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Acceptance criteria in a Promotional Tourism Demarketing Plan

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Abstract

In a nature-based demarketing tourism plan the elaboration of promotional products are very important to reach the goals of encourage and awareness tourists to the demarketing measures used. The elaboration of a promotional product involves, in part, a creative process, making the evaluation of the final product subjective and, therefore, compromising the acceptance criteria and the finalization of the project. This work presents a tool for a common issue addressed in promotional tourism demarketing plans: raising environmental awareness. This tool can help to objectivate its acceptance criteria, making the process of acceptance of the final product (the promotional tourism demarketing plan) more objective, predictable and simpler.

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1. Introduction

Marketing currently occupies a major role in the success of organizations. Strategic marketing/demarketing planning involves finding or creating attractive opportunities, as well as developing marketing strategies that offer potential for growth, profitability and sustainability in the medium to long term. In the tourism industry, the role of elaborating the promotional tourism marketing, included in the marketing plan, is fundamental to promote attractiveness of products/tourism destinations. However, if we consider the possibility of implementing the promotion project, issues related to the end of the project emerge. According to Kotler's definition, marketing is a science and art to explore, create and deliver value to meet the needs of a profitable target market. The use of the word "art" always submits us to something subjective. The opinion about if a certain advertising product is good or not, is always related to the fact of someone liking it or not, and this is a subjective opinion. So, when will the conditions of acceptance of a delivery be met? The purpose of this paper is to find a tool that can be used before delivery, to pre-verify the existence of acceptance conditions of deliveries, providing measurability, so that the process of finalizing and accepting a nature-based demarketing promotion project becomes something less subjective and simpler to achieve.

2. Tourism Marketing Plan

The elaboration of a marketing plan involves: defining objectives and targets; deciding mix and budgets; create action programs; and monitoring and control. Objectives and targets are the goals to be achieved; Mix budgets involves the decisions related with the Marketing Mix (4P's: product, price, promotion and place) and marketing budget; Action programs is the implementation of marketing plans to achieve the defined objectives and targets; Monitoring and control involves systems of monitoring the effects of the marketing plan and the control procedures to adapt it to the agreed targets[1]. To design a successful marketing plan on tourism some specificities of the tourism industry must be considered[1]. Fragmented supply: the tourism industry is composed by multiple services (accommodation, transportation, entertainment, etc.) and products are supplied by multiples agents. Interdependence within tourist services: tourism services and products are interrelated and are complementary, what means that an action on one of the stakeholders can have an impact on one or more of the others involved, and this impact could be positive or negative. Supply rigidity: most of the tourism services can't adapt quickly to a variation on demand. When there's an excess on demand a waste of resources can exist. But when an increase on demand occurs, that may lead to an impossibility to maximize revenues. Intangibles: the large majority of tourism products and services are related with the emotional experience of tourists. The expectation and the satisfaction of the touristic experience varies from tourist to tourist. Price elasticity of demand: most of tourism demand results from the use of personal discretionary disposable income and the free time of persons. In result of that, tourists are very sensitive to prices causing a high prices elasticity (small variation on prices causes high variations on demand). Seasonality: the causes of this so common characteristic in tourism market can be divided into two wide groups of factors: natural and institutional. The main natural cause is the weather, and the institutional factors are related to the periods of public vacations, that in most of the western industrialized countries are in summer months, or in Christian holidays[2][3]. Experience feedbacks: the feedback of people who have experienced a touristic product or service, like visiting a place, influences the decision of future tourists that listen to their opinion. Specially now, when a lot of people share on the Internet their touristic experiences. In this way, the elaboration of a tourism marketing plan has multiple conditionings that result from the complexity of the tourism field. The various specificities of this industry along the concept of tourism and tourism product, where the consumer is part of the product itself, implicate taking them into account from the first very beginning.

