

Mauritius islands as a destination



The destination marketing plan will be based on a small island, which is not even visible on the world map, called Mauritius. It is a volcanic island of lagoons and beaches in the Indian Ocean, it is known for its stability and racial harmony among its blend of population. It is an island situated at about 900 kilometres east of Madagascar and about 3, 943 kilometres south-west of India. (Blunt 2005)

It has more that 150 kilometres of beaches and the lagoon is protected by the world's third largest coral reef. Its population is estimated to 1, 2 million which forms a blend of cultures from India, Africa, Europe and China.

Mauritius was discovered by a Portuguese sailor, Don Pedro Mascarenhas. It was occupied by the Dutch (1598 – 1710), French (1715 – 1810) and British (1810 – 1968). It gained its independence on the 12th March 1968 and its Republic status on 12th March 1992. It has a democracy based on the British democracy. The currency used there is the Mauritian Rupee, made up of 100cents and its capital city is Port Louis. The Mauritian economy is dependent upon the textile, tourism and sugar industry.

Currently the destination is attracting tourist mainly from European Countries and the destination's current mission to keep its loyal customer and promote in countries where people are not aware of Mauritius as a tourist destination. They want to maintain the image of Mauritius as being a “paradise” to their current markets.

The Destination would want to regain the French market following the chikunguya disease, to attract more tourists from American countries and become the number one tourist destination in the Indian Ocean.

Jobber (2004: 210) defines segmentation as the “ identification of individuals or organizations with similar characteristics that have significant implications for the determination of marketing strategy”. In other words it means dividing a segment into sub-segments because customers differ in tastes, needs, attitudes, lifestyles, family size and composition. Identifying these submarkets will help the destination to serve its customers with similar requirements efficiently and effectively. The more a destination knows about its customers the better they will be able to satisfy their needs. A segment is identified by dividing them according to the purpose of travel, the buyer’s need/motivations and benefits sought, the buyer’s behaviour, their psychographic profile, the price of the ticket and the demographic, economic and geographic profile.

The identified segments for Mauritius were people aged 25 and upwards with a medium to high income per year, because the price of a ticket for the destination is around £600 – £700 and the life cycle identified was newly married couples, full nest II, empty nest I and empty nest II. It has been found that it is mostly leisure tourists that come to the destinations and their motivation honeymoon, young married couple seeking paradise for their honeymoons, looking for a quiet place, this applies to retired people, families willing to escape the European winter and seeking sea and beach holiday, individuals seeking for water- sports and tourist coming for cultural interest. Most of the tourists coming to Mauritius are Loyal and spend a lot during their stay. Regarding price, tourists are quite sensitive to this variable when the price is high less tourist travel to the destination when the price is reduced more tourists travel. Price is also an indicator of the perceived

quality, so when playing with the price variable one should be careful of the quality that it is going to reflect.

Market Positioning

Position is about the perceived image of the destination by customers compared to other nearby destinations. Customer's has this perceived image of Mauritius being paradise when they look at the brochure and see the white sandy beaches and the turquoise ocean. This perceived image would help to make the island the number one destination in the Indian Ocean.

Marketing Mix/branding image

The marketing mix is defined as a combination of controllable variables that can be used to achieve the desired levels of sales in target markets. This combination is known as the 4 Ps, which includes product, price, place and promotion.

Product

In terms of the tourism industry, the product covers the complete experience from the time a tourist reaches their destination to the time he/she leaves. Therefore the tourism product is a mixture of attraction and facilities at the destination, facility and destination. The role of marketing is to increase awareness of the product, improve their presentation and their delivery to customers. One has to bear in mind that when a customer buys a tourism product they are actually buying the expectation of benefits; it is the benefits that are the product. Thus the product should match customer's needs.

The tourism product comprises of five components:

Destination attractions and environment

Destination facilities and services

Accessibility of the destination

Images of the destination

Price to the consumer (Middleton 1994)

The destination's approach to the product mix will be doing a market research to see what customer perceptions of the product are and used the information meet their needs. It can also be done on non-users to see what attraction or facilities the destination will need to build up. To attract more customers the destination will introduce packages made by tour operators such as when tourists staying in certain hotels they will have free admission at certain attraction. This type of package will particularly suit families. Extending the usage of the products will help to achieve this strategy as well, such as offering one free night to customers if they are staying for a weekend. The destination could also introduce an airline, like Ryanair in Europe, which would do flights in the Indian Ocean only, such as flights from Mauritius to other island in the Indian Ocean at a low price.

