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THE NECESSITY OF APPLYING MARKETING STRATEGIES IN TOURISM – THE CASE OF SLOVENIA AND TUNISIA

Abstract

It is known that tourism represents an interaction between tourist offer on one side, and tourist demand on the other side. The results of this interaction contribute towards the increase of the national gross domestic product and an increase of the rate of employment. It can be stated that significant attention needs to be allocated to tourism and its development and distinction of the destination has to be made in order for it (the destination) to be attractive for tourists (domestic and foreign as well). This can be done if and only if the policymakers in tourism create a marketing strategy for development of different types of tourist products and promotion of those products on the targeted markets. Therefore, based on a comparative analysis of the tourism strategies of Slovenia and Tunisia, this paper presents prospective guidelines for creating and implementing these strategies in the Republic of Macedonia. The experiences of these countries can serve as a solid basis for developing strategies in tourism at different levels, which will contribute to its successful development in the Republic of Macedonia.

Key words: marketing, tourism, marketing strategies.

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Introduction

Tourism as an industry, is an interaction of supply and demand that is formed as a result of people's need to find themselves as tourists on one hand, and on the other hand, they also can be actors who organize the supply of the tourism product for satisfying the needs of tourists. The results of an interaction like this contribute for up-surgings of the meaning of the tourism as an industry and incorporate it as significant element in creation of the GDP, national income and employment.

Besides the meaning and the role of the tourism as an industry, in some way it also mediates the development of other non-industrial branches such as: trade, business, banking industry, public health, education, utilities and crafts as well.

With the emerging of the marketing concept in the mid-20th century, the preferences and consumer behavior are of great importance for the marketers. The application of the marketing in services requires acceptance of the basic principles of marketing in general, rather than a differentiated approach because of the individual characteristics of the tertiary industry. Therefore, the concept of the tourist market means using the general principles of marketing, but with respect to any specifics that are presented with the interaction of the components of the tourist market. With the appearance of the Internet and the social media, the consumers are becoming more aware of the products and services they are using and by utilization of the above mentioned channels they gather information about what they need.

1. Theoretical frame regarding the marketing strategy in tourism

Marketing strategies and strategic planning, at its base, represent a process that involves taking steps which are organized in order to form and lead the organization and what it stands for (Porter, 1995: 63-69). There are so many theories dealing with the matter of marketing strategies. Some authors (Pike, 2004: 127-131) suggest that the best and the most efficient way to create a strategy and a strategic plan is to firstly identify the problem, i.e. the approach has to be based on the problem and finding a way to resolve it. However, other authors (Poon, 1993: 443-449) in the focus of creating the strategies and plans, put the

intention and purpose of the business factor in tourism, as a basis for the formulation of the strategy. But there are also authors (Roehrich, 2004: 38-45) who believe that the theory of the matrix is the most appropriate in the creation of strategies and strategic plans. From all this elaborated above, it can be considered that the most appropriate model when developing marketing strategy is the one that includes the aims and intentions of the business included in tourism. Still, taking into account that the development of marketing strategy in tourism is an extensive process, the internal and external factors of business environment, resources, trained personnel, competition and etc. have to be taken in consideration (Roehrich, 2004: 38-45).

In their base form, the strategies include creation of a strategic plan that is an essential tool for implementation of the plan of companies including the one in tourism. Thus, strategic plans can be used as mechanisms by which companies will answer on the more and more challenging working conditions on the market. Therefore, it can be stated that the strategic plan is closely related to the direction in which the company should go in the future, in line with its ambitions, resources and how it interacts with the world in which it operates (Pike, 2004: 217-222). The role of the strategic plan of the companies in tourism varies depending on how the market works, but for most of them, it can be said that they have a single purpose and that is to help the company for better utilizing the given resources in order to improve its market position. Even though it is like that, still, there are few steps that are common to all companies in the creation of marketing strategies. These steps include corporate, operational and business aspects while formulating the strategies (Poon, 1993: 88). These considerations, in some point of time help the business in tourism to gain competitive advantage over the competition.

The process of strategic planning contains a need to create strategic alternatives. But the growing demand for services in tourism in contemporary working conditions can be satisfied only by creating modern marketing strategies. Strategy is a tool that allows companies to implement all the plans and to make effective decisions that will help in achieving their organizational goals.

