

Perspective

Beach marketing strategies in emerging markets

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Abstract

Beach marketing refers to the promotion of beach and coastal areas as a tourist destination. The purpose of the article is to discuss the factors-tourists (coastal versus green) and seasonality (favorable versus unfavorable)-affecting beach marketing in emerging markets. Using the Social Exchange Theory, we conceptually develop a two-by-two matrix and formulate marketing strategies for each segment labeled as Beach tourists (coastal and favorable season), Eco- tourist (green and favorable season), Cultural tourist (green and unfavorable season), and Active tourist (coastal and unfavorable season). The implication for managers is that depending upon the nature of the tourists and seasonality, they can use appropriate strategy to market beach and coastal areas for revenue generation.

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1. Introduction

The international tourism market is forecast to be about 1.6 billion by 2020 (UNWTO, 2016). Previous studies relating to tourism focused on various individual traits (Fennell, 1999), consumer behavior (Ryan *et al.*, 2000), demographics (Wearing and Neil, 1999), and quality expectations (Khan, 2003), among others. Recently, scholars have paid attention to the sustainability of tourism – ecotourism – defined as responsible travel that conserves the natural environment and improves the well-being of local people. Thus, ecotourism destination follows the principles to (1) Minimize the impact; (2) Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect; (3) Provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts; (4) Provide direct financial benefits for conservation; (5) Provide financial benefits and

empowerment for local people; and, (6) Raise sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental, and social climate (IES, 2016). Some research on ecotourism focuses on changes in climate (Amelung and Viner, 2006) and its certification (Singh *et al.*, 2016). Recently, Barickman (2014) explains how firms in the beach tourism industry seek to market their services effectively to the world in the Brazilian context. Many factors motivate tourist to travel: easy of travel, lower visa restriction, higher income level, and desire to learn about other culture, among others. In this context, Western countries have a number of destinations at their disposal to attract tourists; for example, the charm of metropolitan cities (*e.g.*, London, Paris), world heritage sites (*e.g.*, Rome), and of course, natural beauty of beach, mountains and rivers, among others (*e.g.*, Canada, Switzerland). However, it may be challenging for emerging markets to attract tourists in the same ratio as western countries.

The purpose of the article is to highlight the importance of beach marketing in emerging markets that can be a source of tourists and foreign exchange, and discuss the two factors – tourists and seasonality – that should be considered while formulating strategies for beach marketing. Beach marketing refers to how firms in beach tourism-oriented countries promote their respective coastal regions as consumer–desired destinations. We use the psychological, sociological perspective of the Social Exchange Theory that suggests that people engage in interaction or reciprocate with other people because they expect to receive benefits or incentives from the other party. The theory has been used widely in tourism-related studies (Andriotis and Vaughan, 2003). We contribute to the literature by discussing the specific factors (tourists and seasonality) relating to beach marketing and their use in formulating marketing strategies. In the next section, we examine the kinds of beach tourists and the impact of seasonality on tourist arrival, followed by the implications for managers and conclusion.

2. Beach Tourists

Beach tourists could be placed into two categories (beach versus green) regarding what they desire most in a beach (Onofri and Nunes, 2013). Beach lovers care about beach characteristics such as length of the beach, quality of sand, the temperature of water, etc. They mainly seem to appreciate the coastal landscape and are swayed by it (Roca *et al.*, 2008). Golden sand contrasted with a crystal clear blue and surrounding trees give a natural feel and are aesthetically pleasing to the eyes. Sand quality of a beach has a strong influence on tourists choosing a beach (Uyarra *et al.*, 2005). The aesthetics of the sand such as color and texture also determine the quality of the beach. Tourists desire clean, hygienic sand and water, free of litter

and algae (Morgan, 1999). Thus, tourist's attraction to a beach is highly dependent on their perception of the quality of the beaches' characteristics.

However, green lovers put emphasis on the coastal habitat abundance, diversity, environment (*e.g.*, recycling) and beach itself. Few countries (for example Bermuda, Palau, Cyprus) rely on their natural scenery and structures to attract tourists. So, accentuating beautiful landscape or creating one with resorts can be appealing to tourists. To optimize tourist satisfaction, it is important to focus on short and medium-distance visitors who can more easily access the beach and its amenities (Amelung and Viner, 2006). Eco-tourists also tend to have more time and money than beach lovers. Ioppolo *et al.* (2013) find that implementing a system to transform ecotourism to an economic driving force is beneficial when advertising to the western tourists that appreciate the concept of green. Pollution destroys tourist's positive perceptions because it ruins the attractiveness of the beach. Thus, it is important to maintain a high level of environmental quality for emerging markets' beaches to remain competitive as a tourist destination (Mihalic, 2000). Aiming to advertise the green aspect of coastal tourism should appeal to western tourists.