Price

Tourism businesses deal with different segments at the same time and they frequently use different price for the different segments. Pricing is a very complex decision due to the high degree of competition and the inaccuracy in forecasting levels of demand. It may vary not only because of the industry's characteristics but also due to other factors such as weather,

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terrorism and strikes. There exists no universal way of pricing, price will always vary. Pricing acts as an indicator of quality, thus it can be used to assess quality before purchase.

The characteristics that affect pricing are the following:

Perishability:

Intensive capital investment

Cost of intensive staff employed

Customer's characteristics

Regarding pricing the destination will use a low pricing strategy at the beginning to encourage long-run demands, capture market share from competitors and discourage any potential new entrant to enter the market. If it is observed that there is a high proportion frequent customer, this means that the customers are satisfied with the product and customer loyalty has been created. Then price could be raised at a reasonable level to maximise profits. The price could also be lowered during off-peak season to attract customer and non-users as well that could try the destination. Special price could be given to newly married couples for their honeymoon, if they did like the destination by word of mouth they will tell it to their other friends who might use the destination for their honeymoons. (Ernie 1992)

Place

Place is the element of the marketing mix which includes channel of distribution and physical distribution. Channel distribution includes tour

operators, retailers and travel agents. Channels should be chosen according to the other the other three marketing mix. Choice of location, which is the point of sale, should be well located to increase the flow of customers (Ernie 1992)

Since we already know who our target markets are the destination will choose tour operators which specialize in their target market and travel agencies that are located where their target market are. For instance if the destination is targeting at families they will choose a travel agent that is specialize in that market and located in area where families live. Since the destination is aiming at non- users they will have to find an operator in these countries.

Promotion

Promotion mix consists of four elements: advertising, personal selling, publicity and sales promotion. They are designed to create excitement and interest about the destination. These elements should communicate similar, consistent and non-conflicting messages to each of their target markets. (Ernie 1992)

The aim of the destination is to increase advertising in target's market countries and in non-user's countries as well. Mass media advertising and aggressive advertising will be used to send the message that Mauritius was made first and then heaven; and that heaven was copied after Mauritius. This message will be sent through the use of televisions, radios, newspapers and billboards. Market research could be use here to see what image our target markets have of the destination and use it for the advertising. The

destination will advertise in trade magazines to reach tour operators and travel agents. The destination will use travel agents as an intermediary for personal selling and they could also be used as a way of promoting the destination. Using sales promotion would help to achieve the objectives mentioned earlier, the destination will use price promotion, special merchandise use to promote the destination and familiarization tours for travel agents. Price promotion could be used when there is festival going on at the destination, such as the Independence Day, which would include discount on attractions, restaurants and hotels. Selling merchandise such as T-shirts, key chains and souvenirs will help to promote the destination by word of mouth when tourists go back to their countries, this might encourage prospective customers to visit the destination. Familiarization tours are free trips for travel agents to let them experience the tourist destination before the customers. This would be for travel agents operating in an area where there non-users of the destination, the travel agents would be able advise non-users on the destination. Promotional impact can be managed by carefully managing the four elements of the promotion mix.

TALC

Tourism Area life Cycle

Tourism Area Life cycle a framework concept by Buttler (1980) highlights the tourism attractions and resources of a particular country. It mainly involves according to Butler (1980) a six stage evolution of tourism namely exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, stagnation and post stagnation. . Mauritius Island can be classified between a

Development stage and stagnation in the TALC (Buttler 1980) more people are reaching Mauritius (see tourist Arrival stats) by years, more people discover the destination, and the word spreads about its attractions and the amenities which are increased and improved (development) with the approach of the carrying capacity* (define below next content) stagnation rise with the social and environmental limits. Buttler (1980) mentioned that a rise from Exploration to Stagnation happens very rapidly, as implied by the exponential nature of the growth curve. As this is the case for Mauritius in a rise of infrastructure, development in Technologies, improving services for quality customers. For Instance carrying capacity clearly explains the rest of the situation.

