

CHAPTER 4. MARKETING AS A TOOL FOR IMPLEMENTING THE PRINCIPLES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

ASPECTS OF THE USE OF «GREEN» MARKETING IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY

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Abstract. The twentieth century was a period of unprecedented economic growth. It was then that the process of mass production of goods to meet growing needs was born. In this context, markets became competitive, giving rise to the growing role of marketing as the means by which companies conquered and exploited markets and market shares. At the same time, as a result of explosive growth, society has begun to face the various problems created by this accelerated development, climate change and increased environmental degradation. The emergence of green marketing is intended to support society in combating these detrimental effects. This section explores all aspects that comprise the concept of «green marketing» and examines examples of international and national applications.

Keywords: Green marketing, hotel industry, ecological marketing, sustainable tourism, environment, accommodation units.

Introduction. Modern society faces a serious global problem that leaves no one indifferent, namely climate change. This phenomenon is called «global warming» and is manifested by an increase in the average temperature of the air near the earth and water (United Nations, Kyoto

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Protocol, 1994). Since the beginning of measurements, there has been a constant increase in temperature since the Industrial Revolution. This allows us to conclude that the anthropogenic factor (man and his actions) has largely caused the phenomenon of global warming [8].

In recent years, the concept of green marketing has become increasingly important among organizations due to the promotion of conscious environmental practices initiated by the United Nations (UN). Many companies have launched internal green marketing campaigns for many reasons, such as: conserving non-renewable natural resources, protecting the environment, and even as a response to competitors. Companies are aware of the importance of reducing their environmental impact, but applying a green marketing strategy is also a source of promoting their own image [3].

Viewed as a strategy, green marketing involves collaboration between suppliers and producers, partners, as well as competitors to achieve sustainable development throughout the production and marketing chain, pursuing two main goals: profit and long-term positive environmental impact.

1. The concept of green marketing

In the extensive literature on the theory and practice of marketing in the last 4 decades there are several terms synonymous with the concept of «green marketing», one of the most common is the term «sustainable marketing». At the same time the following terms are also used: ecological marketing, environmental marketing, ecomarketing.

As a result of this research, it was concluded that there is no unanimously accepted definition of green marketing. A large number of authors and institutions have tried to define the meaning of the term and its components. Some of them focused on the differences compared to classical marketing, others used the basic principles of the concept of sustainable development.

As early as 1975 the American Marketing Association defined the concept of green marketing as «the study of the positive and negative aspects of marketing activities on environmental pollution, depletion of energy and non-energy resources». At the same time, according to the association, «green marketing describes the process of producing, promoting and packaging products in an environmentally friendly way».

University professor Sergey Polonsky identifies 3 defining factors of this concept: «(1) green marketing is part of overall marketing activities, (2) both positive and negative actions are considered, (3) as well as a limited range of environmental issues» [5]. Although this definition seems to cover all desirable aspects, the author himself argues that ecomarketing should be defined more broadly, and offers the following definition: «Environmental or conservation marketing is a set of activities aimed at creating and facilitating any exchange to meet needs or desires in a way that minimizes the negative impact of anthropogenic factors on the natural environment» [5].

Conventional marketing is about developing products to meet customer needs at affordable prices by communicating the benefits of those products in the most compelling way possible. Green marketing is much more complex and has the following two goals [4]:

1. Development of products that strike a balance between market requirements (quality, usability, performance, price) and environmental acceptability (minimal negative impact on the environment).
2. Creating an environmentally friendly image by developing products with ecological properties.

Environmental marketing is put into practice by applying environmentally appropriate strategies, which should include the following key elements [6]:

1. Creation and development of environmentally sensitive market segments.
2. Systematic evaluation and monitoring of all activities and products put on the market, taking into account the latest environmental requirements and standards.
3. Revising product quality and packaging strategies.
4. Reconsidering promotion and communication strategies with the market, the public, environmental groups and organizations.
5. Creating new environmental standards and launching new sustainable initiatives.
6. Creation and use of eco-friendly forms of product labeling.

The above strategies can be applied to the tourism industry as well as to other areas of the economy.

