

## Communication and promoting policy in tourism marketing

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**Abstract** *By communication, any tourism entity aims to identify the target markets and the preferences of their potential clients who may become loyal consumers. To accomplish this goal, the entity must achieve a constructive and homogenous sum of all the data and information that may be the basis for determining the reaction patterns of the competition and can select promoting methods and techniques they can later on use for promoting their services. Promoting their services is useful to the clients while making the purchasing decision, because it helps them eliminate or reduce distrust in the tourism product that is up for sale or to offer them security of a good level of satisfaction resulted at the purchase of the selected tourism product.*

**Key words** communication policy, tourism promoting, tourism marketing

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### Introduction

Through the communication policy and the means by which they materialize it, tourism entities aim to disseminate information about their activity, products and services as complete as possible but also to gather feedback on how these are received and appreciated.

Communication is a complex mechanism of sending out images and messages about the tourist destinations and about the products offered to potential clients. This includes all the internal and external actions of an economic entity (company, agency, and association) that gathers knowledge, beliefs and attitude of the market participants, that they use for creating promotional materials targeted on the market and the customer segments (Bruhn M., 1999).

Viewed from this perspective, the entity becomes, over time and space, an important source of communication, transmitting large amounts of data and information with the main goal of strengthening its image and prestige, its products and services in the environment or market they act in.

Any communication is based on communication means, namely data and information transmitting technologies that are put into the service of communication.

In the current development state of tourism at an international and European level, marketing has become a major economic tool when potential clients are choosing a tourism destination, but also insures development and respectively modernization of tourism activities in the medium and long term. This approach derives from the fact that the tourist is an increasingly busier professional, with their own obligations, who can evaluate a tourism product through real and fair marketing.

### Communication

By communication, any tourism entity aims to identify the target markets and the preferences of their potential clients who may become loyal consumers. To accomplish this goal, the entity must achieve a constructive and homogenous sum of all the data and information that may be the basis for determining the reaction patterns of the competition and can select promoting methods and techniques they can later on use for promoting their services.

As an information receiver, the entity must pay maximum attention to their relations with the tourism providers, to their image regarding the offered range of products and services in order to be constantly appreciated by tourists. This aspect will determine having a certain volume of sales and a certain market share. In this last instance, the obtained information must serve some measures that should

contribute to earning a better position in the environment or market to which it applies (Brassington F., Petit S., 2000).

**The communication system** the entity chooses to use for transmitting information, an idea or an attitude consists of the information source (the entity itself), the message (respectively the information, idea, etc. that would be transmitted); the receiver (the consumer, tourist, supplier etc.) and the channel (the means by which the message would be transmitted) (Balaure V. et al, 1985).

The decision to purchase a tourism product is taken either as consequence of an existing previous experience of the tourist, or because of prior advertising for that product on the market. Information that reaches the potential consumer can be commercial, noncommercial, personal and impersonal (tab. no. 1) and it contributes to the awareness of a certain product, to knowing it because of differentiating features, to its appreciation in relation to the experience and client motivation, to selecting it as a favorite, to strongly believing it and finally, to the client purchasing it.

The impersonal level for transmitting information is more synthetic, more direct, with a focus on the artistic creation of the message, while the personal level is much more detailed and also more convincing. Many times the noncommercial transmitting of information can be more credible than the commercial ones because of the fact that it represents an experience already taken from the client phase to the consumer phase. Because of their experience as tourists who benefited from specific tourist products and services, they become messengers of positive or negative appreciations and thus an important promoter.

Analysis of the information in tab. no. 1 highlights that in the current economy *integrated communication* is preferred from its simplest forms of advertising promotion all the way to the email, becoming a sort of bible for the business environment (Marketing guide proposed by The Economist). Marketers must know the information sources that can influence the client into taking the purchasing decision and even more, to influence them and use them in the most beneficial way for the entity they represent. In this respect, specialized literature recognizes opinion formers and opinion leaders (Kotler Ph., 1997).

