Integrated Marketing Communication

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# **Introduction to brand**

Hotel business has been chosen to make an integrated marketing communications plan. The brand will be developed for a variety of customers ranging from low priced no fringe benefits to high priced full option facilities. There will be range of facilities from three to five-star hotels designed to meet the needs of relevant customers. Our brand image will represent customer needs, values and life happenings which will make it easier for customers to choose our brand (Reid, 2002). We will use emotional stimuli to attach customers to our brand. It is important for the brand to influence consumer’s heart as well as their minds because it has to clear customer’s minds from the impact of old brands. Brand image is either formed immediately or it is developed over the passage of time by providing excellent services continuously. All parts of integrated marketing communication system should be coherent and give out the same message (Seric, Gil-Saura, & Molinqa, 2014).

## **Target Market**

The target market will vary from high to middle income groups depending on their preferences. There will be some corporate clients as well who will be our regular customers and will originate from local as well as international market. All the US citizens who travel to our city and can afford any of our services are considered as target market. However, the primary target market relates to our city and more specifically people with profiles matching to our services. A higher level of service will be required from our end because this will make customers to come back for a revisit. Business community will be offered highest level of technical assistance both within their rooms and in conference rooms of hotel. Segmentation by age will also be appropriate for us especially when there are events organized in various halls of our hotels but they will be our secondary customers. The population of our city is around 125000 people dominated by business and working class. Various business meetings are held on a daily basis with local as well as outside delegations. There is no norm of staying at each other’s house when one comes for business meetings, this provides further opportunities for our hotel to gain business. Major buyer motivation will be convenience that is experienced by customers by staying at a quality resort (Seric & Gil-Saura, Integrated marketing communications and information and communication technology in the hotel sector: An analysis of their use and development in Dalmatian first-class and luxury hotels, 2011).

## **Overall marketing strategy**

The major objective of our marketing strategy is to communicate the difference in our offerings and services offered by other hotels. Our customers compare quality and value for their money to our competitors. This helps us to avoid any price comparisons between us and other hotels. Marketing strategy will also allow our customers to know about our brand values and develop long-term working relationships with our customers as well as suppliers which will help us identifying customer needs in an effective manner. Two major goals set up for our organization are continued differentiation and growth. For the first five years of operations, company will seek growth in revenues and customer base. After this time period, other aspects of growth will be pursued.

Our hotel will provide the most personalized services for our customer irrespective of his income levels. There will be business essentials in every room for corporate clients whereas there will be entertainment essentials for clients from other segment. Hotel will also provide easy to access meeting rooms for business class customers. Reverse positioning strategy is when a player from industry focuses on fundamentals of industry. Applying this strategy in hotel industry will mean that we will have to provide quality service to our customers and charge competitive prices from them. Breakaway positioning is a strategy that allows hotel to position itself on something other than original product category. There is a new definition of product category leading to a new definition of competition as well.

## **Marketing Mix**

Hotel will provide high quality of service to its customers that is differentiated from competition in terms of overall brand strategy. The product offering will allow us to find repeat business from our already satisfied customers.

Pricing will be competitive in nature which means that we will charge a price that is just equal to competitors but we will provide extraordinary services for this same price as compared to competitors. There can be different pricing strategies for the major segments catered by the company. For the segment of people having middle income, we will charge prices lower than competitors. This is called penetration pricing strategy with which we will hope to drive the competition out of this segment market. This strategy will not work for business travelers because they perceive lower prices with lower standard of services.

The placement means location at which hotel will operate, we have chosen a location that is very close to the business hub of the city, this location can be seen as the epicenter of city from where many roads towards various areas of city emerge.

Promotion is the most important aspect of marketing mix in this scenario because this will let our customers know about our offering. As a business, we have to make sure to deliver same quality of services as promised in advertisements. Various modes of advertisement will be used to communicate with customers including print and electronic media. In print media, major source of advertising will be trade publications and industry magazines which have the same target market as we have. Another option is to advertise in magazines such as Times etc. Electronic media advertising will include television advertisements as well as radio which is a source of mass marketing. The television advertisement will show interior and exterior of our location as well as some comments from our customers in foreground. All these modes of advertising will be used one by one over a period of time. This will help us to assess the effectiveness of each mode separately. Once we are able to identify the most effective tool of advertising, we will stick to that. Another mode of advertising will be trade shows held in other cities of the country. This will provide us the opportunity to reach markets in these cities so that people from there will come and stay with our hotel. The most important aspect for us will be to deliver the same level of service quality as depicted by our advertisements. This is very important because advertising develops perceived quality in minds of customers and they compare actual experience to this perceived level of service. A big negative difference between these two aspects will reduce the chances of revisits from customers.

