

SERVICE MARKETING EXAMINATION OF OPUSZTASZER HERITAGE PARK AS A RURAL DESTINATION

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ABSTRACT

Today the service industries are developing rapidly therefore the service marketing tasks are getting more and more into the focus. Those who are engaged in the subject do researches to explore the emotions, attitudes and purchasing motives in decision-making and the purchasing processes of different services. Decisions are made not only by companies but costumers, parents, families and circles of friends, too, when they plan their programs for the weekend considering their income and expenses. That is why we feel important to examine our subject on the basis of the service marketing of the Opusztaszer National Heritage Park, which takes a prominent part in the cultural life of the Southern Hungarian Plain, in order to render help to improve the services of the institution. The examination is complemented with a non-representative questionnaire survey which, nevertheless, is suitable to give the background to a wider survey. On the basis of the answers given some chances of improvement have been seen which we are planning to recommend for the Opusztaszer National Heritage Park.

Keywords: touristic destination, national memorable place, rural development, education and history, service marketing

INTRODUCTION

In case of a service we cannot talk about goods in a traditional sense since the customer has to undergo the experience itself that is how he can see and feel the service. The task of entrepreneurs and service providers is to make the chosen service more and more tangible. They have not prove that the costumers enjoy services, which can be done by organized shows, by offering a unique content attached to the product or by broadcasting special advertisements. However, it should be taken into consideration that it is only an experience and not a content to be stored. (KOLOS K. – KENESEI ZS., 2007)

While examining services the most essential factor is that providing and using a given service has to be done at the same time and in the same place. The experience can be felt only in the service itself then and there where the provider makes it possible. Considering these factors we have to admit that both the service provider and service user take a very big risk in the service market.

The service is nothing else than a kind of promise which is supported by the image, that is the picture the service provider would like to show about itself, the picture which is published about the organization. This image is considerably influenced by the leading product or the service presented by the organization. In case of the Opusztaszer National Heritage Park these products are the Feszty Panorama and the outdoor village museum. Besides these, the main target of each permanent or temporary exhibition is to increase the number of visitors and to give more information for a wider public.

It is difficult to pass the message of the Park, namely it is worth visiting Opusztaszer more times, to each sector of the target group. To improve this situation the Park utilizes a wide range of PR-means, so it always appears at different events, exhibitions, and in the printed and electronic media, as well. The conscious communication has to be constant, it has to be planned. The effect of the information sent yesterday is decreasing continuously as time goes by, thus it needs constant work to be up-to-date constantly.

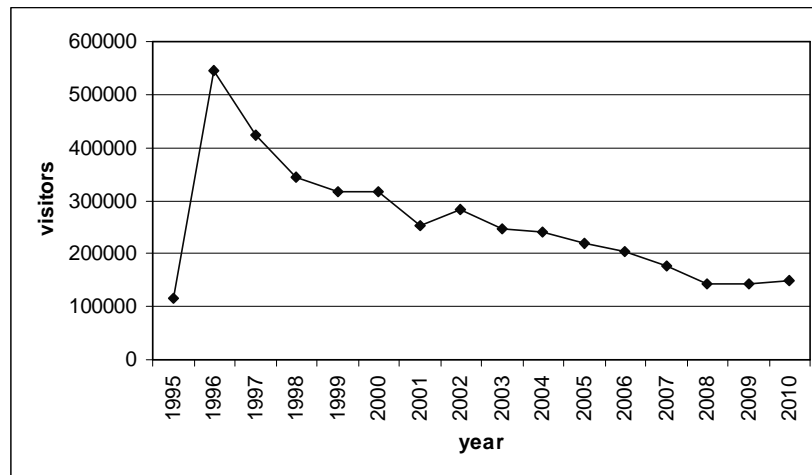


Figure 1. Number of visitors

Source: [HTTP://OPUSZTASZER.HU/KOZLEMENY](http://opusztaszer.hu/kozlemeny) (2010)

According to messages have been published it would be possible to measure efficiency, results and impacts.