3. Demarketing

With the growing concern for environmental sustainability, various measures associated with nature-based tourism have emerged to ensure that the resources used in tourism experiences maintain their regeneration capacity at acceptable levels, so that future generations can enjoy these resources too. Demarketing thus emerges as an important control tool in the excessive search for nature-based tourism destinations, making it possible to keep these places environmentally and economically sustainable. Kotler & Armstrong[4] defines marketing as "… managing profitable customer relationship.". They say that "The aim of marketing is to create value for costumers and to capture value

from customers in return." Accordingly, marketers have traditionally been associated with increasing demand for a certain product or service. However, the excess of demand for a certain product/service is, in certain fields, as important problem as it is a lack of demand[4]. The concept of demarketing is presented for the first time by Kotler & Levy[5], who define demarketing as the marketing process that seeks to discourage customers, or a class of customers, to reduce the consumption of a certain product/service, temporarily or permanently, without losing the relationship with the client. According to these authors there are three types of demarketing: General demarketing: where companies want to reduce demand; Selective demarketing: where demand for certain market segments is discouraged; Ostensive demarketing: in which the perception of consumers is that we intended to discourage the demand when in fact we want to increase it. In practice, there will be an increase of the demand of the more and more desired product, in consequence of the difficulty to obtain it. The first published paper on the application of demarketing directly to tourism is by Clements in 1989, who refers the use of demarketing as a tool to discourage a certain segment of tourists from visiting Cyprus, thus using selective demarketing[6]. A field in which demarketing presents itself as important as marketing is in environmentally sustainable tourism, where most of the demarketing studies in tourism emerge.

4. Sustainable Tourism

Sustainable tourism according to the World Tourism Organization (WTO)[7] is one "that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities ". Although this concept is rather broad, the concept of sustainable tourism has been widely associated with environmental sustainability, which is justified by the growing worldwide concern for environmental issues, especially since the Rio Conference (1992), which sought to find instruments to make social and economic development compatible with the conservation and protection of Earth's ecosystems. Thus, environmentally sustainable tourism must raise tourists' awareness to the need for tourism to be sustainable and carry out management measures that guarantee sustainability, while maintaining the level of tourist's satisfaction. From the tourism perspective, Beeton[8] considers that the sustainability limit has been exceeded when the number of visitors is higher than those that a site can withstand before it deteriorates beyond an acceptable level of regeneration. But the number of visitors is associated with the economic aspect of tourism, which generally seeks as many tourists as possible to maximize revenues. The search for monetary gains, by increasing visitors, often leads to places' degradation. In the nature-based tourism, the access control becomes especially important because, being inserted in the nature, the sustainability of the surrounding environment depends on the number of accesses, and, because the tourism depends on the conditions of the nature, tourists lose the interest if there is a degradation of the environment. As a final consequence, the tourism destination will disappear as well as the tourism industry in that destination.

5. Nature-based Tourism

Cassells and Valentine (1991) divide nature-based tourism into three types: nature-dependent tourism (such as bird watching); tourism enhanced by nature (the tourism that benefits from the fact that it takes place in nature, such as camping); and tourism that occurs by incident in nature (such as swimming in a lake when the focus is on swimming).

In this work, we will focus on the various demarketing measures that have been used to control access to tourism destinations involving nature-based tourism as a way to maintain their environmental sustainability. However, when the term "nature-based tourism" is used, it refers only to the types of tourism where a satisfactory natural environment is essential for a successful tourism experience (tourism dependent on nature and tourism enhanced by nature).

6. Demarketing in Nature-based Tourism

In this section, various papers will be presented describing the application of demarketing measures in nature-based tourism. We consider that measures that involve the prohibition of access, or limitation of visitant's number, in space or time, aren't demarketing measures for themselves, because they don't solve the environmental problems caused by over-visiting tourists discouraging customers (demarketing concept). There may be visitor limitations, for example, but it is not desirable that the customers find out those limitations only at the time of arrival. Pre-queuing or reservations are what constitutes the true measure of demarketing. Therefore, they will not be considered for this work.

