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ROMANIAN MARKETING TOURISM SERVICES DURING AN ECONOMIC CRISIS

Empirical
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Abstract

This paper, proposes to emphasize the marketing strategy of the tourism companies, in order to promote the development of Romanian services and tourist destinations during an economic crisis. The last decades are characterized by the increase in tourist traffic, based on the diversification and increase in demand and supply of tourism products and services in many regions of the world. New touristic destinations appear continuously, offering novel products, while the touristic entrepreneurs must face a sharp competition on the nowadays tourism market. Their success can be ensured by adopting target-oriented and efficient strategies in their marketing mix policy. Regardless of the type of the Romanian tourism company (tour operator or retailer, tourism service provider, etc.), it must adopt an appropriate strategy to allow permanent and effective adaptation to environment changes. In order to get a sustainable position on the tourism market the tourism companies must address and plan complex marketing strategies.

INTRODUCTION

The increasing expectations and prerequisites on the domestic and international touristic market are determinant in the marketing politics of the Romanian entrepreneurs acting in this field, this meaning that they attempt a new approach of the already adopted marketing strategies in order to adapt their tourism products and services supply to these changes as well as to the mechanisms of the European Internal Market.

In the context of an increasing preoccupation of the Romanian tourism entrepreneurs and of the national authorities involved, to attract the domestic and foreign tourists' flows, the adoption of sustainable marketing strategies is one of the basic solutions in the development in this field. The fast and continuous development of services during the last decades lead to the emergence of a new branch in the marketing (Ph. Kotler, 1998), able to identify its specific features: the marketing of services. *This represents a service-specific process, aiming at identifying the expectations and needs of the consumers and satisfying them at the appropriate place and time to the most attractive price.*

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In the fire point of the marketing, strategy is a relatively new concept. „The last three decades witnessed sustained efforts in defining it, in establishing its place and role in the whole of the strategic leadership” (V. Balaure, I. Catoiu & C. Veghes (2005).). In the up-to-date socio-economic progress, the touristic enterprises frequently need to adjust their strategy, meaning i.e. modifying their touristic products and services and looking for new outlets.

From the variety of strategies, the tourism enterprise has to choose the type of strategy which allows the most accurate evaluation of the inner and external factors and suits the best to the marketing politics of the company.

By the way it uses the means within its reach, the tourism enterprise „has to create a strategic advantage in the competition, positioning its offer in a way that makes it sharply different from its competitors, in the eyes of the consumers” Ph. Kotler (1998). In their struggle against each other, by the methods and ways of using their goods and means, the Romanian tourism enterprises look for a better position towards their market competitors. „The shapes this competition takes are different, mostly in accordance with the potential and the position of the company on the market, as well as with its goals” V. Ad sc li ei (2005). In this context the entrepreneur should use competition strategies that comply as much as possible with the objectives of the company. Highlighting the compositional strategy versions, Michael Potter takes into account two fundamental criteria:

the nature of the competition advantages gained by a company from a specific strategic activity field

the goal of the strategic activity field in a certain context: by the whole of the strategic activity fields or by individual market segments.

The definition range for the concept of marketing is wide and complex. Along its evolution there were lots of attempts to define it, in a manner as exhaustive and appropriate as possible. For instance, „the term „marketing” designates as well a scientific field as a branch, an activity, a function of the enterprise”(V.Balaure, 2002).

Depending on their potential, the companies may use different product strategies in order to achieve their goals, like: „reinforcement of their position on the tourism market, the growth of the market for the specific touristic product by attracting new segments of tourists, differentiating their offer towards the products of the competitors, raising the market share etc.”(M. E. Porter, 2001). In the Romanian tourism the main strategic directions to be adopted in the framework