In order for this theoretical framework to be successful in practice, there must be an evaluation and control of the process of creating marketing strategies in tourism. Some authors (Porter, 1995: 57-

61) go even a step further and propose concrete steps for evaluation and control of the strategy:

- Defining parameters that can be measured
- Defining values of those parameters
- Process of measuring
- Comparison between the procured results with previously set standards
- Implementation of strict steps for application

Taking this into consideration, for creating a prosperous strategy, the process has to be permanent i.e. it must gain constant feedbacks about the strategy's efficiency as well as every segment that must be improved in future and all that with one goal: satisfying the more demanding need of the consumers.

The absence of a comprehensive marketing strategy in tourism is, actually, the basis of the negative trends in tourism development. There is a need to create a generic framework that will enclose all the parameters that are essential for creating a complete marketing strategy in tourism. Although in the past it was believed that as the world becomes increasingly globalized, so the products and services would become more prevalent (Pike, 2004: 311-315).

The market research in a way represents a collection of data with a unique task to be used in order to achieve the marketing plan so that they become more and more efficient.

The tourist industry has a constant need for these types of research and data because of various reasons (Goodall & Ashworth, 1997: 187-201):

- Identifying of the possibilities to develop tourist products;
- Setting up prices which correlate to the ones of the competition;
- Ensuring that the distribution channels work effectively;
- Selecting the best possible combination of promotional techniques and tools;
- Making decisions to invest;
- Choosing location to open new hotels and restaurants

When a research is done in an area which has essential significance to the economic development of a country, it is of great importance to be able to compare the experiences from other similar countries and to see how they have dealt with the growth and

development of tourism. In this paper, the experience from the Slovenian and Tunisian example is taken into consideration.

2. Experience from creation of marketing strategy in tourism – Slovenia

According to the assumptions from the WTO (World Tourism Organization, 2000: 87), the tourism industry in Slovenia participates with around 12.1% of the GDP of the country. And, at the same time, the tourism is also an important export activity, contributing with around 8% from the total export and around 40% of the total export of services and payments. In the past decade, tourism in Slovenia shows progressive rate of growth, both when it comes to increase of the total number of tourists and overnights, as well as when it comes to the spending in tourism (source: Bank of Slovenia in Slovenian tourist board, 2007: 11).

Based on previous research, the people responsible for the tourism in Slovenia have identified several obstacles in the development of the competitiveness of the Slovenian tourism (Slovenian tourist board, 2007: 11):

1. Financial assets to market and develop tourism – limited financial assets decrease the possibility to develop tourism, as well as the possibility to develop strategies for the tourism in general;
2. Availability of the destination – few direct flights from the main countries which generate tourists, but also the outdated road and railroad infrastructure and so on;
3. Promotion – the inconsistent use of the national brand “I FEEL SLOVENIA” in terms of promotional activities on the foreign markets and the low level of recognition as a tourist country;
4. Tourist offer – lack of competitiveness of the tourist products, added value to the price of the tourist product as well the lack of integration of the tourist offer;
5. Human resources in tourism – the lack of qualified and quality workforce;
6. Legislation – the existing legislation is inconsistent and not in correlation with the needs of the tourist sector

Source: Slovenian tourist board. Marketing plan for Slovenian tourism 2007/2011. 2007 (Slovenian tourist board, 2007: 11).

These obstacles can be overcome if the officials follow the policies for tourism development. They include cooperation in planning, shaping and marketing of the tourism in Slovenia on all levels, starting with the local and all the way to the national level. It is also important to manage to promote Slovenia as a tourist destination in general.

The tourism marketing plan for Slovenia from 2007 includes the tourist offer which has been previously researched, valorized and consists of natural and unique specifics, but in accordance with the trends of the world's tourism (Slovenian tourist board, 2007: 13).

The aim of this strategy is to focus on a tourist offer on smaller segments of the market. That means developing a detailed plan for successful segmentation of the market, research of what that market needs and wants as well as to create a tourist offer which will satisfy the needs of those markets.

It can be stated that the strategic marketing concept is consisted of diversification strategy, which in phase one includes development of new products and promotion of those products on new tourist markets. The diversification of these products will be done through expansion and improvement of the existing ones, and offered on the tourist markets. This concept also includes a strategy for differentiation, meaning differentiating the tourist offer with distinctive and familiar attributes which are unique for Slovenia. The main goal of this strategy is to create a powerful brand association with the help of these unique specifics for the Slovenian tourism.