3. Seasonality

The climate of the beach destination, such as warm temperature, precipitation, and the tourist's home country climate influence a decision to visit that beach destination (Becken, 2010). The optimal temperature for summer destinations is approximately 21 degrees Celsius. In Canada, for example, people tend to travel more internationally during winter time and are attracted to destinations with hotter temperatures. It is evident that climate has a significant influence on tourism. Further, changes in the length of seasonality for highly-dependent climate tourist activities (*e.g.*, beach vacations) can also have implications for managers, and thus revenue. To manage the climate change, country-specific parameters such as temperature change, precipitation variability, sea-level rise, monsoons likelihood, cyclone frequency, tornado occurrence and extreme weather conditions should be taken into account when formulating a strategy to attract tourists (Naswa and Garg, 2011). Although the potential consequences of climate change are relevant to both destination countries and countries of origin, beach capacity can be adjusted in response to the climate change and tourists arrival.

Beach capacity is mainly determined by the amount of sub-aerial space available to beach-goers (Sarda *et al.*, 2009). Determining the carrying capacity of a beach is essential for use and management. Knowing the sand availability of a beach can help identify at what time the beach in question would experience the most arrival of tourists (Brown *et al.*, 1997). This is important for countries interested in marketing beaches as a tourist attraction because if their beaches have a small capacity or are frequently overcrowded, tourists may opt for other nations with many beaches. In some cases, changing the beach layout may not be an option, but for smaller beaches with higher rates of overcrowding, adding extra leisure activities will keep tourists attracted to the areas (da Silva and Pereira, 2002).

4. Theory

The development of our conceptual framework that identifies the four segments (discussed in details in the next section) based on the two dimensions-seasonality and tourists-builds on the social exchange sociological theory which essentially suggests the sharing of resources between individuals and groups in an interaction situation (AP, 1992). This theory is widely accepted in tourism research; it is based on assumption that people engage with other individuals with the aim to receive benefits or incentives from the other party; i.e., tourist (people) engage with local residents (other people), environment and activities to gain experience as benefits (Perez and Nadal, 2005). We use the nature of engagements for developing tourist segments in the context of beach marketing.

5. Methodology

Our methodology for this study is based on qualitative method. Several scholars have argued in favor of qualitative method as an alternative to positivism (Funk, Mahony and Havitz, 2003; Rinehart, 2005; Tsiotsou and Ratten, 2010) and suggested to spend less time tracking epistemological and ontological roots of their methods and more time on learning and conducting qualitative studies (Andrews, Mason and Silk, 2005). Because no paradigm-qualitative or quantitative-can capture real-world situation, we use the deductive approach by reviewing the literature and discussing pertinent empirical studies while taking into account pluralist pattern of beach tourists instead of portraying tourists as a homogenous group (Arnegger *et al.*, 2010; Yannaskis and Gibson, 1992). This approach leads us to the following four distinct strategies for the four segments.

6. Beach Marketing Strategies

Based on the above discussion of the factors and the Social Exchange Theory (Vogt and Jun, 2004), we conceptually propose a framework in Table 1 for the formulation of beach marketing strategies. Our proposed strategies are based on two factors: tourists (coastal versus green) and seasonality (favorable versus unfavorable). The split on each factor created four segments. We label the segments as (1) *Beach tourists* (coastal and favorable season), (2) *Eco-tourist* (green and favorable season) (3) *Cultural tourist* (green and unfavorable season), and (4) *Active tourist* (coastal and unfavorable season). We explain the segments in the next section along with their marketing strategies.

Table 1: Beach Marketing Strategies

Seasonality	Unfavourable	(4) Active Tourist	(3) Cultural Tourist
	Favourable	(1) Beach Tourist	(2) Eco Tourist
		Coastal	Green
		Tourist	

[Source: The author]

(1) *Beach-tourists (coastal and favorable season)*: Understanding the beach conditions surrounding the beach is important. A beach has the three aspects: long-term erosion, shoreline reorientation in bayed beaches, and storm-induced changes (Valdemoro and Jimenez, 2006). These aspects influence the beach conditions that are the main attraction for tourists as it plays an important role in determining a beach's perceived desirability among consumers (Moreno, 2007). Beach condition refers to the landscape, water quality and sand quality of a beach. Tourist perceptions of the beach are highly influenced by the degree to which they find the conditions aesthetically appealing (Martin, 2005). These conditions are important factors for tourism appeal. Naturally, without the tourism appeal, marketing managers would be less inclined to promote those beaches because it may not be profitable (de Frietas, 2003). The fact that about 85 percent of all tourist revenues are generated by the attraction of beaches demonstrates the revenue generation potential of beach tourism (Blakemore *et al.*, 2002).

(2) *Eco-tourist (green and favorable climate)*: Because many beaches available to the tourist may be similar in their shape, look and their usage concept, one of the ways to attract the tourists to choose a beach is to promote its rich natural attraction

that may surround it. Many destination places use visual components in the advertisement to promote natural attractions that are unique to beach, ocean and islands and coastline (Echtner, 2002). Depicting topographical features and exotic nature such as sand dunes and stark landscape, unique coastline and savannas, fauna, exotic nature that contrast with man-made monuments or modern hotels, will increase tourist's interest to visit the beach and experience its unique offerings (Selwyn, 1993). Many emerging markets also portray images of indigenous peoples to attract western tourists (Silver, 1993). Naturally, depicting tourists in the beach evokes feeling of engagement, socialization, romance and happiness that encourages people to visit the destination, and thus experience the unique place has to offer (e.g., Amazon).

