

TAFISKA NYASULU

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Discuss and apply the 7ps of marketing

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1. INTRODUCTION

In this report the 7ps of marketing will be discussed from the perspective of a destination marketing organization. To develop a more profitable marketing communication strategy, a destination has to look at consolidating the marketing communication tools and marketing mix elements (Prifti and Alimehmeti, 2017).

2. Definition of marketing mix

Marketing mix can be defined as a combination of factors that can be controlled by a company to influence consumers to purchase its products. A marketing mix includes multiple areas of focus as part of a comprehensive marketing plan.

The success of the tourism industry at any destination is determined by the proper use of the marketing mix. It is therefore important that marketers of a destination are guided properly on its use (Fakamau *et al.*, 2015). This entails paying attention to the tourism marketing mix elements, which include the 7 Ps of Marketing in tourism. The figure 1 below lists the 7ps of marketing. The details of which will be discussed below.



Figure 1 : The 7ps of marketing for a hotel

3. Product

Tourism products are produced and consumed spontaneously (Cooke *et al.*, 2010). To take full advantage of tourism products, Malawi as a tourist destination needs to package its products in such a way that:

- It increases the number of tourism products which it offers to its tourists. In the case of Malawi, canoeing, fishing, windsurfing, motorbike rides and mountain climbing can all be offered to create diversity in the products offered by Malawian tourism to the world. This can be illustrated with the success France has had over the years. France is the world's most visited destination and the number of tourists visiting the country is still on the increase. The country has been able to succeed in tourism because it has a diverse mix of tourism products on offer. Its geography, attractions and facilities allow the country to offer different types of tourism such as culinary, cultural and wine tourism. Cities such as Paris showcase France as a place where you can find both quality and diversity (Karim and Gen-Qing Chi, 2010).
- It captures more of the market by adding innovative tourism products to encourage tourists who would never think of visiting Malawi to tour the country. Innovation entails creating new ideas which can provide business value for the advancement of the business. In tourism, such innovation can entail artistic designs, improved quality of service and unique visitor experiences. For any company to go forward, it needs to be innovative and keep up with new developments in technology; the tourism industry is no different (Sears and Baba, 2011). A destination where innovation has proven to produce good results is Turkey. The introduction of a website providing online food delivery services, with restaurant deliveries to homes, has proved extremely successful (Pinar *et al.*, 2012).

4. Price

For a destination to remain competitive and attract tourists, it needs to correctly set its pricing. In research conducted on the competitiveness of South Africa in tourism, it was

found that it is essential for suppliers of tourist products to strive to have their goods reasonably priced to deliver good value to tourists (du Plessis *et al.*, 2014). The advent of the Internet has influenced company pricing strategies, as consumers are exposed to more information than ever before, and can therefore judge the pricing structure of products, and compare them with those offering similar products. It is thus important that Malawi as a destination encourages firms offering tourism products to price their products competitively so that they can compete internationally (Yannopoulos, 2011).

5. Place

In terms of placing, service providers that distribute products of tourism such as travel agencies are key (Pillai, 2010). Tourism distribution channels are a group of companies that act as an intermediary between those that provide tourism services and tourist. Advances in technology have made multiple distribution channels in tourism possible. Some of these channels are online social networks, online review sites, mobile location-based services, and the traditional ones being direct sales on site, travel agents, wholesalers, tour operators, visitor information centers and third-party website (Fountoulaki *et al.*, 2015). For a destination to have an effective marketing programme, its marketers need to have a clear understanding of all distribution channels at their disposal. The impact distribution channels have on the target market also needs to be well understood (Pearce, 2009).

In the example for the hotel in figure 1 above, the place will include its location . The hotel must insure that the hotel is accessible and that it has enough parking for tourists. It is also important to allocate the hotel near tourist attractions. Quality of rooms and service are also important facets that the hotel must look at closely .

6. Promotion

Promotion is recognized as an important aspect of tourism marketing. Using promotional tools, a destination can communicate its tourism package details to

potential tourists (Lai and Vihn, 2013). Malawi needs to continuously promote itself to the world to keep tourists aware of its tourism products and persuade them to purchase. Such promotion also acts as a reminder of the presence of these products for those who already have this information (Prasetyo and Nyzula, 2015). Therefore continuous improvement of products is required, so as to maintain the interest of older customers. Using integrated marketing tools to promote tourism at a destination can assist by increasing tourism sales, increasing tourism market share, creating and improving the brand image of destinations. This could also create a favorable climate which could result in the destination gaining competitive advantage within the tourism industry.

7. People

Because tourism is mainly a service industry, many of the staff delivering the tourism service must deal directly with customers. This has made it virtually mandatory that companies offering tourism products should engage in a careful selection process when choosing their employees. When capable candidates are selected, companies need to invest further in continuously training their staff. This will ensure that the service delivered is appropriate and of high quality (Kapiki, 2012b).

A trained workforce will assist in producing a profitable tourism sector through the efficiency of the services provided (Jehanzeb and Bashir, 2013).

8. Physical Evidence

This includes the infrastructure available at tourism destinations, their landscape and topography, the facilities they have available, the appearance of their staff, their promotional materials, and the branding strategies they are using, along with all visible facets which provide physical evidence of the service quality being offered (Asiegbu, Igwe and Akekue, 2012). It is therefore imperative that Malawi's government ensures

that it invests in all of the above facilities so as to enhance its tourism industry's competitiveness.

9. Processes

These are the procedures and policies which tourism organizations need to follow in ensuring that the whole promotion process, from packaging the product to the delivery of services to tourists, is executed properly and that the desired results are achieved (Kulscsar, 2011).

Marketing in tourism is considered as a systematic and coordinated execution of business policies to achieve the optimum satisfaction of the needs of identifiable consumer groups, and in turn achieve a profitable return (Arunmozhi and Panneerselvam, 2014). This definition highlights the need to have processes and policies in place that should result in satisfying tourists and lead to destinations having a good return on their investments in the tourism industry. Tourist satisfaction is what ensures the survival and the future of a country's tourism industry. Research has shown that tourist satisfaction results in good returns for destinations, repeat purchases and good referrals to family and friends (Anton *et al.*, 2017). Figure 1. Above indicates that the destination must have good processes in place when it comes to booking, paying and cancellations for products.

Research has shown that the more a destination understands its tourists and develops products to suit their needs, the more successful that destination will be. This entails segmenting tourists and identifying the groups and niche markets into which they fit. It is also a fact that segmenting tourists based on the types of experiences they seek assists tourist destinations to build unique tourism products and services and can create competitive advantage for them over other destinations (Ainley and Smale, 2010).

10. Conclusion

The role of marketing mix in tourism is to bring the tourists to the destination and to ensure that they are satisfied with the tourism product that they are purchasing.

Destination marketers worldwide have realized that to beat competition and build a sustainable tourist destination they need to ensure that they have a policy guideline drawn up to guide them on issues of customer relations, marketing strategy and marketing mix. Without such a framework to work within, it will be difficult for these marketers to achieve their goal of transforming a countries tourism sector.

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