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OBJECTIVES

HYPOTHESES

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

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- Sharma T., Kwatra, G. (2008) Effectiveness of Social Advertising: A Study of Selected Campaigns, Corporate Social Responsibility, Edited by David Crowther & Nicholas Capaldi, Ashgate Research Companion to Corporate Social Responsibility, Chapter 15, pp 287-303.

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TOURISM MARKETING IN LAKE TANA MONASTERIES

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to assess the marketing practices of Lake Tana monasteries. For the purpose, data were collected from tourists, concerned government official, and from monks. Mixed research approach with case study design methods was employed. As a result, the findings found out that the Lake Tana monasteries have huge potential for tourism which deserves tourists' attention. The respondent tourists who visited the places are generally satisfied with their experiences in the monasteries. There are encouraging results with regard to the transparency of boat charges and availing boats in enough amounts. The attempt to make the monasteries ready for visit through out the week is also another interesting aspect. However, there are also things which require improvement. The promotion aspect especially deserves attention and needs immediate action to make tourism in the monasteries sustainable and exploit the tourism potential to the fullest. The creation of common understanding with the local community and the monks, as to how to treat tourists, is also another assignment for the Bahir dar city culture and tourism office.

JEL CODE

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KEYWORDS

Marketing, monasteries in Lake Tana, tourism, Tourism marketing.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a rapidly growing phenomenon and has become one of the largest industries in the world. The impact of tourism is extremely varied. On one hand, it plays an important and certainly positive role in the socio-economic and political development in destination countries by, for instance, offering new employment opportunities (Dinan & Sargeant, 2000). Also, in certain instances, it may contribute to a broader cultural understanding by creating awareness, respecting the diversity of cultures and ways of life. On the other hand, as a tool to create jobs, though it has not fulfilled its expectations. At the same time, complaints from tourist destinations concerning massive negative impacts upon environment, culture and residents' ways of life have given rise to a demand for a more sustainable development in tourism, especially in its marketing aspect. Different parties will have to be involved in the process of developing sustainable tourism marketing.

Countries in the world have made tremendous efforts on their tourism sectors development because the sector is strategically located within the economic mainstream as it links easily with other sectors of the economy such as agriculture, hospitality, transport and entertainment. For developing countries like Ethiopia, it has added advantages including the fact that the tourist product is consumed at the destination. Such destination consumption offers local communities the opportunities in job creation, skills development, economic empowerment, and social development (Ngwago, P. 2008).

LITERATURE REVIEW: THE TOURISM MARKETING MIXES**PRODUCT**

Product in tourism is basically the experience and hospitality provided by the service provided. In general the experience has to be expressed in such a way that the tourists see a value in them. Products are the value which the tourists come to see and experience them. Tourism products are different from tangible products in that instead of the product is transported to the tourists' nearby places tourists themselves travel to the tourism sites. Hence, there must be sustainability concern as to offer healthy experience to the tourists without affecting the local community.

PRICE

The price of the tourism services depend on business and target market objectives, cost of producing, delivering and promoting the product, willingness of the target, prices charged by competitors offering similar product/service to the same target markets, availability and prices of substitute products/services, and economic climate. This includes the prices at which visitors are admitted including any promotional and discounted offers. The main emphasis in pricing in tourism has been on low prices to encourage high volumes to ensure high profit levels for enterprises (Swarbrooke, 1999). In general, the public sector has little influence on prices (except in cases of public ownership and through taxes, fees and the like) but is a most influential tool in the hands of the commercial sector to influence demand.

PLACE/ACCESSIBILITY

Place refers to the location at which any service component, the subject of the marketing campaign, will be delivered. Place also refers to the channels of information that are used to disseminate the message. If, for example, the decision is taken to issue all visitors with a tourism code of conduct, the co-operation and commitment of intermediaries such as travel agents, tour operators and those responsible for tourism attractions themselves will be required (Dinan & Sargeant 2000).

PROCESS

The process in Tourism include, (a) trip planning and anticipation, (b) travel to the site/area, (c) recollection, (d) trip planning packages. The trip planning packages include, maps, attractions route and on site, information regarding lodging, food, quality souvenirs and mementoes. Process describes the "actual procedures, mechanisms, and flow of activities by which the service is delivered – the service delivery and operating systems" (Zeithaml and Bitner, 1996, p. 27). Each of these three elements is within the control of the services marketing manager, allowing service differentiation, and thereby providing customers attributes on which to compare and judge different service brands.

PROMOTION

Like other services, the promotion should address, the accurate and timely information helping to decide whether to visit target audience, the image to be created for the organization, objectives, budget, timing of campaign, media to be selected, and evaluation methods.