When it comes to the present system of the tourism in Slovenia, it can be stated that there are seven different tourist products which are complete, and two other which are in the development process. The completed tourist products include (Slovenian tourist board, 2007: 21):

1. Active holiday;
2. Cities and culture;
3. Nature, eco-tourism and rural tourism;
4. Gastronomy tourism;
5. Health tourism;
6. Business tourism and
7. Entertainment and gambling.

Additionally, the products in the development phase are (Slovenian tourist board, 2007: 19):

1. Offers for more demanding tourists;
2. Offers for young people.

Apart from these basic products which are offered to individuals, combined tourist products can be created in tourism. This means that they represent a combination of two or more individual products. The following can be mentioned as such (Slovenian tourist board, 2007: 24):

- Regional tourist product;
- Combined tourist product;
- Partial tourist product.

In general, it is about three different development zones, for which the strategy has the aim to incorporate and to create synergy in between (Slovenian tourist board, 2007: 12):

- Increase of the competitiveness;
- Creation of positive business environment;
- Efficient and innovative marketing.

These development zones are crucial part of the investments in quality and innovation, the development of strategic partnerships with outer parties in order to eliminate the obstacles for effective tourism development. It can be said that the aims of the strategy are (Slovenian tourist board, 2007: 28):

- Creation of competitive advantage through innovation, added value, safety, security and so on;
- Increase of the quality of life of the local population;
- Tourism development via partnerships for development, public-private partnerships, improvement of the image of tourism and so on.

In the years to come, the tourism in Slovenia will be in the focus of the economic development of the country in general. This will contribute towards creation of significant contribution towards the increase of the GDP, increase of the employment, regional development and so on.

3. Experience in the creation of marketing strategies – Tunisia

Tunisia is a small country located in North Africa. According to some, Tunisia is a strategically irrelevant state that has no natural or oil resources (Mihailovich, D., & Sommer, N., 2011:46-48). Nevertheless, Tunisia runs on tourism, which is crucial for the economy (Travel and tourism in Tunisia, 2009: 157). Thus, in order to approach the

development of the economy, it is first necessary to start developing a new marketing strategy that will contribute to the development of tourism in the post-revolutionary period. Tourism in Tunisia has several advantages in terms of attracting tourists: beautiful beaches, a variety of archaeological sites, excellent climate throughout the entire year and the most important fact, it is close to Europe.

Tourism is a sector of strategic importance for Tunisia, as it participates with about seven percent in the gross domestic product of Tunisia and generates about 400,000 jobs (Mihailovich, D., & Sommer, N, 2009: 46-48). Therefore, having into consideration the close link between tourism and the other sectors of economy (such as trade, crafts and transport), the reduction in the number of tourists will negatively affect revenues from these and other sectors of the economy, which represents an indirect threat to those people who depend on tourism.

The number of tourists who visited Tunisia in 2011 was not over three million. This compared with over seven million tourists in the pre-revolutionary period is a very small number. But it is important to point out that tourism in Tunisia in 2012 showed high rates of growth, despite all that had happened in this country. Nevertheless, regardless of this fact, the tourism industry, from a business perspective, is still in the stage of recovery and in any case is not in favor of tourism stakeholders (Travel and tourism in Tunisia, 2009:157). Even though, it was expected for this trend of progressive growth to continue, nevertheless, the situation is different, as in the beginning of 2013 violence once again broke out, contributing greatly to a reduced number of tourists visiting Tunisia.

Perhaps, it is too early to assess how these developments will affect tourism in Tunisia. However, it is clear that indicators point to an increased caution among potential tourists, travel agencies and tour operators that offer arrangements for Tunisia. There are even cancellations of already booked travel arrangements. This greatly affects the overall situation of the tourism industry in Tunisia.

The tourism sector in Tunisia is experiencing a decline, also as a result of its excessive dependence on resorts that provide services with a medium level of quality. This business model brings low profits, and carries a high risk of volatile economic conditions (Mihailovich, D., & Sommer, 2011:157). Data from the World Tourism Organization show that in average tourists spend \$385 per capita, which is the smallest amount from among the other countries along the Mediterranean. In

comparison, the average per capita consumption of tourists who visit Morocco is \$725, while in Turkey they spend \$770, in Egypt \$890 and \$1,000 in Greece (World Tourism Organisation, 2000: 76).