of the product policy are: *the flexibility strategy, differentiating, diversifying and refurbishing up the offer.* (M. Bruhn, 1999). In the field of the price policy, the Romanian tourism entrepreneurs can choose from a great variety of price strategies, differentiated by certain criteria, like: (V. Balaure, I. Catoiu & C. Veghes (2005)) *the level and accessibility of prices, the specific characteristics of the market and the way of distribution. The strategies preferred by the tourism companies are mainly: the strategy of high prices, the strategy of intermediate prices, the strategy of low prices and the strategy of flat rate prices.* However the strategic options are not restricted to the specified ones, but: „*depending on the marketing orientation of the companies, one can meet on the tourism markets a range of strategy versions and options, to be used to different purposes and in different situations*” (A. Nedelea, 2003). In the Romanian tourism, in their distribution policy, the companies are oriented towards the following strategic patterns: selective distribution, adopted by the company with a restricted number of carefully selected distributors, exclusive distribution, chosen by the companies which use the distribution network of one single distributor and the intensive distribution, used by the companies which address a great number of handlers to carry out the sale of their touristic products and services. There is interdependency between the touristic products and services, so the low quality of the services supplied by a supplier may have an impact on the whole offer. On the other side, the high quality of a touristic service offered by a company may raise the turnover of the other offers, whose services are included into the same package. The touristic offer depends not only on the services supplied by different companies, but also on the components of the touristic – natural and anthropo geographic - potential of the area; these make the offer

more or less attractive but also are able to persuade the tourists to choose the specified touristic offer. These elements complete the complementary character of the touristic offer. The behaviour of the tourism products' and services' consumers has also a significant effect on the marketing activity in the branch. The demand on tourism, very flexible for the income of the tourists, the prices of different suppliers, is also fingerprinted by non-economic factors like: unfavourable climate conditions, religious constraints, political insecurity in a certain area, etc. All these topics, specific to the processes and phenomena in the touristic field, demand a different approach compared to other fields of activity. The Romanian touristic entrepreneurs may establish their marketing objectives for certain time periods (one year, a season, a trip etc.) according to certain factors like: the particularities of the touristic products and services, the market share addressed, the place of the company on the market etc. In the given context, the strategic objectives to be considered by the Romanian tourism companies are:

- gaining a preferred market position on the tourism market;
- attracting new segments of tourists from the European Union and from outside it;
- increasing the market share;
- carefully studying the needs and expectations of the tourists by using interactive methods, facilitating the permanent communication with the customers in order to clearly identify their requirements and expectations towards the services offered by the touristic enterprise;
- stimulating the domestic and international tourist traffic;
- breaking into new markets;
- offering complex touristic packages based on complete and diversified touristic services;
- entering into beneficial alliances with other touristic and service companies.

The Romanian tourism companies should

pay a special attention to the tourists in order to establish with them a good relationship and to gain their fidelity. During the establishment and implementation of the marketing strategy, the Romanian companies should take into account the motivations and expectations of the reliable and eligible tourists.

In their activity, the Romanian tourism enterprises are continuously comparing themselves to the evolution of the external environment and to the changes occurred on the tourism market, thus being in a permanent process of adaptation to the new conditions.

In the Romanian tourism, the companies try to create innovative touristic products and services, these being the results of assiduous creative activity. The process of contriving the new touristic product should be the result of large scale research of the targeted market, containing information about the competition and the consumers as well as about the specific touristic resources of the destination that can be exploited.

For the tourism enterprise, developing its price policy involves the establishing of acting directions according to its objectives, in order to determine the price that will be charged on the market. Obviously, in determining the price level, the results of some analyzes regarding the demand, costs and competition should be taken into account.

As the tourism market is a very competitive one, any decision regarding price policy will be reflected in the consumer behaviour of the tourists. That is why the tourism enterprise must carefully study the consumer's reactions to different price levels of the tourism products and services, while identifying the determinant factors of these responses. Promotion in tourism involves a whole of communication steps aimed at sending messages to inform the potential tourists and tourism entrepreneurs about the features of products and services marketed,

in order to reinforce a positive company image.

In the Romanian tourism, the image consisting in tourist destination, company, services and products offered etc, significantly influence the purchase decisions of the tourists. The image the tourists create about the natural and human resources, about certain destinations, human communities, diversity and quality level of the services determine the increase or decrease in attractiveness of a touristic area. The communication structure practiced by the Romanian tourism companies includes: publicity, sales promotion, public relations, marketing events, utilizing trademarks, sales forces and direct marketing.

CONCLUSIONS

The Romanian tourism entrepreneurs should be aware that the success of their companies, the access on new markets mainly depends on their marketing. Whatever the type of Romanian tourism company would be (tour operator or retailer, tourism service provider etc.), it must adopt an appropriate strategy to allow permanent and efficient adaptation to the environmental changes. In order to gain a privileged position on the tourism market, a complex, information-based marketing strategy must be developed by analysis and decision, involving the bigger part of the company resources.

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