Polonsky M.J. and Rosenberg P.J. outlined three major effects of economic marketing on business [9]:

1. cost reduction – switching to more environmentally friendly production processes often leads to a more efficient use of raw materials and directly to lower production costs;

2. differentiation from competitors – by offering new products in new markets and/or adding value to existing products, a company can gain access to new market segments, leading to increased customer loyalty and directly to increased profitability;

3. revitalize the business – By using green marketing, companies have the opportunity to revitalize their products as well as their overall strategy, culture, mission and vision.

In this context, both producers and consumers are shifting from a cost orientation to a more sustainable perspective. Thus, targeting environmentally sensitive customers is an advantage for companies with a wide range of green marketing strategies. Therefore, neglecting this consumer niche can affect a company's image in the long run, since the green marketing philosophy and environmental orientation are closely linked to the competitiveness and economic goals of companies.

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Using a green marketing strategy is beneficial for companies because they can show customers their interest in developing environmentally friendly products. Organic marketing has a great impact on tourist behavior, being also known as sustainable marketing, organic or eco-friendly, even if these terms are elements of a common concept.

2. The connection between eco-tourism and green marketing

Taking into account the specific components of green marketing and the growing interest of tourists in natural destinations, authors and tourism experts believe that ecotourism is the main form of tourism suitable for the practice of promoting sustainable development. Ecotourism involves activities carried out and based on the natural environment, and its most important purpose is to mitigate the negative impact on the environment, as well as providing a wide range of benefits to local communities [2]. According to the definition of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO),

ecotourism has the following characteristics: it is designed for small groups and includes small and local businesses; has an important educational aspect, with a strong emphasis on reducing the negative impact on the environment (including communities), and supports the socio-economic development of the natural area.

Ecotourism, as well as agrotourism, can be considered an example of green marketing in agriculture through a number of sustainable practices, such as: organic farming, preservation of cultural and agricultural habits and traditions, and involvement of community members in tourism activities. Due to growing demand and minimal negative impacts, ecotourism can be transformed into future mass tourism.

In this context, ecotourism can be considered «green» not only because of its activities, but also because of the implementation of organic marketing strategies that include such aspects as: active environmental activities, creative environmental industries, traditions and customs, nature tourism activities, festivals and events, ecological accommodation units. In addition to being a separate form of tourism, ecotourism is often presented as a solution to the problems of mass tourism and prevents the development of tourism in an unsustainable way.

In today's changing climate, sustainability in tourism has become a key factor in a marketing strategy focused on long-term relationships between suppliers and customers. Based on changes in consumer behavior, who have become more aware and more willing to behave properly in nature, being «eco-friendly» has become a necessity for companies. Therefore, due to the growing interest in eco-tourism services based on contact with nature, ecotourism tends to have a growing advantage in the tourism market. In this sense, tourist destinations can take advantage of this trend by developing «green» marketing campaigns to strengthen their image to customers.

3. The practice of green marketing at the international level

In today's increasingly competitive hospitality industry, hotel departments are constantly looking for innovative marketing solutions that will give them an edge in the hotel market and set them apart from other competitors. Growing consumer interest in eco-tourism is pushing hoteliers to adopt green marketing. By applying this type of marketing in hospitality

management, the hotel not only meets the requirements of today's market to offer eco-friendly products and services, but also convinces people to choose such hotels.

According to the researcher Manfred Lenzen, tourism accounts for about 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions, with tourism's annual global carbon footprint increasing from 3.9 to 4.5 million tons of CO₂ equivalent between 2009 and 2013. In addition, according to the 2018 Emission Gap Report, European Union emissions have increased by an average of 1% per year since 2014, proving that implementing green measures in the hotel sector is important. (United Nation Environment Programme, 2018).

The transition to marketing environmentally friendly products and services is quite a costly and frustrating process for all international hotels. In spite of this, the policy of many hotels is aimed at greening their operations. Environmental policies aimed at hotels around the world are implemented by reducing and conserving natural resources, such as [7]:

- saving water and electricity;
- separate waste disposal;
- reuse of items that can be used for a longer time;
- use of ecological / recyclable and biodegradable materials;
- use of chlorine-free products;
- use of alternative energy sources;
- use of 100% organic cotton bedding, towels and linen;
- promotion of local and organic food products;
- transportation to and from the hotel in eco-cars;
- landscaping with an «eco-friendly» environment.