**Tab. no. 1 – Tourism communication types**

Tourist information categories	Personal level	Impersonal level
<b>Commercial</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- travel agencies;</li> <li>- tour operators;</li> <li>- tourism providers;</li> <li>- tourist information centers;</li> <li>- tourism offices abroad;</li> <li>- advertising agencies;</li> <li>- tourism fairs and expos.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- radio, TV advertising;</li> <li>- newspapers, magazine advertising;</li> <li>- printed materials;</li> <li>- video materials;</li> <li>- cinema materials;</li> <li>- landline and mobile phones;</li> <li>- websites.</li> </ul>
<b>Noncommercial</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- close friends;</li> <li>- family members and relatives;</li> <li>- neighbors, coworkers;</li> <li>- strangers;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- tourist programs;</li> <li>- specialized press;</li> <li>- guides, tourist catalogues;</li> <li>- specialized film studios.</li> </ul>

Opinion formers are people, groups of people, advertising or travel agencies that can transmit the information to the consumer. They can present data and information about the tourist attractions, the natural and cultural environment, transport, prices, estimated costs and so on, thus being able to influence the purchase decision of the potential clients. The tourism market can also be influenced by the information transmitted by personalities from various domains, like arts, sports and business who can express satisfaction with the chosen destination or the offered accommodation.

Opinion leaders are people who are part of the same social category with the people they influence (neighbors, friends, co-workers, relatives and so on). They are experienced in the tourism field, have visited the offered destinations and can make knowledge based recommendations. Having a detailed knowledge of the destinations and tourist products allows creation of a promotion policy.

### Promotion process

The *promotion process* begins with the analysis and prioritizing ideas and information and then continues with stating clear objectives for the promotion that must be the marketers focus.

They refer to information distribution depending on target audience identification, determining expected results, selecting and preparing created messages, selecting the means and techniques to effectively transmit the messages to the target audience, respectively analyze feedback.

Objectives should be based on a thorough analysis of the current situation and implies a detailed research of the target market and clients. The promotional objectives can be pointed at consolidating, creating or changing the behavior of the tourist product consumers. In case of products that were just launched on the *market*, a *promotional strategy based on creating an acceptance behavior and appreciation of a particular product* is used and later on when the product reaches maturity on the market, a preference consolidation and customer fidelity promotion strategy would be used.

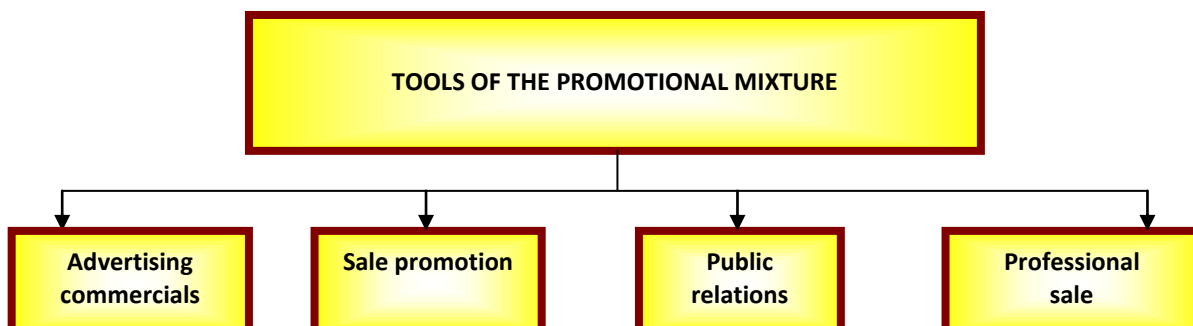
Promotion is useful to the client during the purchase decision process because it helps eliminate or reduce the distrust in the tourist product about to be bought or to offer safety of a good level of satisfaction resulted by purchasing the selected tourist product.