Promoting sustainability through more sensitive promotional and Marketing Practices could utilize all mediums including brochures and websites. Promotional techniques (the specific presentation of objects, stories and themes, and all the forms of display provided for visitors) can be a vital element in creating more sustainable forms of tourism. Sustainable promotion should reflect the manner in which a tourist site is promoted and advertised, and such promotion must accurately reflect the unique characteristics of the area in order not to cause disappointment and frustration among tourists. It is important that the industry, in its brochures and advertisements, does not create expectations that the product cannot live up to. Tourism organizations and destinations can also use literature and advertisements to raise tourist awareness of key issues relating to sustainability. They can undertake 'green marketing' and communication of

information explaining and interpreting the nature of the attraction/resource and its significance, for example, by promoting 'soft' tourism that minimizes adverse environmental and cultural impacts (e.g. nature tourism) as well as informing tourists of the impacts of their presence.

PEOPLE

People are the centre for Tourism. It is more a human intensive sector. For hospitality and guest relations it is very important to focus on people. It also plays a vital role in quality control, personal selling, and employee morale. In the case of Lake Tana monasteries the people aspect is very vital because most of the historical intangibles are told through people. In most cases, the people aspect is more vital to market the intangibles and training and development should be an integral part of tourism marketing.

PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Physical evidence consists of the "environment in which the service is delivered and where the firm and customer interact, and any tangible components that facilitate performance or communication of the service" (Zeithaml & Bitner, 1996, p. 26). Therefore, adding tangible cues to the intangibility of the service will add value and make the memorable to the tourists.

IMPORTANCE /BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

Amhara region has huge potential for tourism and if managed effectively and efficiently the industry can support the region's economy considerably. Some of such tourism sites are Lake Tana and the monasteries surrounding it. Regardless of some of the efforts made by monks and the regional government to support tourism in its narrowest sense, there are few researches conducted on the area even at an exploratory type, to the best of my knowledge. This is therefore an in depth investigation of marketing strategy problems in the Lake Tana's tourism which can uncover the gaps and came up with possible solution ideas. I believe appropriate tourism marketing has three major importance; it is source of income to the city and to the monasteries, it serves as employment opportunity, and it also creates favorable image of the region in the minds of tourists who come and visit the places. The study may also serve as spring board for future researchers in the Lake Tana and the monasteries as spring board.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Being the largest lake in Ethiopia, source for Blue Nile, and home for many islands makes Lake Tana the center of tourist attraction in the region. There are several small islands on the lake, most of which have monasteries. Most of the islands accept visitors of both sexes while some do not allow women. The thirty-seven islands of Lake Tana shelter twenty monasteries. Because of their isolation from the main land, they were used to store art treasures and religious relics from all parts of the country. Legend claims that the Ark of the Covenant was kept on one of these islands when Axum was endangered, and the ruminants of five emperors are found in these islands.

However, the tourism sector in Ethiopia has not developed as expected due to many factors. In relation to this, the Ethiopian Tourism Development policy (2009) pointed out that marketing is one of the major problems for the country's tourism development. This is because tourists' products are consumed at the destinations, unlike tangible goods, and hence more efforts of reaching tourists is of paramount importance. It is also not only to promote the monasteries and attract tourists that develop sustainable tourism, it is improving the process and making places safe and pleasant that will satisfy tourists as well. Consequently, appropriate tourism marketing is the most feasible strategy to exploit the places tourism opportunity to the fullest. Although the number of both domestic and international tourists to Lake Tana monasteries has increased since the past five years, it is still very few when compared with the tourist inflows of the neighboring countries like Kenya. The World Bank (2006) report indicates that the Kenya's marketing effort has made a considerable tourist inflows more than other sub Saharan countries.

It is therefore reasonable to evaluate the lake tana tourism from marketing point of view in order to pin point which aspects are going well and which of them need improvement. To do this, formal scientific investigation like this is the right means and this is the very reason why this study was undertaken. The central research question here is how do the monasteries use tourism marketing for their tourism development endeavors.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The major objective of the research is to assess the practice of tourism marketing in Lake Tana monasteries as an integral part of the region's development policy in order to help the monasteries get more tourists and the region give due attention to the marketing aspects of tourism.

The specific objectives are:

- To assess how different stakeholders for Lake Tana monasteries view tourism
- To examine the marketing strategies implemented in Lake Tana monasteries
- To identify the challenges ahead for increasing tourist inflows
- To appraise tourists perception of the dimensions of the monasteries' product
- And to recommend possible marketing strategy insights

BASIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In line with the central research question, the research has tried to answer the following specific research questions.