Research by the environmental organization «Green Seal» has shown that a hotel with 150 rooms consumes as much electricity per week as is needed for 100 private homes. This enormous consumption is largely due to empty rooms, huge corridors, non-stop lighting, and irrational use of electricity by guests. To this end, UNWTO experts have developed an online program called Hotel Energy Solutions, which allows hotels to monitor their energy consumption levels and make them more rational. Through this program, hotels can reduce the negative impact of climate change. In addition to these benefits, Hotel Energy Solutions also offers a customized selection of energy sources, including alternatives, suggesting ways to use them economically, including cost savings [7].

The Montana Magica Hotel in Patagonia, Chile, is a prime example of an eco-friendly hotel. The entire area and the hotel are created using natural materials, which is recognized as the most successful eco-hotel project in Chile. The Montana Magica Hotel also creates an amazing view thanks to the waterfall that flows down from the roof of the hotel. Only natural materials were used in the hotel rooms as well.

Another current example of ecomarketing is the Hotel Leopold in Brussels. The management of this hotel is strictly focused on the recycling process and environmental protection. In this hotel the cleaning products are ecologically certified and the paint used for the interior design is water-based to eliminate the possibility of inhaling chemicals. At the same time, the hotel uses a low-consumption heating system and water consumption is controlled. They are also actively involved in paper and plastic recycling, and carpets are made from 100% recycled materials [10].

Kamp Koren is the first camp in Slovenia to receive the «European Ecolabel» for meeting the criteria of an ecological accommodation facility in 2011. Thanks to many years of efforts to meet these requirements, the camp received this certificate without any problems. Everything in the camp is arranged and organized with great attention to the impact on nature. The water here is heated mainly by the sun, and rainwater is used to water the flowers. Both the houses and outhouses of the camp are made of wood. Most of the environmental requirements are followed, including the same requirements for guests [11].

A small fraction of international hotels donate soap scraps, given that 2.6 million soaps are discarded annually in the U.S., although 1.8 million deaths occur each year due to poor hygiene. Organizations such as Clean the World and Global Soap have launched soap donation campaigns, creating benefits for all parties involved, including nature. Hilton was the first hotel chain to join this campaign [9].

Due to the fact that many customers left hotel rooms without turning off their lights, most hoteliers decided to install light sensors and energy-saving light bulbs. About half of the waste produced by hotels can be recycled. One hotel customer produces an average of 900 grams of trash, while the waste produced by the entire hotel is very large. However, as with soap, sustainable hotel units have found ways to turn waste into resources.

Another tool used in environmental marketing is collaboration with various companies and organizations that already have an internationally recognized image of promoting «green» activities. An example is the Hilton hotel chain's partnership with Global Soap, an organization that recycles hotel soap [9].

In recent years, the entire global community strives to comply with environmental standards and protect the environment, and the hotel business is no exception. An important element when opening a hotel business is to establish a relationship of trust with future clients. Focusing on public health, participating in the improvement of the environment, partnering with organizations dedicated to protecting the environment are just some of the important activities to consider if a friendly and responsible image in the hotel market is to be achieved.

4. Green marketing in the hotel sector of the Republic of Moldova

The Republic of Moldova is a country with great potential to become a major tourist attraction when it comes to rural and eco-tourism, thanks to its rich natural resources and authentic villages. However, the phenomenon of green marketing is less common than in European countries, gaining momentum only today.

Before the pandemic, tourism and eco-travel tended to grow in the Republic of Moldova. In this context, the accommodation enterprises to hotels, as active actors, have a great interest and are accordingly responsible for achieving the goals and standards imposed by the UNWTO on the environmental issue. Therefore, an increasing number of hotels are closely monitoring energy use and taking measures to reduce careless consumption, while at the same time developing renewable energy projects.

Hotels striving for sustainability and sustainability should work with major organizations in the industry to understand how they can update their operations to be even greener. Organizations promoting green business include the Partnership for International Tourism, the Green Hoteliers Association, Hotel Energy Solutions, Global Soap and others. Although the authorities do not offer or encourage green policies, most hotels in Moldova prefer organic products, realizing the importance of implementing green marketing in the strategic policy of the accommodation facility.