The recovery of tourism in Tunisia mostly depends on the increase of the stability and security of the country. But, in order for the tourism sector to develop and ensure economic growth and development that will contribute to the creation of new jobs (especially among the young population), considerable changes must be made in the overall strategy of the country, especially in two directions (Travel and tourism in Tunisia, 2009: 67).

1. First, Tunisia must take into account the demographic changes that are taking place in Europe and the changes in the needs and demands of tourists for new forms of tourism (especially cultural, environmental, adventure and research tourism). Estimates of the World Tourism Organization WTO are that about 40% of world tourism is in fact, a tourism associated with cultural activities. These types of activities are more profitable and less susceptible to seasonal changes.
2. Second, Tunisia must create a new market in order to diversify its revenues from tourism. This will contribute towards reducing or perhaps eliminating the excessive dependence it has on tourists from Europe, which currently represent 80% of the total number of tourists in Tunisia. Markets in Asia and South America are on the rise and are becoming ever more important sources as the standard of living is constantly improving and air traffic is in constant development.

Experts argue that authorities have failed to create a marketing strategy that will reflect the actual situation in the tourism sector. Existing plans do reflect the needs and the demand of foreign tourists, but are not in line with the post-revolutionary period. They have created a strategy that has failed to take advantage and exploit these events, but has rather concentrated on mass tourism with a focus on making use of the potentials of the seashore. It is important to note that this strategy does not correspond to the needs of the tourists, especially the tourists from Europe (Travel and tourism in Tunisia, 2009: 67).

Tunisia has all the fundamental and basic features for development of diversified tourism and tourism with a high level of quality. Also, the use of these advantages is in the hands of the state and the institutions, which must develop a strategy that will contain the most

important values that can be offered to the market and which will be oriented towards satisfying the needs of “new” tourists from emerging markets. Nonetheless, the political instability has led to a distortion of the image (which is an important component in the process of making a decision to travel) for Tunisia as a tourist destination. (Kalboussi, 2011: 17).

Those competent must promote this destination by creating an aggressive marketing campaign that will contribute towards restoring confidence among potential tourists and will help restore a positive image. Also, they will have a difficult task in finding new markets where to sell the tourism product, and in doing this they will contribute to the development of the tourism industry and the economy as a whole.

Conclusion

The comparative analysis in this paper could be used for future planning of the activities in the tourism industry in Macedonia, as well as to help in the direction in which activities and measures should be taken and how those activities should be implemented. When it comes to planning the strategy in tourism, a lot of factors have to be taken into consideration. Amongst those factors are the economic, political, social, technological factors as well as the influence of the media and so on. The influence of these factors can lead towards (You, O’Leary & Fesenmaier, 2000: 181-197):

- Growth of tourism in the countries which previously weren’t generating international tourist travels
- Growth of tourism for specific groups of the society
- Development of new tourist products
- New and innovative ways of buying the tourist product.

The research contributes towards better understanding of the tourist products and that the development of new product will lead primarily to:

- Change the consumer behavior
- Improved availability of the tourist products and
- Eminent technological innovations.

It can be said that the continual growth of pressure in the modern way of living will lead to people seeking holidays to relieve from the

stress. Thus, it seems that tourists will prefer to travel more to destinations which are different and unique, opposed to what they are used to. On the other hand, because of the constant development of technology, the promotion of destinations has changed as well as the distribution of the tourist products. Because of that, it is recommended that the future development of tourism should be based on these fundamentals.

When it comes to framing the strategy for tourism, it can be concluded that there is a need to get the national tourist organization involved in the development of the tourism in general. The organization will be in charge of implementation of the strategy, as well as for the promotion and support of tourism on a national basis. This can and should be done via promotion and improvement of the processes in tourism, preparation and implementation of a program to promote and support tourism as well as to prepare promotional material and promote the tourist values of the destination. Also, it is of crucial significance to prepare and conduct research and analyze the needs and wants of the modern tourist. In this way, the marketing activities can be focused towards the markets which have the highest potential of growth.

In order to improve the image of tourism in Macedonia, there is a need to first make attempts to analyze the similar tourist products and tourist offers of countries which have more or less the similar geography and potential for development. It is of great importance to follow their development throughout the different phases of the process of development. That is because, when these products are properly introduced, the possibility for synchronization of the tourist offer is much higher and the development of different tourist products is much higher as well.

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