- How do the stakeholders for Lake Tana monasteries view tourism marketing in general?
- What efforts have been made to increase the number of tourists to the monasteries and the future intentions?
- What marketing strategies do the Bahir dar city administration/monasteries implement to increase the number of tourist inflows and their satisfaction?
- What challenges have been identified in relation to tourism in the monasteries?
- How do tourists perceive different dimensions of the Lake Tana monasteries' product?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

I used mixed approach for this study. According to Jill H. and Roger H. (1997), it is usual in business research to take a mixture of approaches, particularly in the methods of collecting and analyzing data. This in fact allowed me to take a broader and more complementary view of the research problem. Regarding the design, the nature of the questions to be addressed and the level of investigation required demand the specific research design to be employed. In general, case studies are the preferred strategy when "how" or "why" questions are being posed Yin (2003). The case studies allowed me to deeply understand the practical problems in tourism marketing.

SAMPLING/CASE SELECTION TECHNIQUE

Two methods of sampling were used for this research; one to select case monasteries and the other to select tourists as respondents. For in depth investigation and the fullest application of the case research design chosen, considering five monasteries are believed to offer enough information for this study. I selected five monasteries based on the tourist inflows to these areas. These monasteries are most tourists favored and frequently visited areas. Besides, I selected forty foreign tourists judgmentally right after their comebacks to Bahir dar from visiting the monasteries. The basis for selecting these respondents is their visits of the monasteries and willingness to participate in the study.

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

I used three data collection instruments: questionnaire, interview and observation.

- Structured questionnaires were dispatched to tourists
- In depth interviews were held with the culture and tourism officers
- Interviews were also held with monastery administrators

➤ Personal observation was also employed to gather data with regard to how monks treat tourists and the local community's interaction with tourists

DATA ANALYSIS

Data collection and analysis are developed together in an iterative process in a case study, (Cassell & Symons 2004, P: 329). The case studies are also so flexible that they can accommodate emerging theories in the final data analysis. Thus, descriptive statistics such as percentages and frequency were used for quantitative data analysis. And thematic analysis was also substantiating the quantitative data as qualitative data were collected through interview and observation.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research is to assess tourism marketing practices of Lake Tana monasteries and the challenges ahead in order to put forward marketing strategy insights for the development of tourism in the area. To do so, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected from three sources; monastery administrators, Bahir Dar city culture and tourism office, and tourists. Questionnaire for tourists and interview for monastery administrators and Bahir dar culture and tourism office were used as the major instruments of data collection. Personal observation as a means of data collection was also employed.

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT TOURISM STRATEGY OF THE PLACES

The Bahir Dar culture and tourism bureau is the responsible government body for implementing tourism strategies of the city including the tourists cites near the city such as the Blue Nile fall and Lake Tana monasteries. The tourism strategy is devised by the Ministry of culture and tourism at the federal level and adopted by the region's culture, tourism and park development bureau.

The key informant for this research indicated that Bahir dar city administration has recognized tourism as one of the key sectors which are aimed to enable the city achieve its vision of being one of the top tourist destination places in East Africa. The bureau works in collaboration with the Amhara National Regional State culture, tourism and parks development bureau. The informant stated that Bahir Dar has become tourist favored city since the past ten years due mainly to its geographic situation between the two tourist sites; Blue Nile fall and Lake Tana. Specially, Lake Tana justifies the very existence of the city as its name Bahir Dar ('near to lake') is derived from it.

TABLE 1: ANNUAL TOURIST FLOWS TO BAHIR DAR CITY

YearE.C	No. of Domestic tourists	Birr obtained	No of Foreign tourists	Birr obtained	Total Birr obtained
2000	26710	25053980	11774	28292314	53446472
2001	28542	26772396	12613	30300373	57167888
2002	22880	21461440	14286	34314028	55848767
2003	33989	31881682	18347	44086957	76055132

Source: Bahir Dar culture and tourism bureau tourist flow chart from 1988-2003 (1996-2011)

*1USD = 18birr, current exchange rate

The total birr generated from both domestic and foreign tourists consists of those amounts which the government directly receives and the amounts generated by different service rendering bodies of the city such as hotels, boats, tour guides, etc. The time series flow of data shows increment in both number of tourists flow and income generation. Based on the data, the average increase in local tourist flow is 1819 tourists or 27% annually. Similarly, there is an increment in foreign tourists flow by 1643 tourists or 55% annually. This implies that the growth in foreign tourist is about double to the growth of the number of local tourists.