THE OPUSZTASZER NATIONAL HERITAGE PARK

It was Anonymous who wrote in his book, entitled *Gesta Hungarorum*, that war-lord Arpad and the tribe leaders settled down in the area of today's Opusztaszer for 34 days and they framed the common law of the future country. It means that it was the birthplace of the Hungarian statehood. The Opusztaszer Heritage Park, which spreads on an area of about 55 hectares, was established in this settlement of great history. One of the greatest treasures of the Hungarian can be seen here: the Feszty Panorama (called 'The Hungarian conquest') which commemorates this important event of our history. The monumental piece of work can be visited in the Heritage Park since 1 August, 1995. (<http://opusztaszer.hu/tortenet> 2011.01.16)

The Opusztaszer Heritage Park accepted its 4 millionth visitor in 2010. While in 2006 the culture at the time of the conquest was the only topic around which the image was structured, nowadays the project of the outdoor village museum ('Step into the Past') has successfully closed up to the line of interactive services. We can take part in the peasant culture of the 1920s. The anniversary of the Hungarian conquest brought an outstanding number of visitors; however, it has been impossible to approximate that number since then. (Figure 1) We can participate in a contemporary school lesson, we can meet gendarmes, we can get to know the everyday life of a shepherd or a highwayman, or if we feel like doing it, we can bake some typical peasant food (eg. traditional bread called

‘kenyerlangos’) or make squash from elderflower.

There are several exhibitions, pieces of art, programs to attract the visitors. The main sights and attractions are: Monastery, Outdoor Ethnographical Museum, Arpad-Monument, Historic Statue Park of Counties, Szeged Gate, Szekely Gate, Cumans’ Statues, National Monument of the Army and Land Distribution, ‘Heritage of Szer’, Statue of Anonymous, Nomad Park, Csete-yurts.

The main objects are to show these historic events and processes of symbolic value and to arouse the interest for a trip to Opusztaszer and thus to move from the attitude obstacles those who have been indifferent so far. It is important to give new information, new pieces of knowledge while staying in the Park. Utilizing the opportunities, getting more information- all of them can make the visit more meaningful.

The experts of the Park have the intention to change the everyday routine, to motivate teachers to evolve a new desired routine, a hoped process, the learning process of the history and past which is rich in experiences. Obviously, they need open-minded students, visitors who are ready to accept these intentions.

In case of Opusztaszer a positive local initiative has an impact on the country, too, visitors arrive from more and more places, and there is an increased interest in the modern, interactive exhibitions. However, the interest is not followed by the expected number of visits. At the same time, it is important to point out that a national historic exhibition should not join the line of commercial theme parks. The underlined targets are the authentic representation and transmission of culture which serve to strengthen the sense of being Hungarian. The paper knowledge becomes deeply rooted knowledge only when it is connected to reality. This process is supported by the programs which are realized by the experts, local people and the visitors together.

It is the philosophy or mission of the Opusztaszer Heritage Park that they want to connect culture with development, reform, transformation, renovation which they have to take demands of the visitors (or customers) into consideration for. The service marketing tools give help to this mission. Their elements are in harmony with the factors which determine life of the whole society and with the whole culture of the individual member of the society. Or more precisely: how do we work, eat, move, live, wear our clothes and behave at home, in family, on the streets, at our working places, with people or in politics? As opposed –in a narrower sense- the museum marketing gives a special role to the science, arts, philosophy and religion from the viewpoint of the culture as a whole.

