

## The structure of the strategic plan in tourism marketing

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**Abstract** *The structure of a strategy includes also a marketing component, by which the products become known, they are distributed and bought by possible clients. Marketing is a managerial process of identification, anticipation, and satisfying in a profitable way the consumers demands.*

*By its component parts, which have to interrelate one to each other, the tourism marketing strategy has the role of establishing the competitive direction, of ensuring the rigorous planning of the products, of supporting their promotion, having a particular mission in reducing the resistance in front of the new economic and social changes.*

**Key words** strategic plan, tourist marketing, promotion

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### Introduction

*Any strategy is an amount of decisions which have as purpose the optimum unfolding of the activities, in a certain period of time (Malcomete P., 1991). By an appropriate strategy adopted by companies' administrations, all the established objectives can be accomplished. At large, any strategy implies objective and subjective decisions.*

*The objective decisions refer to the previous evaluation of the international and internal conjuncture, by which it can be determined the position and the development level of the own activities, for the purpose of maintaining the already attained position and of attracting new customers segments.*

*The subjective decisions comprise some decisions concerning the use of the own capitals (natural, human, economic, financial) which sustain the ongoing activities of any association. In many situations, the presumption or underestimate can become negative factors in the subjective decision-making process. In this context, the professional experience and training of the manager have an essential part.*

*A tourist marketing strategy plan has to comprise a vision, a mission and several objectives, which should be the result of a rational option and of the free will of the entity (enterprise, company, agency, association). In the existing conditions of a more and more globalized and competitive tourist market, a company cannot be maintained to a competitive level without conceiving a general and sectorial plan. In the marketing mix structure, the promotion component is essential because it enhances the popularity of the offered products/services; determines the attractiveness and has a final influence on the buying decision. In tourism, the concept of promotion focused marketing show that the final purpose is the evaluation and the satisfaction of the demands and needs of consumers.*

### The structure and the content of the strategic plan in tourism marketing

*The vision component part consists in determining the necessary intervening, actions for the future, considering the profile market tendencies. This signifies an anticipation of the necessary actions for reaching the competitiveness objectives and attaining a better position on internal and external markets. For having a vision, the strategy builder has to be aware of many details of the economic and social life, the competition level etc.*

*Vision signifies generating innovating ideas concerning the providing of a service, the existence of a product; vision has the purpose of projecting the expected near future of an activity sector or of a business, the anticipated period being of at least 5 years. Especially in tourism, having vision implies major and fast*

changes concerning the function and the quality of the provided services; this kind of initiatives belong, in general, to the great tour-operators or the hotel chains which are capable of generating major changes in their function.

Tourism can have a decisive role in sustaining the local and regional development because, using a judicious strategic plan (within the general development strategy), the tourism sector can produce a better benefit from the less popular and publicized tourist resources. In this context, giving effect to a constructive vision can signify developing tourism facilities (hotel, villas, parking lots, sports fields, ski slopes and transportation by cable car etc.).

The strategic plan has to rely on clear actions, to be simple and complete. The success will be the result of the attraction of the target groups for which the promotion strategy will be built. For a continuously success, the promotion has to rely also on continuous adaptation and diversification. Therefore, in addition to innovation, creativity for a certain activity field within the company, the vision concept reveals also its fundamental values, which directly suggests the contribution of the managerial team and of the entire staff, this being in fact the action philosophy of that company.

The success on the specialized market of several multinational tourism companies (ACCOR, Howard Johnson, Ramada, Continental etc.) reveals that they rely on great comparative values and they express the administration responsibility regarding its success and regarding the maintenance of a dominant position on the specialized market.

***The mission component part*** includes a variety of charges, tasks which have to be accomplished in a certain period and for a well posed purpose. In the context of the present management, *the mission of an organization is its reason to exist*, fact which is also true for marketing, because without promotion, no company can sell its services.

The use of the mission concept in the strategic plan started from the American economic environment, which faced a very strong competition. Regardless the dimensions of the tourism company, it has starting with its foundation, the mission of continuously offering products/services and promoting it; in the marketing mix, this concept can be also applied separately, only for the promotion sector.

The mission has to mark out the difficulties faced by the company or the entire field, to reveal the competition level on the same market or on other similar markets, to indicate how it should respond to the new market challenges and tendencies.