**The purchase decision** represents a temporal sequence of recognizing necessities or desires, of searching and evaluating alternatives, of choosing the tourist product and the post-purchase evaluation. In the specialty literature it is noted that customer assumed risk in the purchase process is inversely proportional with the interest and self-esteem of the individual. The consumer can manage and increase the self-esteem in the purchase decision process if:

- they have previous experience (they contact a tour operator or travel agency that always offered trust and quality products, according to their requests);
- they use services of providers whom they know or are recommended by friends and family;
- they receive warranties from the providing entities for unfavorable situations, by offering another destination or another tourist service pack, similar the previously purchased one;
- they purchase cheaper and more accessible tourist products, taking on the risk for quality related issues of the destination;
- they research and check the information they receive, gathering messages and promotional materials from various sources.

Usually, with higher tourist product price and more unknown products, the risk of the future tourist rises.

**Promotional activity** is not a constant process and has various purposes over time, and the main communication means are: *advertising, sale promotion, public relations and professional sales* – that constitute the tools of the promotional mixture (fig.no.1):



**Fig. 1 Tools of the promotional mixture**  
(Kotler Ph., 2001)

**a) Advertising** is considered to be the most used method in any promotion policy of a tourism entity. This is defined by V. Middleton (2000) as „a tool of mass communication that, by the chosen means, is dedicated to target groups, specific to the entity, in order to achieve the promotion objectives and raise sales“. Advertising includes a sum of actions with the main purpose of presenting and transmitting an idea

about a service, product, brand or tourism entity by a provider or a specialized agency, of the commercial type.

Starting an advertising campaign from formulating the idea and all the way to putting it into effect needs consistent financial support, a reason (usually) for only large tourism entities to be able to have active and continuous promotion policies. Choosing the channels and media supports is very difficult and depends on the designated budgets. Extension of the satellite communication and commercial televisions led to the extension of this type of promotion.

Basically, the promotion campaign has two levels of expression, identified by the used communication means. The first level is the *prelaunch* – that uses television, press, media, public relations and the second level is the launch - that included advertising, press conferences, promotional materials and actions, using brands, special offers, sales, etc. In 1997, Ph. Kotler makes an overview of the main means of promotion used in services, with application in tourism (tab. no. 2).

**Tab. no. 2 – Promotion means for tourism**

Mass-media	Promotional actions	Mass-media and event compilation	Promotional actions and event compilation
Commercials for radio, television or printing	Games, competitions, raffles, lottery, coupons	Speeches and press conferences, specialized workshops	Meetings and commercial presentations
Printed specialty guides and catalogues	Small gifts and souvenirs	Sponsoring some forms of tourism	Other fairs and commercial exhibition
Brochures, flyers and other printed materials	Fairs, exhibitions, and tourist events	Proprietary means of information	Personal mail offer
Billboards, posters, advertising messages, demos, photo exhibitions	Protocol trips for journalists, cultural and economy attachés	Tourism company or advertising magazine	Sport, cultural, national and international events
Internet	Group sales, sales	Planning special events	Religious events
Audio-video materials (CDs, videos)	Short advertisements in large malls	Telemarketing	Book fairs

Adapted from Kotler Ph., 1997

After determining the objectives of the promotion campaign, the necessary budget is allocated for each tourist product, with regard to the phase in the life of the project, the market share and the customers (target-audience), market competition, commercial repetition frequency, degree of product replacement, etc. (Meghişan Gh., Nistorescu T., 1998).

Out of all the promotion types, the one that is used most commonly is the advertising. This is a key component of the marketing activity. Some criticize it for creating illusions in the consumer minds, others praise it for being the most efficient type of promotion. It is based on the mnemonic concept known as AIDA – attention, interest, desire, action.

Advertising can be approached in different ways depending on the purposes of its use. Thus, there is *comparative advertising* that presents the advantages of a product compared to a similar product, considered to be the most efficient for winning customers over and increasing sales and a *sequential advertising* dedicated to specific potential client segments, for determining them to purchase; this can be differentiated by other advertising formulae applied to other tourist segments. Thus, advertising for young clients will be completely different than the one created for the elderly who are more oriented to comfort, safety and commodity of the tourist activity.