In case of the Opusztaszer Heritage Park it is the middle class of the Hungarian society which is regarded as the potential target group who –mostly families- visit the events on a regular basis. However, we have to know that it is necessary to have a wide middle class of high level which not only adapts itself to the circumstances created by modernization but also it can support their development. (LITAUSZKI T., 1989)

SURVEY AND RESULTS

Demands of those who use the services provided by the Opusztaszer Heritage Park are continuously changing which means possibilities but a new challenge, as well. It is the

adjustment which has become one of the most important tasks for the service provider so in this case it is necessary to get to know these demands and then, to offer the suitable replies. It is practical to make a service line which is based on the Hungarian conquest and the awareness of being Hungarian. Then it is possible to connect the added value of history, architecture, the fine arts, ethnography and other fields, too. In museums the so-called service packages are often provided but the main question is: on what extent is it necessary to put the emphasis on the classical ways of getting knowledge and how much on the interactive cognition? Both of them have own advantages and disadvantages. People are hungry for information, exploration but at the same time, they are open to the mass products and services of the entertainment industry. Where is the wise balance? How can it be realized in case of a museum park? The Opusztaszer Heritage Park put more services into the service line so that they can exploit capacities which have not been utilized so far.

Besides service development the price is of a great importance, too. We have to keep in mind that in today's economic situation families first renounce the amount of money spent on culture. It is always necessary to regard the price which people are ready to pay for an experience of this kind since it is the families that give the largest number of visitors.

The Opusztaszer Heritage Park tends to attract the visitors with significant bonuses, special package tickets or- on certain days- with extra services and programs. However, their possibilities are limited because they cannot operate as a real financial enterprise so the mechanism of market control is limited. Although the Opusztaszer Heritage Park is unique in its type so we cannot list thematic rivals, real rivals are other leisure programs. Basically, it can be said that in this case price reduction of some percentage would not result in the significant increase of the number of visitors.

Possibilities of the marketing are very limited. The visitor can find fixed prices and it is very simple to buy the ticket on the venue. It is the only flexibility that he can choose from different options depending on what he wants to visit. Besides, it is worth discussing how they intend to raise the visitor's interest at all. How do the guests decide to go to Opusztaszer, at all? Obviously, it is necessary to use the modern ICT tools, the website or any other forms of the media. It means a lot if teachers talk about the conquest in History lessons so that the children ask their parents to see the place they learnt about. Study trips connecting to this topic bring a considerable number of visitors.

Nowadays promotion is very important. Today not only the Opusztaszer Heritage Park itself but other additional services around it should be examined together. Szeri Tavern (Szeri Csarda) as a place to eat out, the wooden houses around it as accommodation, the hedge maze all make the destination much more attractive. The promotion as a whole should be advertised in the interest of the common aim. There are unexploited possibilities in this field.

The specialty of the services is that the experience is realized in the given period of time so it cannot be stored that is why it is the service process which bears great importance. (KISS M., 2005) The Opusztaszer Heritage Park devote a lot of energy to organize, advertise and realize thematic days, programs and events. During these days the new generations have the opportunity to get to know their ancestors' life and traditions (e.g. Easter, the Day of the New Bread, Nativity plays, cooking from traditional ingredients and with traditional utensils and in traditional ways etc.). Besides, they can commemorate the national holidays solemnly. The whole process itself brings us back to our past in a way that responds

today's rules and using its modern technique gives a new prospect in travelling in time.

We should remember that euthenics is today's most important requirement. The given subject is presented by well-trained, well-qualified experts taking part actively in the experience. Nowadays it is not enough to have the guard lady who reads or knits while watching the visitors. Due to interactivity reciprocity is essential thus the visitor becomes the part of the experience- at time even in appearance (e.g. wearing special clothes or doing certain work etc.).

The experience is full when it is lasting. To reach this aim it is necessary to consider that not only the moment should be outstanding but also it should give a kind of knowledge, or a complex picture carved into our memories. An object can help achieve this aim which is in this case the entrance ticket or an object made by the visitor himself on the venue.

