MARKETING MIX IN FARM AGRITOURISM

MIXUL DE MARKETING ÎN AGROTURISMUL DE FERMĂ

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Abstract: *The main problem of tourism marketers is to balance short-term tourism opportunities demand and long-term brand development and strategic direction. In extreme cases (terrorist attacks, natural disasters, etc.) the strategic direction cannot be pursued any longer. The four Ps of marketing mix in tourism are doubled by other 3 Ps adapted to tourism services: service supply process, physical proof of the service supplied, and participants.*

Key words*: marketing mix, agritourism, farm*

INTRODUCTION

Marketing refers to product development, to pricing, to distribution, and to marketing communication development with a view to build up a strong brand.

A strategic direction can also be adjusted by practicing price cut downs and by promoting sales but, in this case, cutting down prices and promoting sales are damaging to the brand. From this perspective, the best marketers are those who can easily handle tactic detail, who can create the space necessary to strategic thinking and planning, and who can reconciliate the tension between them.

According to the American Association of Marketing, marketing is defined as a function of an organisation and set of processes meant to create, communicate, and supply value to the consumers, as well as to coordinate relationships with customers so that both the organisation and its shareholders benefit [1, 3, and 5].

Marketing is defined as the "main philosophy of business that directs processes of identification and coverage of individuals' and organisations' needs through exchanges that create higher value for all the parties involved" Or it can be defined as the "management process meant to identify, anticipate, and satisfy the profitability of consumers' requirements" [2, 4].

The elements common to these definitions are:

- the discovery of the customers' needs and their satisfaction;
- the profit obtained from the satisfaction of the customers' needs.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

For this scientific approach, we have identified the classical components of marketing mix to which we adapted other three components specific to farm tourism with a view to develop a strategy for agritourism farms through the planning of distribution of rural tourism products.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Marketing means "manipulating product, price, distribution (place), promotion, and people (target public)", which means adding another P to the equation (P from people). Of course, manipulation means, in this context, the control of all the instruments of marketing and their manipulation with a view to maximising the impact on the market. In other words, a marketing manager manipulates: the way in which a product looks, smells, or is felt (product); how much he/she should ask for his/her product (price); the place where he/she should sell his/her product (place); the promotion instruments (promotion); the consumers purchasing the product (consumers).

Tourism Product

A product is everything one can sell. However strange it might look, what counts in a tangible product also goes for tourism products (considered, in general, intangible, at least while purchasing), if we bear in mind that what we offer in rural and farm tourism covers both accommodation and food, and different tourism activities: quality (of foods, drinks, linen, etc.); material (foods, drinks, furniture, etc. are made of); colour (of foods, drinks, interior decorations, etc.); size (of food portions, rooms, parking sites, playgrounds for children, etc.); smell (of foods, drinks, linen, etc.); taste (of foods, drinks, products for sale, etc.); packaging (of products for sale, etc.); design (of foods, drinks, rooms, green areas, playgrounds for children, etc.).

Price of Tourism Product

The price of a tourism product has several important functions: it includes not only the cost of goods marketed (foods, drinks, local products, etc.), but also the estimated profit and the tourist consumer's expectations; it divides potential tourism consumers into tourism consumers that can afford the tourism product or service in question, and tourism consumers that cannot; it shows how tourism products or services can be consumed.

Location of Tourism Product

In rural and farm tourism, the place in which tourism products and/or services are sold can be both a travel agency in the urban area or an agritourism farm (or the small shop marketing local products). No matter the location, the place for selling rural and farm tourism products and services should be chosen in a way that creates a positive perception: the marketing place can establish consumer's tourism-related expectations (quality of tourism product or service) determining the tourism to pay the price.

Ways of Promoting Tourism Products

Promotion refers to any way of promoting a tourism product or service: publicity; public relations; sale promotion; event marketing; direct sale.

Rural and Farm Tourism Consumer

Without speaking of a consumer, there is no sense in talking about marketing, because all tourism service providers act to meet the will, needs, and desires of a tourism consumer. Are very important, from this point of view, the tourism consumer's needs: physical needs (nutritious foods, clean water, etc.); physiological needs (the need to impress); sociological needs (the need to belong to a certain culture); the need to be noticed. This is why, before turning his vegetal or animal farm into an agritourism farm, a farmer should think first of the potential consumers of agritourism, and then go on developing the "agritourism product" in itself, if he does not wish to develop something that is not demanded.

Maximising Tourism Business

To these five Ps we should add a sixth one, profit. The reason is that all companies do business to get a profit that allows them to: pay salaries to their employees; expand their businesses and employ more people; set the bases of other businesses.

Profit can be increased in different ways among which the most important ones are as follows: selling more; increasing the price; broadening distribution; narrowing distribution; reducing material costs and maintaining the price; reducing the amount of products but increasing the price; reducing production costs by producing in the cheapest location.

This is why we need to practice, no matter the type of business, what the specialists call a **strategic marketing**, i.e. a marketing in which the company is focused on product, sales, finance, marketing, or consumer:

- *product-focused companies* first produce and then look for a market to sell the products (which means that marketing is left

last): in the fashion industry, if the designers design a style that the consumers like, products sell well;
- *sale-focused companies* sell as much as possible and, for as long time as possible: in the show-biz industry, for instance, everybody tries to sell as many CDs, MP3s, and shows as possible as long as a musician is a viable product (i.e., as long as he/she keeps the pace with the ever-changing styles in music);
- *finance-focused companies* sell mainly current-use products (aspirins, oil, coffee, vegetal oil, etc.) that do not differ from similar products marketed by competitor companies;
- *marketing-focused companies* have marketing departments that research, develop, and produce new products; that establish the pricing strategy and the distribution strategy; that make reports on the outer selling force and cooperate with publicity and promotion agencies to improve communication with a view to increase sales;
- *consumer-focused companies* get information first on the desires and needs of the consumers and then do everything to meet these desires and needs (detergents, for instance).

CONCLUSIONS

Synthesising the results of research in the field of hospitality and tourism, we can draw the conclusion that the problems of tourism industry trends concern three main fields of the tourism industry on the whole: hospitality, tourism, and food services.

Specialists agree that the best company is marketing-focused because it is only in this type of company that the employees' job is to maximise product quality, to optimise the price (i.e., to satisfy both the customers and the company), to maximise the impact of the product in the shops and to promote the product with maximum impact and efficiency.

Tourism companies belong to the mixed category of companies focused on both marketing and consumer.

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