The first example of an organization that supports the creation and preservation of an ecological living environment is EcoVisio. «EcoVisio» is a non-governmental organization founded in 1998 in Chisinau. This organization tries to create and promote «eco-friendly» activities. The largest project of this organization is EcoVillage Moldova, which is developing in two localities: Riscova village, Criuleni district and Valeni village, Cahul district. This project supports 100% ecological housing, in these two localities are created several boarding houses of this kind. In addition to this project, there are also many ecological boarding houses in the Republic of Moldova in rural areas [12].

Boarding house «Eko-resort Butuceni» is an accommodation facility in Orhei, decorated using architectural elements typical of the Old Orhei. Thus, the guesthouse has local decorative elements, local handicrafts, furniture and jewelry, fabrics and household items. Drinks and dishes are served in earthenware prepared organically, based on natural ingredients and local products [13].

Another boarding house, similar to the previous one, is «Casa din Luncă». The boarding house is ecological and tries to reduce all kinds of environmental pollution. At the same time, rational use of energy resources is a priority for both the staff and clients of the boarding house. The hot water used in the boarding house is obtained by solar energy batteries, and the rooms are heated by a heating system using wood and biomass. Most of the area is lit by solar lamps. At the same time for the collection of household waste there is an ecological container, located in a specially designated place. Also on the territory of the boarding house operates an autonomous system of catching and drainage of rainwater. Due to such comprehensive standards of environmental protection, a large number of tourists choose to rest in this resort, proving that effective green marketing is also beneficial and attracts customers [13].

Casa Verde boarding house is also a living space specific to the ecological environment. As in the case of the previous boarding houses, its construction is made of wood and complies with environmental standards and norms. In addition, the tradition of decorating Easter eggs is preserved and promoted here, and several local women are engaged in this craft. Both dishes and drinks are made from local products, and guests can take part in the cooking process if they wish [13].

Due to the various forms of tourism practiced, the Republic of Moldova has a high ecological potential to attract foreign tourists only through rural

tourism purposes and tourist villages. However, this does not mean that hotel units must abandon green marketing and building their sustainable image in the tourist market.

The hotel industry in the Republic of Moldova consists almost entirely of independent accommodation units that are not part of large hotel chains. It is believed that the label «green hotel» applies only to luxury hotels, because organic products are more expensive. At the same time, small hotels are less proactive about the environment due to limited financial resources and the need to invest in other types of hotel activities. Thus, this may be a consistent reason that green marketing is not as well developed in the Republic of Moldova as in the developed countries of the world.

Another problem is that Moldovan legislation is characterized by a large number of gaps in the policy of greening economic agents. There is a lack of cooperation between central and local authorities on this issue. Being a country with a fragile economy, it goes without saying that the lack of capital is one of the main reasons why the state attaches too little importance to ecological hospitality.

It is obvious that in a country with a developed economy the environmental policy is more effective than in the Republic of Moldova. In this context, the development of effective environmental management strategies within the accommodation facilities is essential. This will help not only to protect the environment, but also to create a better image in the international tourism market and increase revenues, respectively.

Conclusions. This study describes how green marketing has become a necessary method in the marketing policy of every company, especially in the hotel industry. Most of the international hotel chains have understood how green marketing works, and today it has become a means by which large hotel companies, by protecting the environment, attract many customers and increase revenues.

Even though sustainable marketing is defined by several authors and does not have a unanimously accepted definition, essentially all formulations lead to the same goals and objectives.

In the hotel industry, environmental concerns on the part of managers are becoming more and more apparent. Their initiative to bring their accommodation facilities up to the latest environmental standards by

implementing environmental policies is largely motivated by profit. Most international hoteliers have realized the importance of their cooperation with other international organizations in the fight for environmental protection, which has raised the image of many hotels.

In the Republic of Moldova, green marketing is a less used policy due to less demand for such activities. Unfortunately, the state has a very low level of involvement, so there is no cooperation between the authorities and economic agents in the hotel industry. However, there is a greater involvement of accommodation facilities, so most of them have established primary rules of conduct to minimize the negative impact on the environment. The existence of 100% organic farms is a positive factor because they attract many tourists both nationally and internationally. It is recommended that institutions and economic agents in this sector work together to promote sustainable activities in the hospitality industry, which will bring remarkable results for both the local economy and the environment.

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