In tourism, the changes concerning the market, the motivation of the demands are very dynamic, therefore the strategic missions are difficult. The fastest proceedings are necessary in the marketing field, in order to avoid great loss regarding the segment of potential tourists or the attractiveness of the tourist destinations. The mission component implies also finding the instruments and marketing methods which are the most efficient at a certain moment. Being aware of the market specific realities related to a certain moment and location, the marketers have to decide regarding the promotion type put into practice, the methods and techniques, the duration and the expenses.

Establishing the necessary actions in the context of a marketing strategic mission in tourism reveals that the world is relying more and more on a market economy, with liberal highlights, which is stimulated by the potential clients; the promotion must focus on clear goals, on multiple initiatives and means, achieved with a moderate resources consumption, in order to ensure a maximum profit.

Mission is based on: consumer needs, the methods of satisfying him, the selected tourism form, the demanded services, the most appropriate promotion for each target group, the geographical space where it is put into practice; under these circumstances, a well accomplished mission ensures the companies and its business existence and survival on medium and long term. There is an internal mission dedicated to the national market promotion and another one, dedicated to the external markets.

Promotion at a hotel chain level has the mission of showing its distinctive elements, the quality of the services and the satisfaction degree. Then, depending on the evolution of the tourist market, the objectives of the mission can be updated, and according to the technological performances, the marketer can apply the most innovative solutions. By promotion, the mission is in fact recognized, it passes beyond the internal level of the business, being an instrument which keeps the connection between the reality and the suggested promotion image.

The final success of a mission relies, in any company, on collaboration and internal vertical and horizontal consensus, which facilitates the success of the promotion suggested for a certain tourist product or tourist package.

**The objectives selection component part** is essential for the strategic plan, because it has an impact on the stability and the success of any tourism business. Any objective is defined by the fact that it comprises a set of actions/measures designed to improve the economic activity of the field or of the company. It derives from the Latin word „*objectus*”, which signifies *an anterior position, onward positioning*, which suggests the idea of *element which determines an action and induces a certain pragmatic attitude*.

In marketing, the concept of objective, although it seems to have a theoretical character, expresses in fact a set of future states, necessary for a company, which lead to performance and competition. It shows the steps which should be followed in order to determine an ascending direction to the economic activity, to increase its efficiency. In promotion, objectives ensure a good positioning on the specialized market and the selection of the marketing instruments accordingly to the clients motivations.

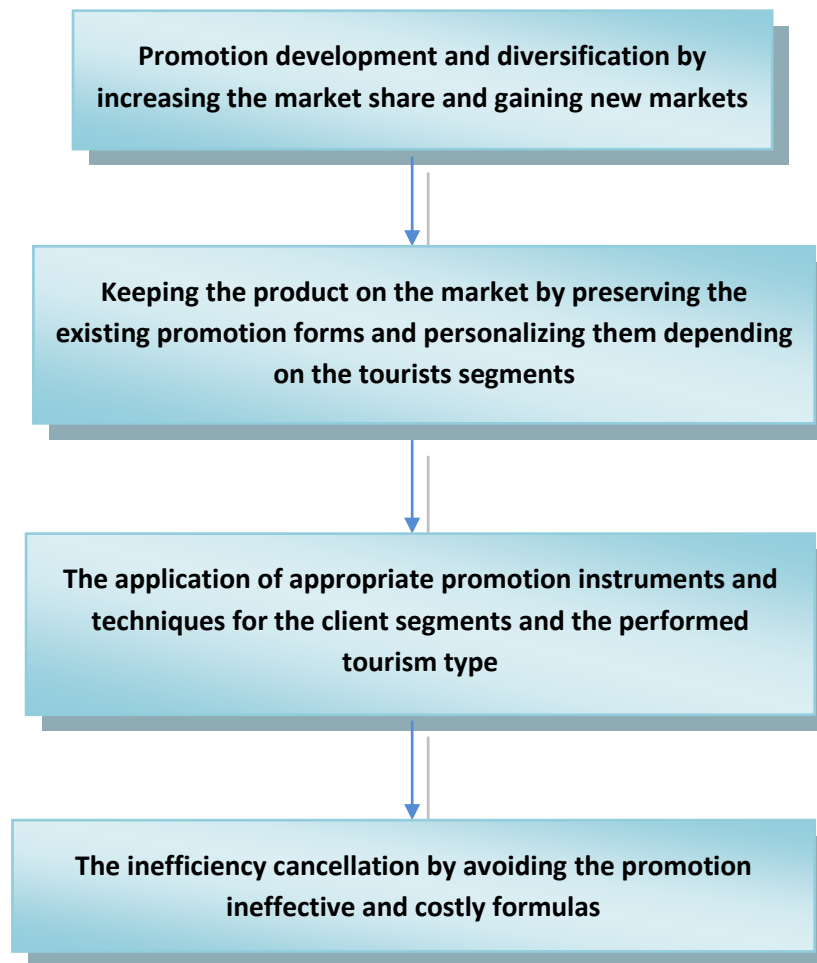
The objective and the goal are often confounded, the difference between them being that the objective involves also achievement deadlines, allocated resources, while the goal reveals a result, in the near or distant future. Establishing an objective brings to any activity field coherence, consistency, efficiency. Accordingly, it plays the role of an action instrument for facing the competition and becoming attractive for the possible customers.

