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Attracting Tourists to a Shopping Centre

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This article highlights a necessity of adjusting the marketing mix to tourists' requirements. The tourists are no longer limited only to the purchase of souvenirs and local artefacts. Shopping has become an important part of the overall tourist experience and tourists are becoming a very important target group for shopping centres marketing.

Keywords: shopping centre, tourists, purchasing, motives of purchase, targeting of tourists

1. Introduction

Tourism is a socio-economical phenomenon whose development influence can be viewed in different areas (economic, geographical, psychological, sociological, etc.). A phenomenon whose roots date back to the very beginnings of human civilization, it has marked the twentieth century. Its main features are massiveness and dynamics, while some experts estimate that 3.5 million people in the world take part in tourist travels [1].

Tourism is one of the biggest global industries which is why understanding tourists' expenditures is important for those who are involved in the aspects of conceptualization, development and management of retail space. The tourist experience is subjective and inconsistent and dependent on internal and external factors [2].

Tourists are an important and growing segment of a shopping centre's market. As tourists arrive from different regions or countries, it is necessary to adjust the shopping centre's marketing mix to different groups. In this article there will be a mention of how shopping centres management can effectively target tourists.

2. The specificity of tourist shopping

Timothy [3] defines tourist shopping in two ways: shopping tourism where the primary purpose of the trip is to shop and tourists' shopping where shopping is only one of the many activities that are carried out during the trip. Shopping tourism has increased significantly in the past several years within Europe mainly due to companies that are offering airline tickets at very low costs.

Today it is acceptable that the possibility of shopping is an inseparable part of tourist offer and it has an important role in the success of the majority of tourist destinations. For the majority of tourists, vacations are not complete without the possibility of shopping. The tourist shopping experience is the sum of tourists' satisfactions and dissatisfactions related to the individual product attributes and service during shopping [4]. The service and products offered by retailers are an important factor in the overall experience of a specific destination.

Tourists are not under pressure in terms of time limits for shopping, therefore they can be relaxed and shop considerably less burdened. The Travel Industry Association of America data show that foreign tourists spend more money and look for better stores and products [5].

Some reasons for which tourists shop:

1. Unique – Tourists are looking for merchandise that cannot be found back home
2. Favorable value / price ratio
3. Time to shop – Visitors on vacations will buy items they can find back home, simply because they are in a more relaxed, stress-free vacation mode ;
4. Planned expenditure – Many tourists allow for extra money to treat themselves while on vacations.
5. Shop with family and friends – A shopping entourage provides encouragement to buy
6. Extend the experience – Tourists love to have memories of a trip that may not always be a classic souvenirs [6].

3. Creating a shopping centre offer geared towards tourists

The initial phase in the process of creating an adequate shopping centre offer is to research the market. Since the tourists differ from potential buyers who live in the trade zone, the method of gathering information will be different. First of all, it is necessary to look through published reports on the tourism potential, which can be published by travel organizations, the Chamber of Commerce and similar institutions. It is necessary to gather information on the number of tourists who visit the city, the city or country of origin, demographic data, whether it is a business or tourist trip, etc. A primary data collection process can be organized at the shopping centre. A source of information can be data on the requests for tax refunds. Tourist guides may also be able to provide useful information. Shopping centre staff can be a source of information in a sense that salespeople in the stores, employees at the information desks, and information from salespeople in souvenir shops are also important.

Another consideration is the offer geared towards the tourists' needs, the availability of an adequate information desk, what entertainment is on offer – these are some of the questions that must be addressed when creating a plan to attract tourists to the shopping centre.

It is necessary to create a separate marketing plan and budget for this purpose that is part of an overall marketing plan by analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of the shopping centre as well as the competition, and then the identified goals and defined strategy and activities. Market research can give useful information regarding the importance of this group of potential buyers for the shopping centre and the amount of the budget that is necessary to allocate for targeting tourists. Even though the number of studies related to the shopping of tourists is increasing, insufficient attention is paid to socio-cultural aspects [7]. Their inclusion in the analysis and offer would improve the pleasure of shopping for individual customers.

The campaign for attracting tourists can be more successful if there is collaboration with industry professionals. These are travel organizations (travel agencies, tour operators, travel associations), accommodation capacities (hotels, hostels, apartments), carriers (airline companies, taxi associations, rent-a-car agencies). Collaboration with them allows for better access to information, association and exchange of ideas and experiences, a greater potential for advertising, and a creation of special packages. It is therefore necessary to make adequate preparations by identifying relevant organizations, preparing high quality promotional material that will be translated into several languages if required, and presenting the benefits of mutual cooperation.

