



Marketing Communication through Trade Fairs with Respect to Tourism-Travel Products

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ABSTRACT

This paper highlights the opportunities of Tourism-Travel fairs for service providers and customers. Service product characteristics are explained through this paper. The role of the participants and organizers are mentioned in the paper. Entrepreneurial advantage and quality bench marking introspects buyers and sellers through this paper. Kerala model is highlighted as a winning strategy.

KEYWORDS

Trade exhibition, Marketing Communication, TQM, Cruise lines, TTF and OTM

Introduction

Fairs have been recognized as one of the powerful and efficient tools for doing business from very early days. Tourism and Travel Fairs got attention of the marketers just in the last two decades. Industry began concentrating on this tool afterwards. The hitherto promotional methods were taken a back seat by overtaking Trade Fairs. The cost and the works involved in keeping a stall in a Trade exhibition are huge compared to conventional form of advertising communication. But the long term, consistent benefit forces Tourism Entrepreneurs to resort new form of Marketing Communication.

Travel-Tourism fairs

Tourism and Travel shows are important marketing links with the customers. That is resulted due to the dynamics of the business economy. The attendees go to the events with a strategic mission to expand the business by preparing to answer the queries of the customers. This is a face to face meeting point, which is cost effective to reach the market audience in one time and in one place.

Tourism fairs and exhibitions are not just a marketing tool. They are the entire market places at the fingertips. This is a source of market knowledge and corporate positioning body to full fill the needs of the service entrepreneurs in a centralized site. Survey studies pointed out those marketing techniques of promotion through Fairs are much more effective than direct sales, public relations, internet, direct mail, trade publications and telemarketing.

Service Product Characteristics in Travel-Tourism

The problems faced by the service industry are the gap in service delivery. The difference between the customer expectation and perception is the major cause for the gap. Professionals use the philosophy of Total Quality Management to fill the gap. As there is no readymade strategy to TQM, they focus on customer, commitment of the organization, continuous improvement, and emphasis on services, employee participation and team work. Product promotion was the talk of every time of business world people. Tourism service providers realize the need to be identified in a unique manner. The global economic integration and free movement of people forced service based organizations to adopt a universal strategy.

Participants to the Fair

National and international tourist organizations, state government tourism departments, tour operators, travel agents, hotels, resorts, adventure tourism, airlines, car rental, railways, coach operators, cruise lines and guides are the exhibitors who participate in travel and tourism fairs. The visitors include

travel-trade members, corporate and business travel decision makers, leisure and holiday travellers and representatives from hospitality industry and travel planners.

Organizing agencies

India International Travel mart (IITM), Travel and Tourism Fair (TTF), Out bound Travel Mart (OTM), Holiday Expo (Travel and tourism exhibition), Times Travel Fair and The Great Indian Travel Bazaar are some of the agencies who conducts fairs across the country. Exhibitors come up with annual shows in many cities. Medium sized cities in India have emerged as the fastest growing markets or quality leisure products. They reach out to those markets to provide services to gain profit and potential.

Advantage entrepreneur

Usually tourism products are delivered through mediators. End customers are not the immediate target of Fairs. So focus is on service providers to educate and convince them about product features. Fairs provide opportunities for the service property owners to assess learn and interact with the intermediary and customers. Feedback from the clients is available immediately for a real time insight into market expectations. Service entrepreneur can identify new agents, distributors and recruit new staff. They can also go for alliances and establish joint projects.

The final purchasing decisions of service products from fairs shown by many survey is 90%. The rest of the promotional methods are far behind this figure. These are known to have high return and expense ratio. Exhibition Association of Australia survey showed that an average expenditure of 9% of companies marketing budgets in trade fair events results in a return of 23% of business.

The first edition of Indian International Travel & Tourism (IIT) 2014 held from 16th - 18th January 2014 at MMRDA, Mumbai. Serving the inbound, domestic and outbound markets, the show was spread over 10,000 Sq Meters. The highlight of the show are 250+ Exhibitors, 4000+ Trade Visitors, 65+ Speakers, National & International 8000+ Consumer Visitors, 40 International 80 Domestic & outbound operators. Compared with the previous shows of various trade fair agencies, figures are higher. The author got an opportunity to attend the Fair conducted by Fairfest media Limited in Mumbai at MMRDA ground in Bandra-Kurla complex. Travel and tourism fair (TTF) and Out bound Travel Mart (OTM) are the flagship events of Fairfest Media.

Quality bench mark

Internationally voluntary agencies work to ensure service qualities. Fair Trade Tourism certification is one among them. Fair Trade Tourism (FTT) certification remains a voluntary process, but is a must-have for businesses looking to promote them in the responsible tourism market. The brand association with Fair Trade Tourism is a competitive benefit that signifies a commitment to fair and responsible tourism. Many travellers want to make positive travel decisions that feel good. Increasingly, they are choosing FTT-certified businesses that offer a meaningful contribution back to the destination and the people who work there. The certification reassures and enhances staff morale, greater staff retention and improved operations as a result of ethically and economically sound business practice. Service providers will have the opportunity to network with like-minded individuals and create joint marketing strategies to further strengthen product offering.

Kerala Tourism Model

The Kerala tourism is a success story. I could see the group participation from Kerala Tourism in an organized way in Mumbai fair. The neighboring states like Tamil Nadu and Karnataka have much tourism potential than Kerala. But the aggressive marketing strategies helped to acquire the growth. Kerala could showcase its products in overseas fairs by way of road shows. 'Your Moment is Waiting' the destination film by Department of Tourism wooed the global Tourism market to make the state a 'must visit' destination for travellers.

On domestic front Marketing initiative of Kerala Tourism is exploring new heights domestically. The latest to its addition is the UTSAVAM (December to February), a cultural program coordinated by the Department started seven years ago. This program succeeded in staging more than 100 art forms across the state under the leadership of District Tourism Promotion Councils (DTPC) in a season.

Apart from marketing the destination, Prominence was given to events such as traditional folks, rituals, tribal and traditional art forms that are in the verge of extinction. This was an attempt to familiarize the art forms of different places from a cross section of hitherto unknown programs.

As an observer of UTSAVAM for last few years, I could see many events got branded in the minds of the people. Eg: Tholpavakooth was only heard in north Malabar, but through UTSAVAM people started to recognize its importance, timings and historical relevance. On the other side Theyyam (meaning Daivam, GOD, a performance included in UTSAVAM) became popular in Southern districts. If Kerala is called as Gods own country, Kasaragod and Kannur can better call as GODS OWN LAND, where people can see GOD. Every year authorities bring uniqueness to this program, thereby keeping the product, live in its lifecycle.

Conclusion

The biggest challenge before the service providers in Tourism Industry is to give better quality products in terms of tangibles and intangibles. Visitors need value for their money. Creation of intangible values for tourism products is a very complex process. Contrary to common perception, service users will not go almost anywhere just to save a buck. Satisfied customers are willing to drive a little further for great service, but providers should better make it worth their effort. In service marketing, it is not so easy to make a perfect match between Guests perception and their expectation. But over the years the repeat visit of many users contradicts the statement. This is possible due to the efforts of the operators who meet the expectation of the visitors. The Goodwill must be maintained at any cost.

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