Literatures show increments in global tourist flow since the past decade and hence such a relatively high growth rate in foreign tourists may be attributed to it. Similarly, the table also shows that the average tourist spending is 1433.82 birr. This implies that any attempt to increase one more tourist has additional increment of 1433.82 birr. More specifically, each effort to reach one foreign tourist will have an equivalent of 1909.37 birr income and each effort to attract one more local tourist will have corresponding payoffs 938 birr. This figure can serve as an important benchmark for comparing the cost of attracting one more tourist and its corresponding payoffs.

TOURISM MARKETING STRATEGY

Devising an effective marketing strategy is at the heart of any industry in general and service industry in particular. Hence the marketing strategy should be carefully designed by making an explicit account of the variables that constitute it. Consequently, this study views marketing strategy in terms of the marketing mixes such as product, price, promotion, place, people, process, and physical process.

PRODUCT

Products are the value which the tourists come to see and experience. Lake Tana monasteries have both natural and cultural products which tourists come to consume them. The product dimension in the monasteries may include the location, being an island, the paintings in the churches and scriptures, the spiritual aspect, the way of living of monks, and the trip over Lake Tana in general. Hence developing better product means improving all these aspects of the product. According to monks in Ura kidanemihret, there are more scriptures to be visited and more accompanying spiritual explanations to be told about the monasteries.

The findings indicate on aggregate average 91% of the tourists agree on the existence and pleasant nature of the products in the monasteries they visited. This is very encouraging result. The remaining aggregate average 10% are either indifferent or disagree with such claim. There are two competing reasons for this. The first reason may be either they haven't noticed the variety and cultural life due mainly to lack of communication or selective attention. And the second reason may be tourists may not have found them unique as they might have similar experience somewhere else before. If the reason is the first one, it can be improved through effective communication in the monasteries where the actual product is being experienced.

PRICE

The price includes the birr tourists are expected to pay right from the cost of boats until their comeback to Bahir Dar. Hence, the price includes; fees for boat, for guide if required, entrance fee for churches to visit, and fees to visit museums. The prices for boats are determined by their association and approved by Bahir Dar culture and tourism office. Such fixed price for boats are assumed to avoid price cheating by boat brokers by fixing prices according to their will and hence exploit tourists, according to key informant. Such fixed prices for boats are essential and develop trust among the visitors and also avoid unnecessary intermediaries which through price bargaining may also intrude privacy.

The price for boat transportation is based on three factors; - the type of boat (fiber or metal made), the distance of the place to be visited from Bahir Dar, and the number of passengers. There fore, tourist can take boats based on their preferences. The case monasteries have their own museums and charge fees for them. However, there are differences on the entrance fees. The monk administrators explained that the income generated from the visitors is used for fulfilling church related services including living expenses of monks under the respective churches.

However, the three case churches do not charge entrance fee. The reason for not doing so is, according to monks "the church is home for pilgrims and invites all to come and be blessed in it". Hence, as the monk in Ura kidanemihret explained charging for entrance may mean disobeying this eternal heavenly call. However, the two case monasteries charge entrance fee hence inconsistency happens at least in the practice.

From marketing point of view, the churches are the main product dimension and hence deserve price for experiencing them. Tourism will be source of income, if reasonable income is generated from the dimensions of the tourism product and hence these monasteries can benefit better if they charge entrance fee as well. In relation to this, the method of setting price in the monasteries is not also based on scientific approach. Literatures recommend different pricing strategies for tourism products. Discriminate pricing is one of the feasible pricing strategies for tourists. The discrimination can be based on whether tourists are local or foreign, as monasteries are currently charging for their museums, and weekend and weekdays. The monk in Kiburan Gabreal indicated that more tourists visit the monasteries on weekends and sometimes very few or no tourist visit them in weekdays. It is, therefore, possible to charge higher prices in weekends and lower prices in weekdays to increase and balance demand.

The tourists were also asked to rate the fairness of the price for the package of services they get as to and from the monasteries they visited. About 81% judged the price fair and cheap. This may indicate that the prices set by the monasteries may not be the optimal prices and there may still be possibility to set higher. However, lower prices like this are recommended in tourism marketing as more profit can be made from the volume of sales. Some times price can be taken as evaluation criteria for quality as the lower priced products are assumed to be of low quality. Hence the pricing for monasteries and boats should not be arbitrary and need to consider the experiences of other countries which offer similar services.

