

## DEVELOPMENT OF A TOURIST DESTINATION BASED ON MARKETING ACTIVITIES

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### **Abstract:**

Development and sustainability of a tourist destination should be the goal of key players in this industry, whereas the promotion of this destination will enable attraction of tourists to visit, stay and enjoy it. If we consider that in a region such as Kosovo there are approximately equal tourist destination, then in the front of marketer comes the task that beside other activities develop definite activities towards the differentiation of the destination and creation of the “brand” destination. Assuming from the hypothesis that the development of a destination does not depend on marketing activities, and then a research question in this paper appears to be “how marketing affects the development of a destination”. Methodology used in the paper enabled recommendation to the tourism professionals that in their efforts to plan a development of a destination apart from marketing activities should be conscious about large number of influential factors in the success or failure of the creation of the touristic destination. Findings are that an approach on admission of the role of marketing will assist key players in finding the ways for development and sustainability of tourist destination.

**Keywords:** Tourism, marketing, destination, brand, promotion.

**JEL Classification:** M3, M30, M37

### **1. Introduction**

The management of the tourism development requires this to be done by using the country's resources and in a situation where we don't have a unique tourism development strategy it becomes more difficult to achieve the country's economic development. The purpose of this paper is to show the importance of connecting marketing activities with the success of a geographic area, city, region or country, in transforming it on attractiveness to visitors, becoming a separate and distinctive touristic destination. As far as the improvement of tourist offer is concerned, there have been made great steps in the region and wider. Sustainable tourism means tourism economically viable but does not destroy resources on which the future of tourism will depend, notably the physical environment and the social fabric of the host community. [ Swarbrooke 1999]. Development of a sustainable tourism should be the target of the country's institutions, while used strategies and tools will give results if the country's tourist offer becomes attractive to foreign and local visitors. The problem is to identify local potentials as well as the stimulation of tourists' demands and the image creation of the tourist destination. One important feature of tourist production is that the natural resources used in tourism are often unpriced, [Mak 2004]. Usually when the resources are used at zero prices, they are not well maintained and overused, in many cases resulting with crowding destination, damaging local residents and social interests, for the entrepreneur's profit. If we take into account the engagement of many actors in the past in the creation and marketing of special tourist destinations as well as these on the national level, it's assessed as very difficult the relationship of these efforts because there are evident different goals and interests. Tourism connoisseurs in Kosovo know and appreciate the made efforts and investments by individuals, enterprises, various associations, and government institutions of Kosovo and also of

international associations and institutions from various and many friendly countries. There have been made efforts in the creation of the tourist product and destination, in all parts of Kosovo, such as the region of Peja, Prizren, etc. , with a good intent in order to achieve the best interest of all, that is, the development of tourism as an economic branch in Kosovo. Different sector of tourism has its own issues in relation to sustainable tourism, there are identified as a important and interrelated sectors: Destination management, Visitor attraction, Accommodation, Transport, Tour Operators, and Retail travel, [Swarbrooke 1999]. We assess that by achievement of the stakeholders' strategic objectives and their economic benefits it's also achieved the tourist destination and marketing objective. The stakeholders here are defined as individuals, family communities, hotel enterprises, associations, tourism associations, government agencies and state institutions as well as those local and central. The common interest of key people in the country's tourism would be seen not only in their value or benefit but also in the association in the creation of an integrated marketing activity which without fail would contribute in the creation and promotion of the tourist products, thus helping in the creation of the tourist destination image, either for local visitors as well those international. A destination may be defined as a country, state, region, city, or town, which is marketed or markets itself as a place for tourists to visit, [Beirman 2003]. The methodology of this research includes analysis of secondary data from cases of best practice of other countries as references, tourism theory and analysis of strategic documents, prepared at the central government level related to the terms of Tourism and Hospitality. A task, such as creation and implementation of a marketing strategy requires from the stakeholders to "change" the attitude towards marketing as a concept. Findings of this paper are related to a coordinated management of marketing of a destination, in order to achieve a competitive advantage that brings an increase in the number of Visitors along with this economic development so adamantly desired. The marketing management will continuously bring innovations in the country's tourist offer and in the literature it is paid attention to tourist destination as a part of an entirety named as "tourist product".

## **2. Tourism and tourist offer of a country**

Economists M. Sinclair and Mike Stabler define the tourism product as a "composite product involving transport, accommodation, catering, natural recourses, entertainment, and their services and facilities, such as shops and banks, travel agents and tour operators"[Mak 2004].