There are many opportunities for cooperation with hotels. Special discounts or coupons can be available for their guests, shuttle bus to the centre etc. It is necessary to identify those hotels whose guests match the shopping centre customer type. This type of cooperation that involves informative brochures, city maps, shopping discounts and coupons can also be arranged with taxi associations, as well as "rent-a-car" agencies. The cooperation with travel agencies can be in the form of information exchange on the tourists who travel to the city, an agreement that the shopping centre is presented as a tourist attraction in their promotional material. On the other hand, there can be an official tourist information service in the shopping centre, which can work on promoting local tourist attractions besides the basic tourist information.

The company Tuabman Co. realizes 20% of their revenue from tourists at tourist destinations. Some lessees, such as Hard Rock Café in Beverly Hills, gain 40% revenue from these sources. The company is focused on alliances with travel organizations, including taxi drivers and bus operators. Retailers should also attend organized conferences for the tourist industry in order to establish better cooperation and monitor trends in tourism. A local museum probably has sculptures that can be displayed in the shopping centre and can be a partner in joint activities implementation [8].

Depending on the preferences of the tourists, the advantages of a shopping centre can be the location, a large number of shops, a comfortable ambience, unique stores, entertainment contents and restaurants and the like. Because of this, the shopping centre can position itself as a destination, i.e., a place where you can put your time to good use and have fun, and not only a place for shopping. Since most tourists plan their stay ahead of time, it is necessary to somehow animate them before their arrival. The organizers of tourist trips need to be supplied with information about the shopping centre (number of stores, the price ranking, the list of tenants), special events that could be organized for tourists, group visits, benefits for tourist guides and travel agencies.

The offer of the shopping centre plays an important part in attracting tourists. This is why it is necessary to define why they come to the shopping centre, whether it is for purchasing necessities, for the acceptable

price/quality ratio or for entertainment. Also, information about the stores they visit most often and the type of goods they purchase can be very useful when developing a strategy. Animating tenants that can satisfy short-term shopping centre offers can be useful in filling in a lack in an offer and monitoring seasonal trends or important city events (such as the organization of Eurosong in Belgrade). The entertainment content can play an important part in keeping the customers in the centre, differentiating the shopping centre from others, encouraging the so called "word of mouth" promotion and animating tourists to revisit.

When targeting tourists, the following media can be used: guidebooks designed for tourists, phonebooks, magazines that are distributed in planes, billboards and posters in the vicinity of tourist attractions, terminals, posters in tourist buses (since the summer 2009 there is a tourist bus with no roof which is used for sight-seeing tours around Belgrade), brochures in theaters, restaurants, etc. This promotional material must include clear information about the location of the shopping centre, the map of the centre, the list of tenants, information about upcoming events, etc. The Internet is a useful tool in targeting this target segment primarily because it is used a lot during the planning of the trip. It is therefore necessary to create an appealing and comprehensive website and position it adequately on search engines such as Google, and include links to tourist attractions and transport options.

Attracting tourists to the shopping centre is not a completed campaign. Special amenities and a pleasant atmosphere are very important. Tourists can be offered assistance in finding specific items, or in making restaurant reservations and purchasing theatre tickets, or offered special discounts and coupons, a spot for luggage storage, the Internet access and other amenities. The shopping centre staff should be familiar with the efforts being made to attract tourists to the shopping centre and they should cooperate by providing assistance.

As with other activities, it is also necessary to measure the results. One of the indicators may be the sales volume achieved thanks to tourist visits. Also, the effect of partnerships can be monitored by using different coupons for different travel organizations, agencies and hotels. It is also necessary to monitor the methods and the extent of competitor advertising on a regular basis. When it comes to events that are organized specifically for tourists, the sales of souvenirs and similar items at the time of the event can be monitored.

Conclusion

Tourists are becoming a very important market segment for the shopping centre business, therefore it is necessary to create an appropriate marketing mix for them. The starting point is certainly the market research in order to be able to perceive their potential. To adjust the offer to tourists, special attention must be paid to the socio-cultural aspects. In creating a marketing plan, collaboration with industry professionals plays an important role and developing a partnership with them has increased revenue for many stores. It is also essential that the shopping centre position itself as a destination, and not only as a place to shop. Evaluating results will help monitor the realization of planned activities and their contribution not only to the number of tourists who have visited the shopping centre, but also their share in increasing the tenants revenues.

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