The natural parks are a good example of nature-based tourism, being, for its beauty and uniqueness, a great attraction for tourists. An example of a natural park that involves the application of demarketing measures is the Rainbow Bridge in Utah. Rainbow Bridge is one of the largest natural bridges in the world, considered sacred to many native American tribes and visited annually by about 85,000 people[5]. In consequence of the increase in the number of visitors, several problems have arisen, some of them of an environmental nature, such as graffiti, increase of noise and appearance of garbage[9,10]. According to Groff[10], if the number of visitors is reduced, these problems should be reduced proportionately. He suggests that the Demarketing process should be carried out by applying fees for access on foot and by boat; hiring a large boat to reduce the use of small boats; creation of supervisory patrols to prevent the excesses of boats' speed, the climbs and the graffiti; and distribution of pamphlets with standards of conduct and environmental awareness. Although these measures may deprive some visitors of access to the monument, they also allow maintaining the ecological balance of the place as well as the quality of the tourist experience. A strong publicity component in tourist's awareness to environmental issues could be the key to the acceptance of limitations by tourists without the feeling of being defrauded by the limiting actions implemented[10]. An example of nature-based tourism that can benefit from the use of demarketing is Ecotourism, which has been defined as a form of tourism where all those involved in the process (authorities, tourism industry, tourists and the local population) cooperate so that tourists can enjoy unique and genuine experiences, enjoying nature and culture, in a way that does not exploit resources, contributing to a sustainable development[11]. Wearing & Neil[12] present demarketing as a control tool in ecotourism management. The concept of demarketing is presented as something non-negative, but rather quite effective and positive, as it allows to control the number of visitor's access to ecotourism sites having limited resources. They present some demarketing measures: price control, in which the price increases disproportionately to the duration of the stay; creating queues; and limit the main promotion strategies and public education for environmental sustainability issues. Sue Beeton & Benfield[13], identify five tourism demarketing tools that can be applied in the control of access to sites: self-regulation (through good practices); institutional regulation; prices; permits and promotions. However, Willian & Montanary[14] consider that auto-regulation has many limitations and is not a sufficient measure. They also consider that formal regulation through legislation or control isn't also the solution and argue that a holistic approach to the problem of sustainable tourism is needed. Benfield [15] studied the case of access to Sissnghurst Castle's Garden in Kent (UK) concluding that self-regulation also doesn't function as a mass access management measure to public gardens. However, it seems that the regulation of visits, if carried out with the care of clarification to the public and awareness of environmental problems, can result not only in a benefit for the sustainability of the tourist place, but also for an increase in the tourist's satisfaction. Using price variations to encourage/discourage the consumption of a specific tourism destination can be used as a demarketing technique. Middleton & Hawkins[16] argue that price regulation should be concerted between the private commercial tourism agents so that the measures are applied in the same way to all competitors. To the authors, the customers' environmental awareness is an important tool to sustainable tourism because the tourist is part of the tourism product[16].

On the use of the limitation on the allocation of licenses and reservation systems, they have been used to limit mass access to tourist sites and, when associated with demarketing, constitute an important tool for environmental sustainability management of nature-based sites. As promotion is a powerful tool of the Marketing Mix, also not promoting is a demarketing tool that can be effective in reducing the demand of places that are in danger due to excessive demand. Not promoting demotivates local demand and alerting to the consequences of mass demand can be an equally effective tool for local sustainability[13]. Another case study of a national park is the Wilsons Promontory National Park in Victoria (Australia). The Park Management Plan includes a set of measures that are demarketing measures: raising awareness of visitors through behavioral education actions; develop awareness campaigns so that visitors have a behavior appropriate to the surrounding environment; creation of pedestrian rails; ensure that all private tour operators are licensed under the National Parks Act, providing high quality services; encourage tour operators to make use of natural attractions outside the park and limit wildlife viewing areas (zoning)[17]. Kern & Armstrong[18] present a list of demarketing measures, associating them with the Marketing. These authors analyze the demarketing 4Ps measures used in the case study, Blue Mountain National Park: demarketing measures related to the Product includes zoning; on the measures related to the Price, there were no extensive measures indicated, only the application of some fees; measures related to the Place include the use of a reservation system and commercial licensing. Promotion related measures include awareness raising on environmental issues and environmental sustainability through promotional campaigns and the non-promotion of certain experiences. Tkeshelashvili[19] also refers several