MEASURING THE VISITORS' SATISFACTION

Visitors to the Opusztaszer Heritage Park are generally satisfied with the services and the surroundings (on the basis of a non-representative sample done with 86 persons). The opinion about the infrastructure inside the Park is positive though it is not the same with its surroundings. They mention the bad quality of roads and the rarity of bus service. (Figure 2)

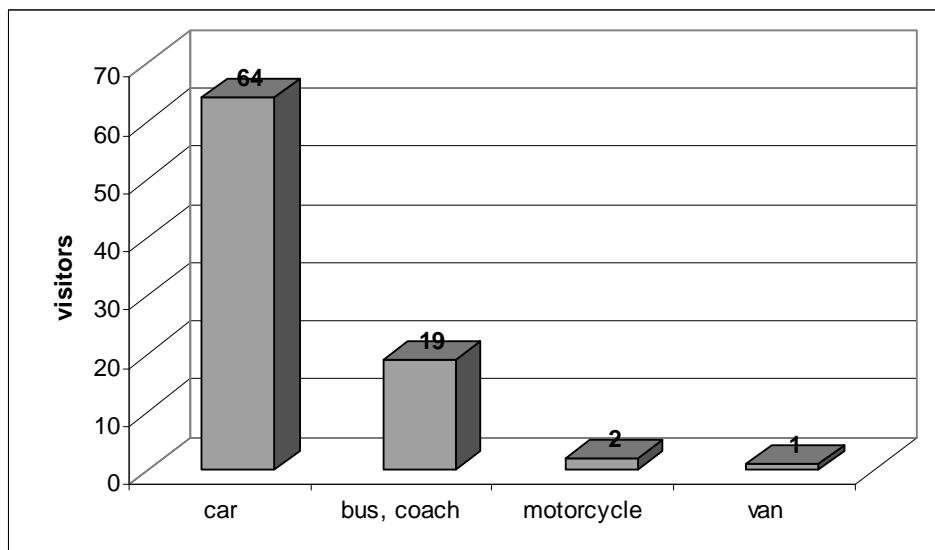


Figure 2. Visitors arrived by ...

Source: AUTHORS'S SURVEY (2010)

They are satisfied with the employees regarding both their attitude and knowledge. A very small percentage of visitors come back on an annual basis, maybe because the Park lacks the new programmes. The sights always get very high points considering the visitors' satisfaction which means that there is no problem with attractions already existing. Thus, it is necessary to concentrate on the demand for new things. (Figure 3)

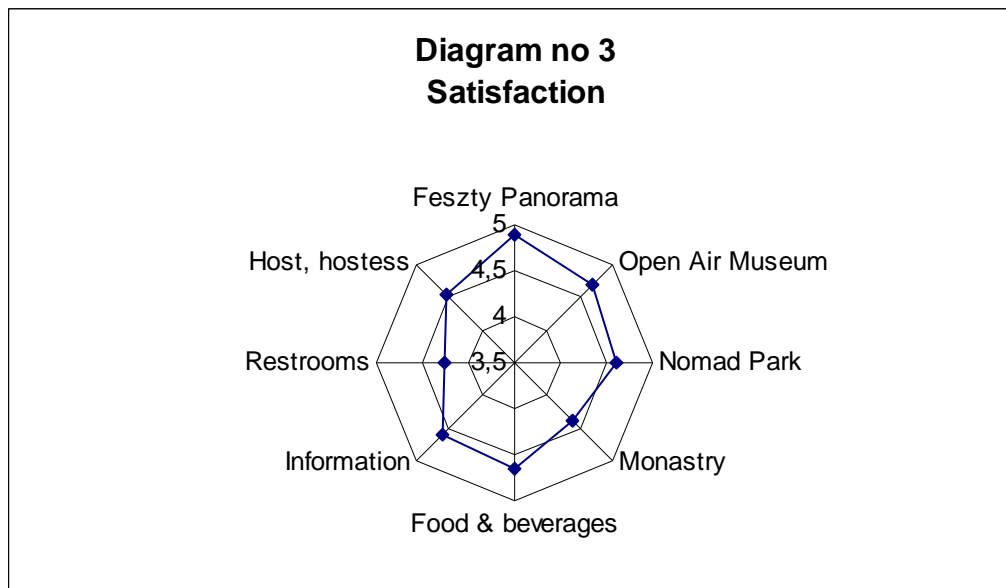


Figure 3. Satisfaction
Source: AUTHORS' SURVEY (2010)

More and less everybody would recommend the Park for their friends. It is interesting that most of them visited the place because of „an old decision”.

