



The Current State of Tourism Promotion. Promotional Strategies Used in an Urban Area

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Abstract: *The tourism industry has undergone significant transformations due to economic downturns, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. This paper examines the current state of tourism promotion and the strategic approaches utilized in urban areas. The primary objective of tourism businesses is to attract and retain customers through well-designed promotional strategies. Effective tourism promotion involves a combination of cognitive and behavioural strategies to enhance customer engagement. The study explores four major promotional strategies: attraction, push, defensive, and offensive approaches. Additionally, it highlights the role of online and offline advertising in urban tourism promotion, emphasizing the importance of digital marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), and traditional advertising techniques. The findings suggest that a hybrid approach, integrating both online and offline strategies, yields the best results for sustainable tourism growth. (Kotler, Bowen, & Makens, 2017)*

Keywords: *tourism promotion; urban tourism; marketing strategies; digital marketing; offline advertising; tourism development; consumer behaviour; SEO; promotional campaigns; travel marketing.*

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1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the most dynamic and rapidly evolving industries worldwide. With the advent of globalization and technological advancements, promotional strategies have become an essential aspect of tourism business operations. The outbreak of COVID-19 significantly disrupted the industry, forcing businesses to re-evaluate and adapt their marketing strategies. Effective tourism promotion is crucial for increasing visibility, attracting tourists, and maintaining competitiveness in the market.

Urban tourism presents unique challenges and opportunities due to the dense concentration of businesses and attractions within a limited geographical area. As a result, promotional strategies must be carefully designed to maximize impact. The main objectives of tourism promotion include providing information, creating demand, fostering brand loyalty, and ensuring economic sustainability. This paper analyses the various marketing strategies used in urban tourism, emphasizing the significance of both traditional and digital advertising techniques. (Buhalis, 2000)

2. The Current State of Tourism Promotion

During the pandemic period, economic declines were observed, including in the tourism sector, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These declines have led companies to seek more efficient solutions for economic recovery.

The main objective of a tourism company or entrepreneur, especially in urban tourism within a less developed area, is to convince clients to purchase their services. In an area with low competition, the advantage lies in making a first impression and highlighting the unique tourist attraction. A promotion strategy facilitates the communication relationship between the client and the company through information, persuasion, and recall. (Govers & Go, 2009)

A specific form of communication is the promotion of the tourist destination, which involves transmitting information through messages designed to inform tourism companies and potential clients about the tourism services offered and the various service components.

Similarly, a strong tourism promotion campaign involves supportive and influential marketing efforts aimed at shaping customer mentality and creating new habits.

A solid promotional policy is considered truly effective if it successfully transitions from the cognitive/affective stage to the cognitive/behavioural stage. In other words, it must convince the client to actually purchase the tourism service. The promotional objectives will be defined differently depending on the client and the target audience.

Characteristics of Tourism Promotion:

- It is a repetitive and continuous action depending on the company's capabilities.
- It is a multi-purpose action over specific time periods, with limited durations, targeting objectives such as increasing the company's image, providing information about the tourist area, creating a unique brand image, and ensuring the prosperous and harmonious development of the city of Deta and its community.

The tourism product is intangible and variable, making the development of a promotion strategy for a tourist area both a slightly challenging but also enjoyable and interesting task.

The creation of a promotion strategy requires recognizing optimal communication options through which the tourist destination can consistently deliver accurate messages to potential clients. These messages may include information on the desired characteristics of tourism services, itinerary creation, activity opportunities, etc.

A promotion strategy for a tourist area must be carefully crafted due to the risk of losing potential or current clients if they are not satisfied with the tourist destination. In other words, the strategy must accurately reflect the reality of the area and what it truly has to offer.

At present, four strategies help achieve promotional targets optimally; these are the most well-known and commonly used in promoting a tourist area:

1. Attraction Strategy

This strategy focuses on demand and supply as agreed upon by the client, agency, market, and the potential of the tourist area.

Through both online and offline advertising, the goal is to generate and develop demand through personalized offers tailored to the tourist area. The main target is to provide information and promotional tools to trigger a tourism "frenzy." This "frenzy" stimulates the desire to purchase and increases the volume of tourism services acquired, both in quantity and duration (longer stays).

In this case, marketing materials—especially advertising materials—must be attractive and tailored to the target group. However, as mentioned earlier, the promotional materials must accurately reflect reality to avoid potential disputes and build customer trust and loyalty. If a client is dissatisfied due to misleading advertising, they may express their dissatisfaction to other potential clients, creating a negative "domino effect" that could lead to the collapse of the tourist area.

2. Push Strategy

This strategy focuses on personal interaction between the client and the tourism company. How does this strategy work? It works directly through communication, prioritizing the relationship between the client and the tourism company. The tourism company is represented by individuals within the organization who directly promote services to both existing and potential clients. The company's agents try to indirectly "push" clients toward purchasing the tourism services offered.