(3) *Cultural tourist (green and unfavorable season)*: According to UNESCO definition, the cultural heritage is the entire corpus of material signs – either artistic or symbolic – handed on by the past to each culture and include both the human and the natural environment, both architectural complexes and archaeological sites, not only the rural heritage and the countryside but also the urban, technical or industrial heritage, industrial design and street furniture (ICCROM, 2005). Advertising natural and cultural places that surround the beach plays a fundamental role in creating positive perception of the beach and can influence the tourists' decision to choose one beach over another. Promotional images serve to frame tourists' expectations by representing the typical touristic experiences available at the destination (Echtner, 2002). Indeed, these attractions have become a very important tool for the marketing managers to increase the commercial revenue and create an effective marketing campaign by incorporating different ways of advertisements of the beaches as tourist destinations. Tourists can be attracted to a beach during the unfavorable season also if a resort introduces alternative outdoor leisure recreation which is not so highly climate-dependent during the favorable season. The importance of local cultural and historical significance contributes to beach promotion as a destination (Montenegro *et al.*, 2008).

(4) *Active tourist (coastal and unfavorable season)*: Another way to attract tourists is to use advertisements promoting destination's history, music, painting, folklore and special events (McCain and Ray, 2003). These advertisements will develop an emotional belonging to the destination and make the tourists focus on the symbolic meaning of the place (Hou *et al.*, 2005). Active tourists are more likely to enjoy the full potential of the destination and, therefore, perceive the destination

to be more attractive. The specific experience, location, and activities can have a positive impact on the tourist's perception especially during an unfavorable season when the demand for the resort is not as high as during the favorable season. Weaver (2008) found that in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park in Australia, travelers spent 40 percent on hotels, food and beverage, 19 percent of trade and 15 percent on transportation. Thus, the adaptation of all-year less weather-dependent types of tourism could alleviate some of the before mentioned stresses during the current peak tourist demand.

7. Implications for Managers

Our study offers a few implications for beach marketing managers. First, the combination of coastal and green provides a unique opportunity for beach marketing managers to influence conservation positively in and around communities, protected areas such as World Heritage Sites, and sports events, which can be a source of memorable experience for the tourists, and a source of revenue for the managers. Second, the matrix suggests the four segments that can be targeted strategically to optimize revenues. To achieve a successful beach tourism, there should be adequate tourist infrastructure as evidenced by the development of the tourist infrastructure that led to successful tourism in Romania. The importance of tourist infrastructure in emerging markets is also emphasized by Orboi (2013). Third, it is important for managers that wish to market beaches as a tourist attraction to research the beach climate and weather patterns to find out when the optimal climate occurs, and what will attract tourists. Capitalizing on the seasonal shifts is important to gain more tourists. Selling *climate* is a good way for the marketing managers in emerging markets to attract tourists because they can meet tourists' predictable weather patterns. When the climate reaches the optimal temperature, countries should capitalize on these seasons to bring tourism. The climate is an important selling point for beach marketing. Finally, managers should also consider getting an eco-certification, indicating a mark of high quality, environmentally, economically and socially sound products (Haaland and Aas, 2010). In this context, (Singh, Dash and Vashko, 2016) have proposed a framework for obtaining an eco-certification and using it as a strategic tool to position products for a range of tourists. Within the tourism industry alone, over 100 certification or eco-labelling programs have already been developed (Honey and Stewart, 2002, p.4).

In addition to marketing managers, this study also has implications for government policy makers. They can follow the initiative taken by Costa Rica that

has devoted 30 percent of its land to national parks and reserves, one of the highest in the world. Monteverde, a prime market for tourists, is situated between two reserves- Monteverde and Santa Elena-in the Costa Rican highlands. It also has well developed beaches with hotels, restaurants, shops and art galleries (Todras-Whitehill, 2009). We also suggest to policy makers the idea of creating parks along coastal lines.

8. Conclusion

Beach marketing in emerging markets presents challenges to the marketing managers due to the competition from western countries. Given the competition, the proposed matrix and its associated strategies should help marketing managers promote beach as a tourist destination. Further, the shifts in seasons provide an excellent opportunity for the managers to introduce off-season products that are based on activities, culture or heritage. These segments and associated strategies are useful for marketing managers, particularly in emerging markets, where some countries may not have competent export capabilities or the quality of manufacturing may not be of export quality. In which case, the managers can offset some of the lost revenues by using the appropriate strategies to segment their markets and attract tourists to sell local produce (highly perishable items) that are grown in coastal areas. Indeed, visitors also bring much needed foreign exchange. In sum, this study provides some useful strategies for the beach marketing managers that can have a positive impact on revenue generation.

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