The most famous sight of the Park is the Feszty Panorama. Regarding its subject it has a special value for the Hungarian tourists. It is well-known for its monumentality among foreign guests, as well. Traditional programs are organized in different part the country, like 20th August, the Day of Archers, the Day of Melons, Saint-Martón's Day, etc. In addition to them, special architectural sights have been stressed: Rotunda, Csete Yurts, the windmill.

With its 5 new exhibitions opened on 20 August, 2010 the Opusztaszer Heritage Park caught up on its work. The glass path to the Feszty Panorama and the new exhibition areas attract new visitors to the park, while the old ones are invited to Opusztaszer again.

From the view of tourism the Opusztaszer Heritage Park has outstanding possibilities. A good example for it is Szeged since during the Open-Air Theatre the number of visitors increases. Besides, favorable effects can be achieved in co-operation with other service providers of the region in tourism. It is worth mentioning the thermal baths: in cities Morahalom, Kiskunmajsa, Szeged and the activity of travel agencies. Since the Opusztaszer Heritage Park belongs to the Kiskunsag National Park it is suitable to organize different educative programs or to plan environmental projects there, too.

This venue is the perfect destination for school trips or study trips, moreover it has all the technical conditions for wedding ceremonies, receptions, conferences, study tours or different trainings.

It is known that the competitors are there in the region with their complex service package. On one hand, it is necessary to enter the competition with them, on the other hand the Park have to preserve the traditional role because it is not able to attract enough number of visitors exploiting exclusively the historic-ethnographic approach.

CONCLUSIONS

In our survey can be seen a picture about the marketing connections of the services provided by the Opusztaszer Heritage Park. It is planned to focus on the importance of service management, then on the condition of the Park as the marketing strategy of one of the largest theme parks and finally on its prospects for present and future.

Regarding the economic role of advertisements they are the motor which drives economy, according to marketing experts. It is necessary to reach the visitors, to inform them what new programs are organized in Opusztaszer. They have to realize that they must come back. Pages on tourism are about to offer programs of high level. A popular video file can produce 100 thousand downloads a day. It is absolutely necessary to update the project profile of the Opusztaszer Heritage Park on the social networks, like Facebook, IWiW, and to increase the frequent use of its message boards. According to some media experts, the printed press is getting into the background while online newspapers, news browsing take its place.

The greatest advantage of direct marketing is that it can reach the clients more precisely, comparing to other marketing tools, and we can direct our sources exactly there where we can expect potentially the best results. We can get more visitors by means of direct marketing. Besides, it is important to pay attention to the existing clients, to form the visitor loyalty as a result of which we can increase the number of visitors more. There are different opinions in connection with the efficiency of direct mails; nevertheless it has proved to be one of the most efficient tools in case of both company and private costumers. We can make personal invitations for target groups, as well. It is important to show appealing information in order to raise a kind of wish in the reader to visit the Opusztaszer Heritage Park. The leaflets placed at the entrance can give information about the forthcoming events. Besides, electronic mails are important, too, as the most wide-spread application on the Internet. The sms campaign is suitable for several marketing purposes. The sms campaign can increase the number of guests on the day of the given event.

In today's economic conditions increase of number of visitors in the Opusztaszer Heritage Park and maintenance of the visitors' satisfaction can be reached only with a definite raise in the level of services.

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