In the marketing mix which has a great applicability in tourism, the objectives have to be easily quantifiable (measurable), to be related to a certain period of time, relevant for a certain tourist market, motivated for as many segments of tourists, to be realistic and flexible. They also have to precisely set a level of expectations, in order to generate the highest possible level of the human satisfaction; the objectives achievement expenses have to fit within the financial limits of the company, in order not to affect the costs.

On these lines, the objectives which refer to expenses/revenues, to increasing the number of customers, the length of stay are easily to be assessed and measured. In promotion, using several methods and techniques of putting into practice the elaborated strategy leads to entering on more tourist markets, which attracts more tourist segments. Thereby, the simpler and less developed tourist markets use advertises, promotion through edited materials, while the developed markets act through modern mass-media and internet.

A strategic plan applying the marketing mix distinguishes between *strategic objectives* which imply a longer period of time (5- 7 years), *tactical objectives* established for 2- 5years and *operational objectives* (0- 2 years). The most important objectives are the operational ones, because they offer the possibility of determining hierarchies regarding the company image, efficiency, profit etc. Furthermore, the great world's brands offering popular products (Adidas, Sony, Nescafe, MTV, Starbucks, etc.) can be arranged depending on the message, the design, the particularity of the business. At operational level, the promotion idea becomes a successful brand which offers trust to potential customers.

Essentially, the tactical and operational objectives are fundamental for the mission of a strategy and determine its final vision. In practice, the set of objectives established for being accomplished leads to the development of the business portfolio and to a more dynamic promotion. Planning within the promotion process comprises the next steps (fig no. 1):



**Fig. 1 The tourism promotion plan structure**  
(adapted from Ph. Kotler, Marketing Management, 1997)

The way in which objectives lead to these effects certifies that innovation, productivity increasing, rational use of all resources were put into practice; this will always contribute to an increased profit, a better positioning on the tourist market and enhanced managerial and employees responsibility. Promotion beyond the verbal message and the image reveals in fact, in a synthetic and expressive way, the tourism development stage in any country.

The current conditions of globalization require for a particular attention to be paid to the profile market evolution process. The new tourist products cannot be put forward, unless they find a niche positioning on certain markets, which facilitate the selling of products/services. The small tourism businesses have to identify first a niche market which allows them to promote and sell their products, and then, depending on the results, they can expand their business.

Promotion is conceived and acts accordingly to the fabricated products and can adapt and be brought up-to-date depending on the ongoing changes, in order to approach other market niches. In fact, a business can start with few, but easy to reach and personalized depending on the tourist segments products and then can manage to diversify its production in order to attract also other potential customers.