A tourist product has its own elements that may be:

- Destination features - offer elements that make a destination unique and enable the creation of specific image,
- Destination approach – it's determined by the easiness and possibility to arrive at destination, and this relates to travel expenses to the destination.
- Destination completion – it has to do with the visit conditions, the possibility of accommodation, and other services as a part of the visitor's stay.

Surely, there's an evolution of the tourist destination definition, which is seen as a term for a city, region or place. A place to be considered as tourist place it should meet several prerequisites:

1. Regulation of tourist spots, particularly infrastructure,
2. Involvement of people, especially of tourism professionals as well as the training of local population to be in the service of local tourism,
3. Offer to contain an assortment of tourist products and services, especially a menu of local and international foods and gastronomic specialties.
4. Friendly and well-mannered communication with visitors, perfect maintenance of their self-accommodation.
5. Real and achievable prices for visitors,

If we manage to fulfill these requirements then we can catch up with competition from the regional countries, and by this are opened opportunities for a bright and perspective future for a new work force in finding jobs. An integrated part of effective marketing management of destination for tourist authorities is to establish and maintain the effective alliance with private and government organizations sharing common vested interests, [Beirman 2003].

### 3. Building of Marketing Mix based on tourist features

Marketing in its concept, as far as tourism is concerned, has as a focus the visitor's satisfaction. [Belch, Kotler, Keller, Beirman, Ukaj]. If we take Kosovo as a destination and as a segment of the world tourism market and we know that the country possesses limited resources, strong competition of neighboring countries, it's imposed undoubtedly the necessity of marketing strategies application in order to create a country's image as a tourist destination and to assist visitors (local and foreign) in their decision-making for the most convenient tourist offer for them. Marketing strategies, first of all, are primarily created to offer the best possible value for consumers. In terms of strategy creation the 4Ps are orientated towards the target market. That is, a mix of the **Product** that in the case of tourism appears in the form of tangible product and intangible services however they have a value for the visitor, the **Price** which expresses the value and readiness of the visitor to spend respectively to assess the tourist offer, **Distribution** that enables through different channels the visitor to come to a tourist destination and to be satisfied with tourist offer, and in **Promotion** as a way of communication in order to inform and persuade the visitor to assess the tourist offer as appropriate and beneficial to him, but bringing him on the position to finalize his action with purchase. The implementation of marketing strategies is based on the available knowledge about the behavior of consumers, i. e. the marketers are trying to understand various needs of different consumers, thus understanding the behavior in different situations that make necessary the recognition of external and internal environment, and the recognition of those factors becomes a basis for the marketing planning. The behavior of consumers is a complex, dynamic, psychological process, and from the prediction of the consumers' behavior depend the decisions on the marketing activities within the management of the tourist offer development.

#### 3. 1 Tourist offer as destination feature

A tourist destination has its features, and in the wake of efforts to create tourist product at the local or country's level, they are exposed to analyses in order to find competitive advantages, life cycle of tourist product and the target market. An example of the country's promotion as a tourist destination is the case of Albania that from the prestigious newspaper "The New York Times" is qualified as special. The newspaper proposes a list of places to be visited in 2014, among 52 countries in the world, and Albania ranks the fourth. Suggesting the visit to Albania the newspaper describes the attractiveness of the country through coast, archaeological places, soft nature, and as a competitive advantage with regional countries such as Turkey, Greece, Italy and Croatia, it refers to a very low price, [NYT 2014]. An example of the tourist destination promotion within country's tourist offer is the case when the municipality of Peja won the prize of "Tourism Tomorrow Award" as a tourist destination by the World Travel & Tourism Council which announced 12 finalists for the year 2013 for the prize "Tourism Tomorrow Award" held in Abu Dhabi. Among the finalists in four categories, the municipality of Peja was nominated in the category for the world tourist destination with the project "Balkan's peaks", with 192 km long path, which contains tourist signalization, recreational mountain sports, the project selected for a successful implementation of a sustainable program of tourism at the destination level, thus involving

social, cultural, environmental and economic benefits. In the final, Peja was together with Singapore and Bhutan, among 46 countries that represented all continents. [EO 2013].