Advertising means used by the tourist entities (tab.no.3) have advantages and disadvantages, imply various costs, attract oscillatory customer segments in time and space.

**Tab. no. 3 – The structure of the advertising concept**

Advertising types	Advantages and disadvantages
Television uses – images, sounds, movement, color;	Short duration Limited air time Broad audience High cost
Radio – sounds, elaborated texts and musical background, sketches;	Broad impact and audience Broad demographical and geographical selection Low cost
Newspapers – text, color and black and white images;	Dominant visual images High credibility Local and national coverage Keeping possibility over time Correlation with special events
Magazines – text, images, description, page position;	Visual images High demographical and geographical selection Up-to-date information Credibility and prestige Sometimes inconstant editions
Annual guides – text, images, circulation, page and volume position;	High credibility Frequent reading Correlation with special events High price
Posters and billboards – dimensions, position, symbols, text and images.	Powerful visual images Low cost Limited creativity Repeated exposure Low demographical selection

Adapted from Kotler Ph. et al., 2001, p.185-187

**b) Sale promotion** was defined by Kotler Ph. (1997) as „an initiative to encourage the purchase of a product or service”, and the tourism industry objectives are: raising sales of a tourist product off-season (especially in spring and autumn); raising sales during important events, holidays or special occasions (Easter, Christmas, New Year, etc.); determining customers to purchase a new product or tourist service; ease the sale towards intermediates (travel agencies and tour operators).

Means that are mostly used as promotion are sales, coupons, holiday tickets, bonuses in products or complementary services, games, competitions and sample distribution of images of a tourist destination.

**c) Public relations** represent a form of direct marketing that an entity uses to find a communication bridge between them and the potential customers. In tourism, the idea of public includes the internal public (employees and their families, shareholders or owners) and external public (tourists and potential tourists, competing tourism entities, local municipality, central and local institutions, mass-media, tourism training centers, etc.). The contribution of PR to the promotion depends on the characteristics of the tourist product (intangibility, perish ability, heterogeneity, inseparability) and on the psycho-emotional component of people. Public relations are based on the interactive capacity of the psychosocial behaviors and on the emotional reactions of customers.

Tourism entities have their own marketing departments, with employees specialized in the field, or they can use specialized companies and agencies. The major attributes of the public relations in tourism are represented by permanently creating a positive image and corresponding relations for this image with all the collaborators and competition; diminishing the negative attitude based on real or unreal facts, in the eyes of partners and competition.

From the possible actions in public relations we can count: research visits at the tourist destinations and tourist accommodation, press conferences, press releases, interviews in the local media, workshops, sponsorships, cocktail parties, tourism company magazine, postcards and others.

**d) Professional sale** is considered to be the most effective tool of the promotional mixture for educating the customer’s preference and convincing them into taking the purchasing decision. This

develops relations between people, resulting in long lasting friendships and customer loyalty. This kind of promotion is considered expensive but is used frequently in the countries with powerful tourism industry because of the long lasting results.

Another promotion formula is the new media approach, a well-structured website that shows all the fields of activity of the travel agency. They contain a short description of the agency, holiday types in the country or abroad, the education and continuous professional training opportunities and transport services on regular or charter flights.

### **Conclusions**

In conclusion, we can say that applying the mix marketing in tourism entities determines accelerated tourism development based on existing resources and facilities. The promotion component is very important because it expresses a tourist destination image and brand locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. Also, examples of the mix marketing content and especially for promoting at travel agency level shows that generally the ways tourism is promoted in the country, both at regional and local level (agencies don't focus on creating new tourism products, more special and more attractive, with as many tourism service providers, but they rely on what already exists, on previously created relationships).

Very relevant is the way of communication, techniques selection and the means to achieve promotion messages. Sometimes lack of inspiration, creativity and professionalism on the long term can lead to customer dissatisfaction and loss. Promoting must always be combined with the quality of the products offered by providers, both ensuring the development of tourism in any tourist destination.

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