*The three strategic plan elements: the vision, the mission and the objectives selection are meant to offer stability to the activity field, a better client perception, a greater flexibility related to the existing competition.*

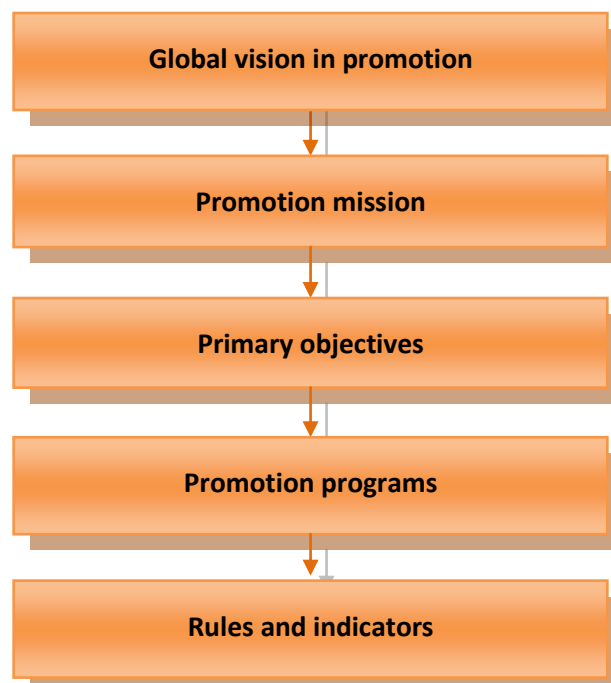
### The promotion plan

A promotion plan is useful because it creates the tourist image of a country and the impact is multiple: attraction of new foreign investments, balancing the running account, development of new tourist products and quality increase. This is, in fact the most important mission of a promotion strategy (Brătucu G., Dima D., 2002). The most noticeable result is that, by particular means, it reflects on the market the tourist image of a country or region, having a positive influence by identity focused diversification of the tourist activities.

Romania faced, in the last 20 years, an increasing image deficit, the negative aspects being caused by several economic, social, infrastructural or related to environmental protection deficiencies. Frequently, the external perception is self-generated, as long as the information is fast flowing. Our country doesn't also benefit, like other European countries, by local and regional marks, which favor the overall tourist image and reflect the coordinates of the domestic tourism.

Certain elements of the natural and cultural environment, which are considered the basis of certain tourism types, can transform in commonplace and become unattractive in front of a stronger competition. The equipment, the facilities, the tourist services are designed to remove the risk of becoming a common offer. The uniqueness and originality of certain tourist resorts, the equipment attractiveness which brings it forward are very important. Their lack leads to the impossibility of building representative marks for certain tourist forms and destination. The process of Romanian economic transition didn't allow an actual restructuring and modernization of the tourist industry (INCDT, 2006).

It is very important that the achievement of a positive image is backed up by real facts, less familiar, but in order to show that also important events take place in tourism, which certify the modernization and the hospitality and travel industry development. In this regard, Romanian tourism has deficiencies, and promotion will only have a positive impact when put together with appropriate general and tourist infrastructural equipment and with an increasing services quality. The content of a promotion strategic plan follows the next figure (fig. no. 2):



**Fig. 2 The stages of a tourism promotion strategic plan**

(adapted from Ph. Kotler and collaborators, Marketing Management, 2005 and Marketing places, 2001)

A wider form of this scheme is present in the annual tourist promotion plan of Romania. The government decisions at the beginning of every year which approve the country tourist promotion plan make public the tourism types which will benefit from an active promotion, the objectives, the instruments, the financial sources, the terms of achievement of the promotion program and the expected final efficiency.

### Conclusions

The promotion plans are frequently very ambitious, without being backed up by a fast modernization of the general and tourist infrastructure, by the increasing services quality. There is a mutual conditioning between the conceived plan and the surrounding reality, which has a phased course and a coherent development. The quantitative and qualitative plans materialization degree is increasing from vision to objectives and programs and comes to an end through a efficient promotion in time and space. Vision changes should be put into practice after a detailed evaluation of the tourism realities and generates more or less impact over the mission accomplishment, over the number of objectives, of the programs and also over the set of rules and indicators for the results quantification. A good promotion strategic plan has to determine a low degree of errors and negative results and to ensure a system (integrated) approach of the promotion issues.

The contribution of a tourism marketing strategy is not of exploring in detail the past of tourist destinations, as a set of tourist products and services created in time and space, but of anticipating the future tendencies. The past is very important for avoiding mistakes and for introducing the innovation in the tourist industry.

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