### **3. 2. Building of marketing strategy in the function of destination development**

There are important issues in terms of the marketing concept implementation in the tourism as well, and they can be counted as: tourist product characteristics, characteristics of the target market, available resources, purchase power of visitors, policy of prices, as well as the management of the tourist destination promotion. Above, in the paper are described the characteristics of tourist products in a destination which may be specific or even identical with those of the region or wider. An interrelationship between Marketing Mix elements with environmental factors create a synergy in terms of creating of a sustainable offer, which will result in a better destination image that will help the visitor in decision making for “purchase -visit-staying” in the tourist destination. This is achieved through an integrated marketing communication, which has the primary purpose of increasing the knowledge of visitors on the destination and the increase of impact of the sender’s messages to the visitors (in this case to the receivers of communication messages). A coordinated and continuous action of Mix marketing elements undoubtedly achieve the goal of information, persuasion and recalling of the visitors about the possibilities, advantages and benefits of visitor’s arrival and stay at destination. The first issue to be done is the identification of the target group which should be attracted and stimulated in the use of the destination tourist offer. All these activities should be based on the marketing research and data collection for the target group of visitors, competition, environmental factors, organizational structure, etc. The visitor (that in this paper is referred to as consumer) is in the center of attention and marketing activities, which besides his knowledge is also influenced by the messages directed around the tourist destination or tourist offer. It’s important to have knowledge on that how the messages of this communication are received and processed by the visitors, being aware of the larger number of information and messages received by the visitor from different sources for different types of tourist offers.

### **4. Integrated marketing communications model**

Building of an enterprise communication system with the public has the purpose of providing information on the enterprise offer, but also the receipt of feedback on the needs and satisfactions of consumers (in the case of tourism-visitors) with the offer. The knowledge of consumer behavior has an important role in the building of a communication system, and this has to do with a very important issue that how the consumer receives and interprets the received information from the enterprise. Key players in the tourism industry in Kosovo should always have in mind the fact that the public this time is overburdened with diverse information including those of tourist offers, and information coming from the inside of the country and abroad, as well. As for the enterprise itself, the problem appears right here because of much available information, i. e. an ordinary tourist is suffocated by information coming from different sources, and from here we notice without any doubt that the tourist keeps in mind only little information that is attractive, interesting and important that draw his attention and care. The communication of enterprises with the public has been carried out in one direction, that is, from enterprise towards the consumers, but over time the need for two-way communication has evolved, and in this communication has predominated the approach inside-out or when it was assessed by enterprise the selected information were launched towards the public. This method is seen as ineffective for those who want an interactive communication and now it’s preferred by many actors the manner or the approach from outside-in or comparing the time when the enterprise conceptualized and selected the way and time of communication on the basis of modern approach and IMC (Integrated

Marketing Communications), the enterprise wants that communication to be done based on the demands of those to whom are dedicated information. Therefore IMC builds a communication strategy of the “setting the target” in information as well as in the recognition of the features of whom it’s directed, and from this arises the need for the creation of the data on individuals or certain groups. This approach strengthens the requirement for a two-way communication, which operates permanently. This new communication strategy approach itself has to do with the difference in the manner of traditional communication where the enterprise chooses what, when and how much to inform, in contrast to the IMC approach where previously there’s a target of communication and for each promotion element there’s a strategy that characterizes the modern way of communication of the enterprise with the message receiver (which is formed based on the demands of the receiver) and this appears to be a functional model of IMC.

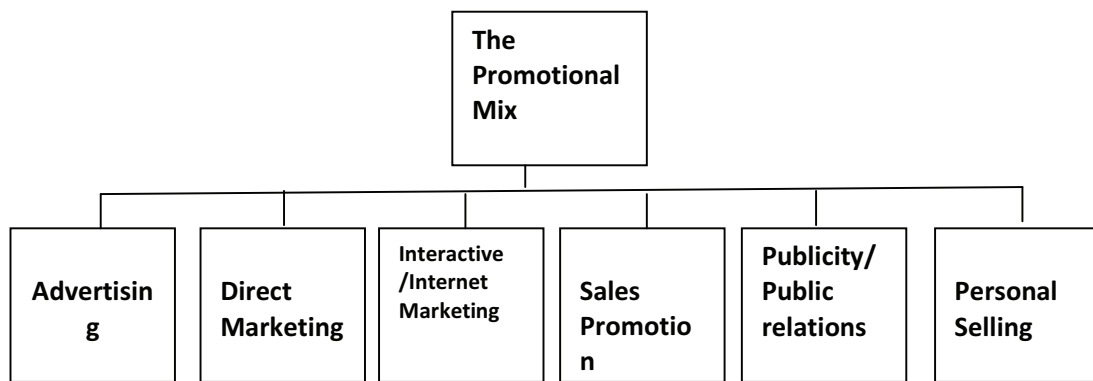


Fig. 1 Elements of Promotional Mix to be used in model of IMK according to Belch& Belch.