PROCESS

The processes in tourism include; trip planning and anticipation, travel to the site/area, recollection, and trip planning packages. The trip planning packages include, maps, attractions of on route and on site, information regarding lodging, food, quality souvenir (Zeithaml and Bitner, 1996). The process in this regard includes the process to and from Lake Tana monasteries and covers almost every aspect of tourist attraction and service packages.

This research tries to see the process in terms of three major variables; safety to visit, availability of boats every time needed, and easiness to get around the monastery islands. Based on the observation result, boats are available in three major departure sites. Besides, boats are in waiting lists and take their turns accordingly to travel tourists. With regard to the data about the two remaining constituents of the process mentioned, the following data are obtained

The findings indicate that more than 95% of the responses indicate positive results about the process. Safety is the first thing tourists need from places they want to visit. The process in service however is not limited to the variables measured in the above way and it includes the safety about the food, bed, hotel and other services which this study hasn't covered and yet important to consider.

The process aspect also includes availability of easy means of prior booking arrangements and availability of varied tourist consumption activities on the site. Tourism literatures strongly claim that tourists tend to maximize their happiness by making their costs minimal. One of the tourism costs is therefore the times spend and the cost of getting alternative sources of tourism sites and accessibility of those sites to make prior arrangements.

PROMOTION

An effective promotion in tourism includes, the accurate and timely information helping to decide whether to visit target audience, the image to be created for the organization, objectives, budget, timing of campaign, media to be selected, and evaluation methods. In this regard, the attempts made so far are not satisfactory, according to the key informant. There are attempts to promote the Lake Tana monasteries through Ethiopia Air line, tour agents' websites, and brochures and even documentary films about the monasteries for domestic visitors. However, according to the key informant, such attempts are not satisfactory. And such efforts are not coordinated and hence may not reach many of the potential tourists.

This research finds out that there is really a great gap in promotion in Lake Tana monasteries. The monks believe that the promotion is expected from Bahir dar city administration side considering their effort for promotion is very insignificant. However the promotion aspect of tourism is so varied that it includes even the services monks render because recommendation has become the major means of promotion. According to Kotler et al. (2010), consumers trust other consumers in their purchase decisions far more than advertisements of producers of goods and services. Hence, there is a room for monks to take part in promoting their monasteries.

PEOPLE

People are the centre for tourism because it is more a human intensive sector. Such aspect is very vital for the monasteries because most of the historical, cultural, and spiritual intangibles are told through people (mainly through monks and guides). For making the people aspect effective, literatures recommend training and development on regular basis. For making promotion effective, the people aspect still plays important role in personal selling both the tangible and intangible aspects of the monasteries and the islands around.

The findings show very encouraging aspect of the people as 90% the respondents develop positive image in the people aspect. However, the remaining 10% unfavorable attitude should not be overlooked. This is so because, literatures in service marketing claim that a satisfied customer is more likely to tell to 6 potential customers, and a dissatisfied customer is likely to tell to 11 potential customers about dissatisfaction. As a result, more attention should be given to the factors which dissatisfy tourists. And for collecting information about tourists level of satisfaction, simple suggestion box or exit memo write ups request forms can be placed after their come back to Bahir dar city.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As delivering satisfaction should be the major concerns of service rendering bodies, there should be clear and up to date understanding about the activities favored most by tourists to keep it sustainable and about parts which needs improvement to make the necessary adjustments and minimize the negative experiences tourist might develop as a result of such inefficiencies. In this regard, the respondents adore the natural setting of Lake Tana monasteries of all the package of services they get from their visit of Lake Tana monasteries.

The major findings indicate many encouraging aspects of the monasteries. However, there are also things which need improvement. The recommendation is worth to consider both aspects.

List prices for boats indeed decrease price cheating and increase tourists' confidences as to the rightfulness of the prices they pay. Such monasteries as Debre mariam also post the price list for both entrance and museum visit fees on the gate. Still these are encouraging. However, there are other monasteries which do not have such lists. It is therefore better for all monasteries to have price lists for items they want to charge and put the lists in visible place. Similarly, different pricing system for weekdays and weekends will help the monasteries to balance and increase demand.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY AND SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCHERS

The absence of tourist database created a problem of clearly identifying how many of tourists who visited Bahir Dar city also visited Lake Tana monasteries. Simply the research took for granted the Bahir dar city administration culture and tourism bureau respondent's assumption that almost all of the tourists did so. Besides, in the beginning, I believed that the impact of marketing efforts especially segmentation and promotion would be better measured in terms of reaching foreign tourists. And hence, the tourist respondents in this research are all foreign tourists. But I am convinced after the analysis that the inclusion of domestic tourists' view in the research would make this research more robust. Hence future researchers are advised to take messages from this.

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