Carrying Capacity

Definition of carrying capacity

Carrying capacity can be defined as “ the maximum number of people who can use a site without an unacceptable decline in the quality of experience gained by visitors” (Karma; 2001 65) . Lime(1976) points to a substantial expansion of the meaning of carrying capacity – from a focus on numbers of visitors to the entire topic of “ how to plan and manage a particular recreation resource “.

Findings in Carrying capacity

Carrying capacities are usually determined for the planning area involving features of key attractions, development sites and even the tourist transit point. The carrying capacity analysis implying the institution of upper limits on development in other words, the number of tourists in terms of days, feedbacks and market forecasts, Moreover, carrying capacities can be

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established both for the developing as well as developed tourist destination. (Kamra; 2001: 68) he also argues that carrying capacity analyse most the number of tourist arrivals to the number of inhabitants in the destination area, in a result they found to be genuinely measuring the elements of socio-cultural environment and physical. More elements such as economical and infrastructure issues are to be seen as a part of the carrying capacity.

A source of pollution can be a source of major problem in an environmental aspect, for example the beaches in Mauritius are well preserved by the government and by the hotels themselves, pollution (land) might affect the tourism industry, if not taken into consideration it might result to a decrease in tourist arrivals in the destination, this one major issue can be classified as being a physical more on that is the preservation of wild life animals, the animals in Mauritius Island such as “ the kestrel” and the Mauritian Parakeet are unique in the species, preservation of those natural resources have large impacts on tourism industry. Economical benefits are mostly crucial for the government of Mauritius, as this is tourism industry is being as a major source of income, tourism industry also bring employment for the local communities for example hotel resorts have been built in the coastal areas.

SWOT ANALYSIS

SWOT

SWOT, is a tool use to evaluate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of the destination. The aim of SWOT is to isolate the key environmental factors that are important to the destination.

Strengths:

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Distinctive and exotic environment

Mauritius is known for its exotic environment and its natural park.

The opening up of new hotels

Lately in Mauritius there a lot of new hotels opening up, this is an advantage for the island because now they accommodate more tourists than before.

High purchasing power for tourists

£1 = Rs 63. 6447, which means that with £1 UK tourist could more things in Mauritius than in their country. (Anon 2006)

Excellent service provided by hotels

The tropical island is not also known for its physical asset but also for the high quality service provided by hotels. (Anon 2005)

Weaknesses:

Diseases

Lately in Mauritius there has been a disease, chikunguya, which is caused by mosquito bites and because of this the number of French tourist has declined.

Language Barrier

Although the official language is English, not all Mauritian speak English and

It is hard for tourist to communicate since most of the tourists are English speaking.

Long haul flights

- The flights to Mauritius from Europe, America and Asian countries is a 12hr flight, which is very tiring.

Opportunities:

Exploit Golf tourist market

It has notice that golf tourist spend a lot when they come to Mauritius, thereby Mauritius try to attract more golf tourist to maximise their revenues.

Growth in Spa tourism

New air routes such as flight to Russia has been open thus creating a new market and if exploited wisely could bring in more revenues for the island.

Increase in the number of flight to Mauritius

- There are now two new airlines doing the flights to Mauritius, TUIfly Nordic and Corsairfly. (Chateau 2006)

Threats:

Competition

Future competition from the surrounding islands might be an issue; Mauritius will have to find a way of gaining the competitive advantage over them.

Tsunamis

Following the tsunami that hit Indonesia in December there were some minor effects felt in Mauritius. Since that time there are still some tourists that feel it is unsafe to visit the island. (Anonb 2006)

Recommendations:

Mauritius Island has the best possible ability to become the pioneer in Tourism industry in the Indian Ocean , The Government of Mauritius understand very well the importance of Tourists for the Economy, the improvement of the Hotels infrastructure is to be made (now in process 2008-2010 project) , the preservation of the wildlife park such as the rare animals and rare plants species, the introduction of a new airport also under future planning of the Government, the size of tourists arrivals is increasing with years and several discounts on Air Fares are available.

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