

CHAPTER 15

MARKETING OF TOURISM SERVICES/EXPERIENCES

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ABSTRACT

Purpose — This chapter's aim is to present the key elements of marketing of tourism services and experiences by taking the perspective of a new tourism entrepreneur. The chapter's focus is on better understanding and efficient implementation of marketing principles.

Methodology/approach — This chapter was built on literature review of marketing of tourism services at business level. A practical approach has been adopted and implemented in illustrating the variables of marketing mix.

Findings — This chapter highlights the fact that in order to be successful in the field of marketing, tourism entrepreneurs should consider and implement all elements of marketing mix as an integral and comprehensive set; all marketing variables are interlinked and interrelated.

Research limitations — This chapter is explorative in nature, based on a literature review. It takes more entrepreneurial/practical than academic approach.

Managerial/practical implications — A marketing plan for tourism services/experiences constitutes a chain of strong bonds that guide the tourism business forward in making the chain stronger and more efficient. When an entrepreneur/manager is considering adding a new feature or changing existing elements, he/she has to consider the whole picture of the actions and the resulting outputs.

The Emerald Handbook of Entrepreneurship in Tourism, Travel and Hospitality:
Skills for Successful Ventures, 261–275

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ISBN: 978-1-78743-530-8/doi:10.1108/978-1-78743-529-220181021

Originality/value – This chapter discusses an extended marketing model; the model of 10 Ps – Product, Place, Pricing, Promotion, Partners, Presentation, People, Process, Physical evidence and Passion under two stages, before and during the experience consumption/encounter.

Keywords: Marketing; tourism services/experiences; marketing mix; 10 Ps model; experience encounter; tools and techniques

Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you should be able to:

- present the principles of marketing tourism services;
- identify the key elements of marketing mix in tourism services;
- describe the available tools for promotional purposes for a tourism business;
- identify the objectives of promotion and present the promotional tools/techniques;
- discuss the issue of partnerships in marketing tourism services and illustrate it with an example;
- highlight the importance and the elements of the physical environment;
- discuss the adequate approach of using elements of marketing mix during the experience encounter.

15.1. INTRODUCTION

During the last two decades, economies throughout the world have undergone extensive social and economic transformation. One of the most significant of these changes is the increased share of expenditure on services. Tourism is defined as the provision of services and products to people who are travelling and staying outside their usual residence for a period shorter than one year, for leisure or business purposes. The marketing of tourism services is the managerial function of business/providers that includes all the activities that are in anyway connected to the communication with promotion and sale of their offerings in the tourism market.

The aim of marketing in tourism is the production and distribution of products that suit to tourist consumers, facilitating the exchange process in the tourism market. Marketing in tourism could be seen as a subsystem of marketing services system (Elida, 2014). As already mentioned in previous chapters, the tourism product is complex, because it consists of goods and services provided by different businesses.

Nowadays, the tourism product/experience is usually a combination of accommodation, travel, transport and entertainment/leisure services. The aim of marketing in tourism is, therefore, information gathering and analysis, based on which the tourism offering is conceived, designed and developed as an integrated offering to permanently communicate with customers.

The differences between tourism marketing and other services are: (1) tourism products are provided in terms of transportation, hospitality, recreational and leisure experiences; (2) tourists must travel to the place of production (destination) instead of a product moving to the tourist and (3) travel contributes a significant portion of the time and expenditure related to recreational and tourism experiences (Middleton, Fyall, Morgan, & Ranchhod, 2009; Srinivasan, 2009). In order to be successful in the field of marketing, tourism businesses need to fully apprehend the main differences between marketing goods and services: the behaviour, motivations and requirements of tourists, and the unique characteristics of tourism experiences. This chapter will present and discuss the key elements of marketing with the aim to provide prospective entrepreneurs with the needed knowledge and background for better understanding and efficient implementation. In this regard, the 10 Ps — namely Product, Place, Pricing, Promotion, Partners, Presentation, People, Process, Physical evidence and Passion — are introduced and discussed under two stages, namely (1) before the experience consumption (pre-encounter) and (2) during the tourism experience consumption (while providing the services).