Public relations campaign will help portray our image as a socially responsible business entity. Our efforts in this regard will include proper disposal of garbage and minimum wastage of natural resources in form of food leftovers and water. Philanthropic payments in name of registered schools and charities will also show our commitment to community. A separate public relations officer will be hired by our hotel who will also work as our spokesperson to media. Sponsored events will be organized including children from less privileged class so that a positive social image of our hotel is portrayed. This team will also handle direct marketing campaign for our hotel in which selected corporate and business people will be given information about all our services. There must be good cohesion between public relations team and all other departments of hotel because this will ensure that there is negligible difference between perceived and actual level of services.

Like all other businesses, it is important for hotels to keep up with digital aspects of marketing including internet. An internet marketing campaign must include an effort to maximize local SEO services. This means that people searching for any relevant service in search engine will find our name at the top of results which means that our hotel will be more visible to all our customers especially potential new customers. Like all other marketing tools, SEO needs time and investment of resources.

Today’s world is more mobile than it was even 2 to 3 years in the past which means that mobility aspect has to be an important part of internet marketing strategy. Our major customers are from business world and are on the go most of their time. A mobile friendly website and opportunity for customers to book on the go will mean that our customers will have an access to our website most of the time. There has been an increase in booking from mobile and a decline in booking from PC in the last 12 months’ time. The quality of website should be such that it can run on any device without sacrificing visibility and quality.

There should be ample content for visitors on the website because it is an important part of overall marketing strategy of any business entity. A good strategy may be to have some positive customer feedbacks on first page of website. Some related content can also be shared based on positive customer experiences. In fact, the hotel can have a small team of blog writers whose content is published on relevant blog websites including positive customer feedback.

Active presence on social media is also an important aspect of overall marketing strategy. Business people do not have much time to stick to social media sites so our business will have extensive backend data base that will help us to track relevant people to be targeted. A properly tailored social media advertisement will be sent to these people over a period of time (Leung & Baloglu, 2015). As for the other segments, role of social media will be different because they will spend much time scrolling through their social media accounts. These customers can be targeted by making an active page on all forms of social media and keeping these up to date with all offers and services. Some paid services can also be used to target very specific customers.

Video content can play an important part in communicating intended message to target audience. It is important that hotel management makes and shares videos showing internal and external environment of hotel to present and to prospective customers.

## **Direct Marketing**

Our hotel can use podcasts to tell stories through the voice of our past customers. Storytelling is an effective way to attach travel brands to their audience in a more engaging manner. Video has been used by most hotels but use of audio is ignored. We will use audio story telling by past customers and interviews of other customers who have had good experience spending time in hotel. Each story tries to cover one or two particular aspects of service which were most appealing to particular customers. It is essential that these interviews include people from different cultures and backgrounds. This method covers educational aspect more than the promotional aspect thereby educating people about various aspects of services provided by hotel. Many listeners try to verify these stories by experiencing services by themselves.

Another option available to hotel is to use music videos with some known super stars to promote the image that is global in nature. However, this method of promotion will work well only with the upscale segment. The videos should be shot inside or nearby the hotel and must contain its interior and exterior. Some video may include superstars signing autographs to customers in hotel lobby and other similar activities. When these videos will be uploaded on you tube, there will be huge following in terms of views and likes.

Hotel’s website should contain details of attractions which are worth watching in its city location. There will be video content and printed content as well. Video will be continuously played at the reception and printed materials will be distributed to guests in all rooms. All this information will be available on hotel website as well. The focus must be on persuading travelers into visiting your city. The hotel address will be given right at the bottom so that visitors to site do not think it as an advertising effort. A strong social media campaign should also help in promoting the places to be visited in the city.

After discussing all these aspects of integrated marketing communications, it is necessary that all aspects of this campaign are communicating same meaning and same image of brand. In case of hotel in this scenario, all the ingredients of this system should depict a high level of service and hotel should try and meet the communicated standard of service quality. In service industry, it is harder to meet customer perception of service quality because every customer has different perception of service quality. Thus, hotel management has to make sure that there is a consistent delivery of quality service to all employees. Another aspect relates to changes that have to be incorporated into this communication strategy over time.

# References

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