with the main amenities and the interior of the most spacious room. (Canfield, A., 2011).

### **Case study: Successful outcome for a virtual hotel at the 14<sup>th</sup> edition of the International Training Firms Trade Fair in Bratislava**

A successful hotel brochure was developed by nine master and bachelor students from the Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies as part of the project entitled “Real access to the labour market through training firms”. The project was initiated by the “Ovidius” University in Constanta, in partnership with the Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University in Iasi and the West University in Timisoara and is co-financed through the European Social Fund, “Human Resource Development” Operational Programme, with the purpose of engaging bachelor and master students in the activity of training firms through simulation and real-life interaction with tutors from successful Romanian companies.

Over a period of fourteen weeks, students had the opportunity to develop business plans, learn how to operate CRM and ERP software and simulate economic transactions in tourism, international business and economic affairs, and banking. Nine students from each university were selected to participate in the 14<sup>th</sup> edition of the International Fair of Training Firms, which took place in Bratislava, between the 30<sup>th</sup> of November and the 1<sup>st</sup> of December, 2011.

The representatives of the Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies proudly presented the results of their work – a business plan and promotion materials for a five-star virtual hotel in the Danube Delta: Danube Dream. The print materials, including the posters and brochure, were developed based on the training firm’s slogan: *Dream. Dare. Discover.* The message was clear: reach for your dreams, dare to experience authentic hospitality and discover one of Europe’s most spectacular wetlands.

In fact, the brochure was structured in three main sections, each one built upon the slogan. The first section, *Dream*, was aimed at presenting the hotel’s facilities as desirable and even necessary for an outstanding experience. The client’s vision was translated in the hotel’s vision, accompanied by colourful images suggesting the very best of personal services and state-of-the-art facilities.

The second section, *Dare*, brought the company’s services a personal touch – at Danube Dream, the customer will leave his or her worries behind and enjoy life. The next and last section, *Discover*, comes as a natural sequel of the second section – dare to adventure into the maze of canals and lakes in the Danube Delta to discover the beauty of wildlife.

The team was awarded third prize for the best catalogue in the competition. From the participants’ perspective, there were several factors essential for reaching the desired outcome. First of all, the message conveyed by the print media was simple, clear, yet not superficial – it urged the potential customer to imagine („Dream”), take action („Dare”) and enjoy the benefits („Discover”).

Secondly, the message focused on the people and their experiences and not necessarily on facilities and services. Photographs depicting life, people and feelings are infinitely more suggestive than any other visual image. In fact, the Danube Dream brochure illustrates humans, animals, people, smiles, dances, flowers, moves – it is dynamic and full of life, just as the destination it depicts.

Thirdly, the brochure focused on the hotel's competitive advantages and not on general services which can be found in any hotel's offer. Only Danube Dream can offer maid service upon request, guided safari or gastronomy courses – this is what the guest needs to remember.

Last, but not least, a testimonial page was included, containing information about the most important supporters of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, in which Danube Dream is conveniently located. The impact of a testimonial section is significant, particularly if testimonials come from persons which have a key role in public life. In the case of Danube Dream, the brochure contained the testimonials of the Costeau family, Prince Albert of Monaco and Ivan Patzaichin – all supporting the conservation and protection of the Danube Delta natural ecosystem. This eco-friendly and social-responsible attitude which the company embraces and promotes may act as a reference for future acquisitions – within a market where price-elasticity is considerably low, a potential customer will choose a luxury service based on its quality and impact on the community and environment.

To conclude with, print media are essential in the promotion of tourist destinations and accommodation facilities – in spite of the services' intangible character, print media can be used to present and describe not only services and amenities, but experiences and attitudes. The success of the brochure developed by bachelor and master students from the Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies for the International Fair of Training Firms in Bratislava clearly shows that it is not enough for a company to provide high-quality services at competitive prices.

A company needs to communicate with its potential customers – particularly in tourism, where consumers cannot experience services prior to their consumption. Thus, print and visual media are the link between the company's offer and the potential consumer, offering him or her the opportunity to see and feel future experiences.

### **Bibliography**

1. Canfield, A. (2011), „Attract New Guest with Hotel Marketing Brochures”, *Ezine Articles*, accessed online at [http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Adam\\_Canfield](http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Adam_Canfield), 15.12.2011
2. Dolli, N.; Pinfold, J.F. (1997), “Managing tourism businesses: financing, development and marketing issues”, in: S.J. Page and D. Getz, Editors, *The Business of Rural Tourism: International Perspectives*, pp. 38–58, International Thomson Business Press, London, United Kingdom
3. Kotler, P.; Gertner, D. (2004), *Destination Branding: Creating the Unique Destination Proposition – Chapter 4: Country as a brand, product and beyond: a place marketing and brand management perspective*, Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford, United Kingdom
4. Kotler, P.; Keller, K.L. (2006), *Marketing Management – Twelfth Edition*, Pearson Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, U.S.A
5. Lupu, N. (2010), *Hotelul – economie si management*, C.H. Beck Publishing House, Bucharest
6. Middleton, V. (2001), *Marketing in Travel and Tourism*, Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford, United Kingdom
7. Morgan, N.; Pritchard, A. (2004), *Destination Branding: Creating the Unique Destination Proposition – Chapter 5: Meeting the destination brand challenge*, Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford, United Kingdom
8. Nistoreanu, P. (2006), *Ecoturism si turism rural*, A.S.E. Publishing House, Bucharest

9. Page, S.J.; Getz, D. (1997), *The Business of Rural Tourism: Internal Perspectives*, International Thomson Business Press, London, United Kingdom
10. Stăncioiu, Aurelia-Felicia (2004), *Strategii de marketing în turism*, Economic Publishing House, Bucharest
11. Warta, Tamara (2011), „Importance of Print and visual media in the promotion of tourism”, *eHow Articles*, accessed online at [http://www.ehow.com/info\\_7907379\\_importance-vision-media-promotion-tourism.html](http://www.ehow.com/info_7907379_importance-vision-media-promotion-tourism.html), 14.12.2011