15.2. MARKETING MIX FOR TOURISM SERVICES: THE 10 PS MODEL

Marketing in service industries, such as travel and tourism, strives towards converting the intangible product into an experience that customer will value and cherish. Tourism market is a set of relations of demand and offer focusing on the exchange of goods and services by means of money and with the extent determined by the prices of goods and services (Elida, 2014). Marketing activities play a key role in achieving the competitive position of a tourism enterprise, in the sense that they enhance to achieve the most optimal combination of marketing mix. The chosen marketing strategy varies through a specific elements' combination of the marketing mix. The goal is to meet in a more efficient way the needs of consumers in the target market segment.

Academic literature and business studies/reports encourage entrepreneurs/managers to use marketing mix models to guide their decision-making (Kotler, Armstrong, Wong, & Saunders, 2008; Lilien, 1994). The classical marketing mix model, known as the 4 Ps (Price, Product, Place and Promotion) is the

cornerstone of any marketing activity (McCarthy, 1975). This traditional marketing mix was also criticised for ignoring the impacts of the business environment on marketing decisions. The external environment factors have an important influence on the marketing strategies (Kotler, Haider, & Rein, 1993). Forces of external environment are always uncontrollable. Moreover, there might be differences between production and service that should be taken into consideration. These characteristics led to the conception and adoption of an expanded marketing mix for all services reflected in the 7 Ps (original 4 Ps, plus Physical environment/evidence, People and Process).

In this chapter, a model of 10 Ps will be introduced and discussed, as nowadays it is accepted that three additional factors to the 7 Ps, are critical, namely Partners, Passion and Presentation. Therefore, the chapter defines the 10 Ps as below.

1. *Price* is the amount the consumer must exchange to receive the offering.
2. *Place* includes the location of a business as well as the activities that make the product available to target market segments/consumers.
3. *Product* means the goods-and-service combination the enterprise offers to the target market segment/s.
4. *Promotion* includes all the activities undertaken to inform consumers about the products and to encourage potential customers to purchase these products.
5. *Physical environment* is the physical context in which the service is delivered and any tangible component that facilitates the communication of the service. It is the context in which the interaction between the provider and customer takes place.
6. *People* are all human actors who play a part in service delivery and thus influence the buyers' perceptions (the business personnel, customers and other customers in the service environment).
7. *Processes* are the actual procedures, mechanisms and flow of activities by which the service is delivered, that is, the service delivery and operating systems.
8. *Partners* and collaborations can make a successful business in the increasingly integrated tourism industry.
9. *Passion* can be an activity, an object, another person or even an abstract concept, idea, cause or goal.
10. *Presentation* includes any activity introducing products and services, contributing to increasing a company's brand awareness and sales.

The following sections are dealing with the various elements/components of marketing mix in temporal terms, before and during the consumption experience, the encounter between tourism business and consumers.

15.3. PRE-ENCOUNTER: BEFORE THE TOURISM EXPERIENCE

There are six key elements of marketing on which a tourism business should focus before the consumption experience. These are Product, Place, Price, Promotion, Partnership and Presentation. The main aim is to persuade and attract the potential consumers to experience its offering.

15.3.1. *Product*

From a marketing perspective, a 'product' is defined as a good or service that most closely meets the requirements of a particular market and yields enough profit to justify its continued production and offering. There are usually choices or options for product assembly, because products include both tangible and intangible elements (Benur & Bramwell, 2015; Middleton et al., 2009). In the tourism context, the tangible element could be a hotel room or the lunch and drink we have in a restaurant. The intangible element could include the service provided by the staff, their attitude and behaviour. The service provided by a tourist guide service is another example of intangible element.

The quality of tangible elements is important, namely the atmosphere/ambience in a hotel with music, lighting, interior design in rooms and display of the food. For instance, Lotte Hotel Jeju, South Korea, decorated everything from the corridor to the amenities in the theme of Hello Kitty, which succeeded in creating a space that realises every little girl's dream world. However, compared to the tangible product, the intangible element is more important in tourism industry, particularly in the online tourism context (Kotler, Burton, Deans, Brown, & Gary Armstrong, 2012). For instance, the tourism companies and other providers in a tourism destination have their own webpages to develop their unique marketing strategies in order to attract tourists. Moreover, the online intermediaries, such as Expedia and Travelocity, realise the importance of customising their offerings. They provide consumers with increased flexibility to build their package up from a 'base' model (by adding options for airlines, hotels, rental cars, and events/shows) or to exclude those features from a 'full' inclusive package (where all the features are included in the default option).

15.3.2. *Place*

Place is defined as the 'direct or indirect channels to market, geographical distribution, territorial coverage, retail outlet, market location, catalogues, inventory, logistics and order fulfilment' (Blythe, 2009, p. 146). The place where customers purchase the tourism product can vary greatly.