demarketing measures associated with Marketing Mix that can be used in nature-based tourism. Again, demarketing is not referred directly, but some of the measures associated with the 4Ps are demarketing. Associated with the Product are the removal of the promotion of unsustainable products. In relation to Price, the authors suggest that prices should be high enough to prevent the excess of visitors, but not high enough to give the tourists the feeling that they are exploited. About Promotion, they point out the importance of presenting the "stories" of the nature-based tourism destinies in the promotion operations, warning tourists to environmental issues as well as to environmentally correct behavior. Studies point to the fact that tourists who have experienced eco-cultural tourism at the beginning of their trip have been more environmentally responsible in later leisure tourism visits[20]. Thus, the creation of tourism programs that organize trips so that this aspect is included at the beginning of the tourist experience could improve the behavior during the rest of the trip. The use of demarketing is explicit in the Progress Report on Implementation of the Recommendations of the Panel on the Ecological Integrity of Canada's National Parks, recommending that "Parks Canada immediately cease marketing products ... Focus instead on marketing Social, political marketing, and Demarketing aimed at appropriate audiences with messages focused on ecological integrity." [21].

7. Analysis of the Acceptance Criteria for a Promotional Tourism Demarketing Plan

Groff[10] proposes a set of steps to elaborate a demarketing plan, stating that: "A different demarketing mix is usually necessary for each of the selected target markets." In fact, Tourism's demarketing measures depend on the characteristics of the tourist product/destination. After analyzing various authors that address demarketing in nature-based tourism, we verify that the demarketing measure common to all the studies is the awareness to environmental issues. In a nature-based demarketing tourism plan, the elaboration of promotional products is very important to reach the goals of encourage and aware to environmental issues. The elaboration of a promotional product always involves a creative process, making the evaluation of the final product subjective and, therefore, compromising the acceptance criteria and the finalization of the project. Client and supplier must agree on the validation of requirements to accept the product and consider it as final. When talking about subjective parameters, that agreement is more complex and reinforces the need for objective tools that can assess the performance of the product or, at least, of some of its components. The Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) Model uses the hypothesis that value orientation related to ego, social-altruism and biosphere are key aspects that model the environmental intentions. Ryan & Spash[22] showed that using environmental concerns (EC) scales provide results indicating consistency with the VBN Model subscales, but the awareness of consequences (AC) scales do not. Therefore, we propose that an adaptation of the EC scale constructed by Schultz[23] in 2000 is used as a major of the quality of the "raising environmental awareness" component of a promotional tourism demarketing plan. In this adaptation of the Schultz's EC scale, tourists would be invited to rate several nouns in completion of the statement "I am concerned about [environmental problems] because of consequences for…", replacing in the original formulation the [environmental problems] by concrete problems of the tourism destination. Examples of those nouns are: me, my health, people in the community, future generations, plants or any other considered relevant. These nouns must cover egoistic items (my lifestyle, my health, etc.), social/altruistic items (all people, people in the community, etc.) and biosphere items (birds, plants, etc.). The work of Ryan & Spash[22] opens the possibility of rearrangement of the items usually found in AC and EC scales resulting in improvements of reliability. Further studies are needed to verify the relevance of adding more questions to this proposed tool for the acceptance of deliverables related to "raising environmental awareness" component of the promotional tourism demarketing plan. Our proposal is to apply this before exposing a group of tourists to the promotional tourism demarketing plan tools and again after that exposure. The characteristics of this tourist's sample, its size and the aimed percental increase in awareness must be agreed between client and supplier in the contract negotiation phase.

8. Conclusions

As this work proves, demarketing in nature-based tourism is a complex and heterogeneous process, leading to heterogeneous solutions. Despite this, several aspects are usually covered in promotional tourism demarketing plans, like introducing of booking ore reservation systems, zoning and price's variation. The one common aspect is raising environmental awareness. To evaluate if demarketing measures should be accepted as final product, we propose that the promotional products produced should be submitted to a pre-test applied to a group of tourists, representative of

the target audience of the promotional plan, which will evaluate how the "raising environmental awareness" component of the demarketing approach impacted on tourists. According to the results obtained in the pre-test, which must be within the agreed values defined in the requirements, these conditions of acceptance will be considered fulfilled or not. In this way, the evaluation of some of the product's acceptance criteria will be obtained in a measurable and non-subjective way, contributing to an easier delivery/receipt of the promotional product.

Acknowledgements

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