As in marketing concept the planning is crucial, also the integrated marketing communication is a planned activity of use of above listed promotional elements. Continuing with developing marketing program for each element separately and IMC program as comprehensive that has its own objective, strategy and tactics. [G. Belch&M. Belch 2003, Kotler&Keller 2009, Ukaj 2011]. A shift in this pattern of communication isn’t easy to accept in the enterprise and marketing department, because it requires a permanent engagement, knowing that the tourist receives the message without taking into account by which media TV, radio or press and in his subconsciousness he forms a single message about the offer or tourist destination. At the same time, it should be brought to light the fact that in the subconsciousness of the tourist is created “a single message” from and about the enterprise without taking into account that he has taken the information from different media, the problem here is that the received messages from different promotional elements if they don’t match among themselves, this can bring confusion and uncertainty to the tourist about the destination image and tourist offer position. In the practice of the Kosovo tourism, regarding the activities of the key players, it happens often that they cannot coordinate the communication channels and this brings mixed information to visitors. Practically, this is documented when the publicity offers a state that differs from the advertisement of different destinations within Kosovo, brochures and catalogues give other information, pricing policy shows different situation from the design and appearance of buildings, whereas in most cases the communication through Internet is not functioning or it doesn’t correspond to other ways of promotion. We bring up this issue being convinced that different actors even inside an enterprise are involved in

information that serve as a source of integrated communication messages. From this we raise the issue of that who is dealing with integrated communications in tourism enterprises and institutions taking care about tourist destinations, it remains that the improvement of the communication form to be wished, however, in fact the promotional messages are sent by any department or marketing unit, while regarding publicity, public relations, direct marketing it's engaged someone from the senior management staff, while the personal selling is coordinated by the sales manager, and so on up to the web page in the Internet which is either maintained by an employee from time to time, or by any individual or professional agency which maintains or refreshes it. It has been noticed that in the enterprise communication strategies, that is, the actors in the tourism have no coordination among those who give information and types of given information to the market by the enterprise or tourist destination. In fact, we notice that with the advertisement and advertising issues are dealing marketing departments, while the personal selling and specific type of communication that is developed in this form is managed and realized by the sales manager, being involved also in the direct marketing, while in other forms of communication such as public relations, sponsorship and sales promotion is planned and realized by relevant departments in coordination with the top management. It becomes apparent undoubtedly that it must be done a coordination of these communications in the so-called integrated marketing communications (IMC), this concept in fact has to do with the coordination of the enterprise communication activities that it develops through different above mentioned channels, and all with the aim of clear message formulation, attractive for tourist offer, the destination itself, and the country in which are offered certain products and services. The concept of IMC makes it necessary the recognition by the person who communicates to recognize and find the issues, spots and the appropriate time when the visitor can and will have contact with the tourist product and service. We mustn't forget that IMC coordinates the messages that go even further, that is, not only to interested consumers or visitors but also to those uninterested or indifferent towards certain offer. In fact the skillfulness here is that in communication to be used various means and different communication channels, in fact it's determined the intensity and the time when by the promotional means will be forwarded accurate and stimulating messages to the whole public. This communication is based on the marketing strategy of the subject who is sending messages that how the offer in the best way can meet their needs and demands. [Kotler, Keller, 2009].

## **5. Conclusion**

Depending on the enterprise and tourist actors orientation, in Kosovo the communication is getting or it hasn't its merited and needed place in communication with visitors or targeted markets. The developments in the way of communication and used techniques make necessary to mention the need of improvement in the understanding and management of communication in the enterprises and institutions dealing with tourism. So, in this paper we started from the problems of the tourist product creation and certain tourist offer as a primary task of the management of tourism activities, but further we confirmed the hypothesis on the importance of communication with the public, visitors and market in general. Tourism as a specific branch of economy and in the case of Kosovo as a promising economic development pillar has its own problems, and here we identified "actors" or "stakeholders" that with a more professional, planned and proactive management will support activities that are already being developed by the private enterprises and state agencies to grow and diversify their activities in places, services and additional offers to the visitors. The achieved successes should be a stimulation to move forward in the application of the marketing concept in tourism and this way making this activity to be dealt by the qualified personnel that have knowledge of the marketing elements and strategies. An indicator that should be used and that was identified in the paper is the experience of neighboring countries in the building of tourist product and tourist offer, and if we have common features of the

tourist offer, we have also features that can be complementary with the offers of these countries and this gives us a chance to draw certain number of visitors from abroad. In the paper we paid attention to integrated marketing communication, and as long as in the classical promotion activities the communication goes from enterprise towards the consumer, IMC has a two-way flow, that is, from enterprise to the public and from individuals and market towards enterprise that is, the one who has an offer that can meet certain needs and demands. To those who are engaged in tourism the difficulties of making business in this field are clear for them, however, if the employees understand the importance of marketing and communication with the market, then they can more easily turn this communication on their behalf taking into account the environmental and ethical problems of marketing communications.

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