3. Defensive Strategy

This strategy focuses on offering tourism services in urban areas with the goal of developing the tourism sector. Through this strategy, the company strives to maintain a dominant position in the tourism market using advertisements, loyal customers, and the promotion of tourism services.

4. Offensive Strategy

This strategy is aggressive because it involves the tourism company utilizing all available promotional tools extensively, often requiring a large budget.

3. Promotional Strategies Used in Urban Areas

To choose the most suitable forms of promotion, considering the vast variety of communication methods between tourism agencies and the market, systematization has become necessary, taking into account general marketing objectives and the company's specifics. (Morrison, 2018)

Since the tourism sector is continuously evolving, a promotion strategy that is highly effective today may become ineffective within a few days. This can lead to client dissatisfaction and, consequently, the loss of potential clients.

In urban tourism, the main promotional channels can also be used on a larger scale, such as at the national level—for instance, urban tourism, travel agencies, or thermal spa resorts.

The main promotional methods that work not only in tourism but also in other fields are categorized into two types:

1. Offline Advertising

Offline advertising includes all physical promotional channels and tools that do not rely on the internet to reach the targeted audience.

The most well-known offline promotional methods include:

- Television advertising;
- Radio advertising;
- Print media advertising (brochures, flyers, leaflets, advertisements in local or national newspapers, billboards in urban or other areas);
- Promotion through participation in various events, exhibitions, and fairs, both specific to the tourism sector and in other industries;
- Promotion through incentive programs, such as contests for all categories of clients (existing and potential), discounts and bonuses for loyal customers, raffles for regular clients, and vouchers for inactive clients to reactivate their engagement;
- Promotion through sponsorship, i.e., financially supporting or providing services for sporting, cultural, or educational events, as well as electronic music festivals like Untold, Electric Castle, Tomorrowland, SAGA Festival, and Neversea. This type of promotion is

frequently used by hotels, guesthouses, and accommodation spaces in urban tourist areas, offering promotional room rates to event organizers.

In an urban environment, for effective promotion, accommodation space owners, tourism destination managers, local communities, and authorities must collaborate closely, as each party contributes to the development of the urban tourism sector. (Sigala, Christou, & Gretzel, 2012)

2. Online Advertising

Online advertising includes all channels and social media platforms that rely solely on the internet to deliver information or promotional messages.

The most well-known online promotion methods include:

- SEO promotion, which refers to a website's ranking in Google search results based on keywords;
- Social media advertising, including platforms like Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram. This is the most effective and popular method for urban tourism promotion since most people use the internet, allowing for a broad client base. This includes both paid advertisements (Google Ads, Facebook Ads) and organic searches for accommodations and tourist areas via Facebook pages, websites, or tourism promotion companies;
- Display ads, where advertisements appear on various websites in formats such as videos, images, cards, banners, and pop-ups;

In the images below, you can see a banner ad at the bottom from GOOGLE, a card-type ad in an article from MGID, and an image ad for the company ZESTRERO.

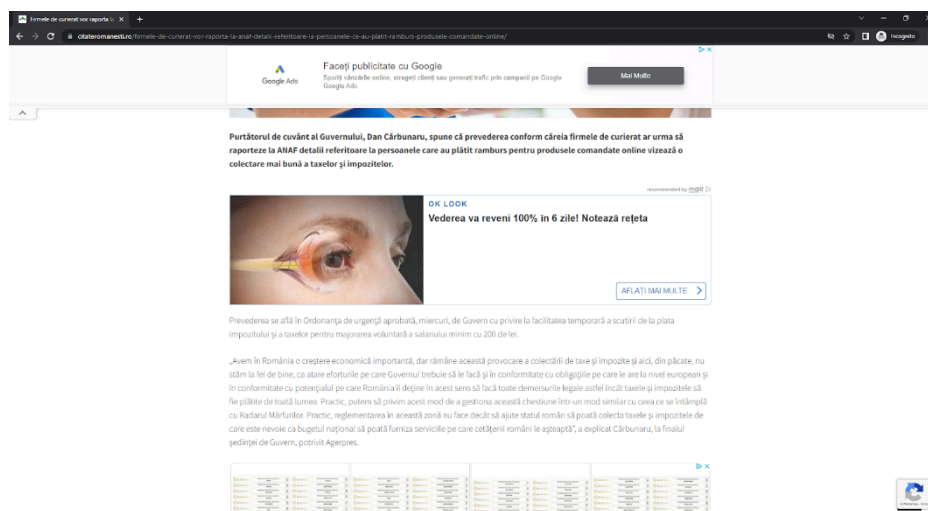


Figure 1. Example of Article Advertisements



Figure 2. Example of Zestreo Image Advertisement

- Email marketing, which involves sending promotional messages to existing and potential clients using an email database (legally acquired with GDPR consent);
In the images below, you can see illustrations of what email marketing looks like:

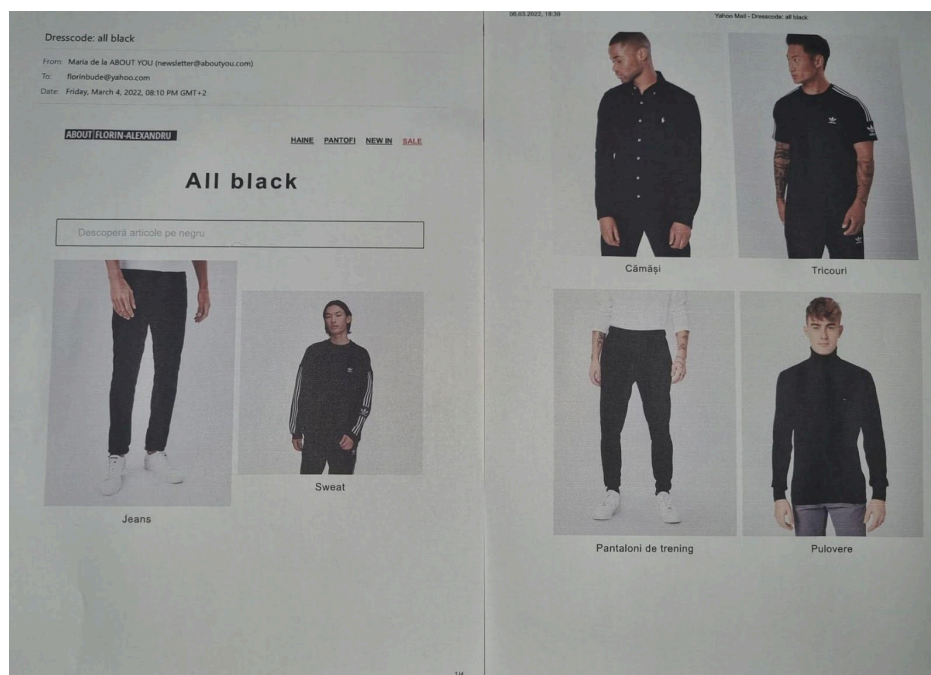


Figure 3. Email marketing exemple

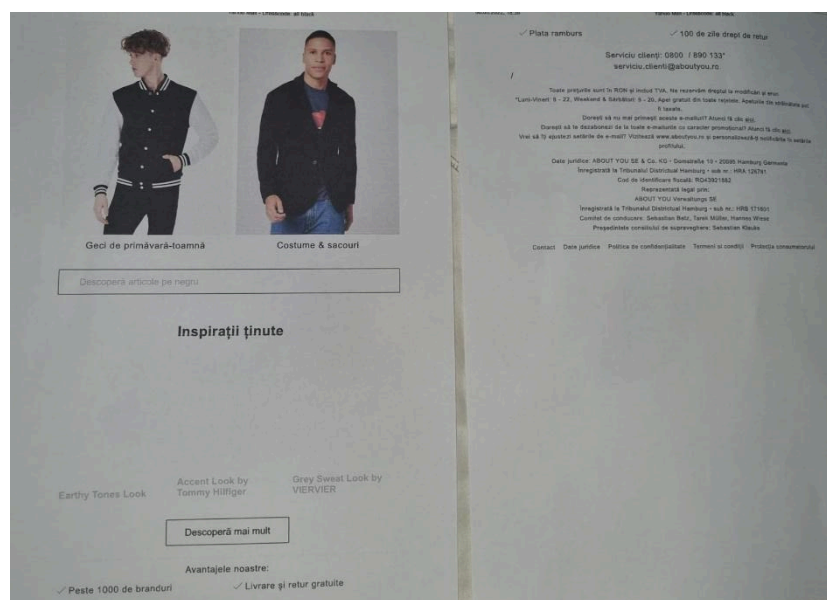


Figure 4. Email marketing exemple

- Mobile advertising, including promotional SMS messages with links to booking or travel websites;
- Advertisements on dedicated booking platforms (e.g., Airbnb, Booking, OLX). These platforms are widely used by potential clients, especially younger audiences.

Regardless of whether the promotion is online or offline, each has specific advantages and disadvantages that cannot be ignored depending on the target client. In tourism marketing, both strategies are used simultaneously to attract as many clients as possible.

Marketing experts state that using both strategies together is the best approach since the message reaches a larger audience, thereby increasing the likelihood of selling tourism services.

3. Conclusion

Tourism promotion plays a crucial role in the economic and social development of urban areas. The effectiveness of promotional strategies depends on their ability to attract, engage, and retain customers. The study highlights the importance of integrating both online and offline advertising methods to maximize reach and influence consumer behaviour. Traditional marketing approaches, such as print media, television, and event sponsorship, remain relevant, while digital marketing tools, including SEO, social media, and email marketing, have revolutionized the industry. (Pizam & Mansfeld, 2000)

A balanced promotional approach ensures that tourism businesses can reach a diverse audience while maintaining credibility and consumer trust. Moving forward, businesses must continue to innovate and adapt to the changing landscape of tourism marketing. Future research should focus on emerging trends, such as artificial intelligence and personalized marketing, to further enhance tourism promotion efforts. (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010)

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