Travel agents, tour operators and tour wholesalers are a few examples of the distribution channels for tourism products. Hence, generally hotels are located at either central city or tourist zones; airlines and travel agents are around the metro city areas, malls and office complexes. Fast-food restaurants and service centres may be located in busy main streets to allow consumers walk in to experience an authentic experience value. However, certain restaurants may be located in a quiet street to maintain exclusivity and privacy. Ultimately, product or service must be available in the right place, at the right time and in the right quantity to meet tourists' requirements and needs.

With the rise and extensive use of the Internet and hybrid models of distribution, place may refer to a retail outlet, but increasingly refers to virtual stores such as a digital presence, business own website or 'a mail order catalogue, a telephone call centre or a website' (McLean, 2002). Thus, the business owners/managers should know the consumption habits and preferences of the targeted market/s, how to be there, easily accessible and guarantee the convenience to consumers. Convenience, easy information search about the product and related elements are factors of critical importance in placing and distributing business offering into the tourism markets.

15.3.3. Pricing

In simple terms, price is the amount of money that tourists pay for the product or service provided. Thus, pricing of tourism services is a very important factor compared to other elements of marketing mix. In a business environment of intense competition, higher prices could cause a decline in sales and thus influence the total income. On the other hand, the price has to cover production costs and ensure a profit (Bowie & Buttle, 2004).

Catering for the upmarket segment pricing may not fluctuate much, while businesses targeting the budget market segment may not have too much room for flexibility in pricing, and they will rely on volumes of bookings. In addition, the external environment factors, such as the government laws and regulations, weather conditions and season fluctuations in demand are very crucial for a business's pricing decisions.

The main pricing strategies are: skimming pricing, penetration pricing, premium pricing, main competition pricing, high price/quality pricing, promotional pricing, geographical pricing, price matching guarantees, cost-plus pricing, real-time pricing by competition, price discrimination and discount pricing strategy (Kotler et al., 2008)

Any pricing strategy should take into account all operational costs and commissions paid to a third party (retail travel agent, inbound tour operator or online travel agent). A more practical approach to the pricing decision-making was presented in Chapter 10 – 'Managing Financial Matters'.

15.3.4. Promotion (Communications)

In tourism industry, small- and medium-sized businesses really need to understand the importance of promotion in order to achieve the best performance. A business can utilise its human resources to the fullest and come up with strategies to promote its offering and let it flourish. There are three aims of promotional activities, namely: (1) to present the information to consumers and others, (2) to influence and increase the demand and (3) to differentiate a product (Middleton et al., 2009). The promotional plan should have specific objectives, including sales increase, new product acceptance, creation of brand equity, positioning, address a new competitor or creation of a corporate image. Promotion is the voice of an enterprise in the marketplace, sending out a loud and clear message to the audience.

A range of media and techniques can be used to convey the message and attract consumers to purchase the offering, including information kits, websites, advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, travel shows and public relations. A company's promotional tools consist of the specific blend of advertising, public relations, sales promotion and direct marketing, as briefly defined below (Philip et al., 2012):

- *Advertising.* Any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods or services by an identified sponsor.
- *Public relations.* Building good relations with the various publics of a company by obtaining favourable publicity, building up a good corporate image and handing or heading off unfavourable rumours, stories and events.
- *Sales promotion.* Short-term incentives to encourage the purchase or sale of a product or service.
- *Direct marketing.* Direct communications with carefully targeted individual consumers to both obtain an immediate response and cultivate lasting customer relationships. The adequate techniques are direct mail, telephone, e-mailing, the Internet and other tools to communicate directly with specific consumers.

The development of the Internet has changed the business environment forever. The digital presence for a tourism business, i.e. having its own website is a now a crucial ingredient to the marketing promotional strategy. Consumers can obtain instant information on products or services to enhance them in their decision-making (Middleton et al., 2009; Morrison, 2002). A more detailed analysis of marketing approach and techniques in the digital environment and online tourism market is presented in Chapter 16 — Digital Tools: Their Value and Use for Marketing Purposes.

15.3.5. Partners

Poon (1993) argues that major business actors in the tourism industry, particularly the airlines, hotels, travel agents and tour operators have increasingly

integrated in an industry whose boundaries are becoming increasingly blurred. In this context, collaborations and partnerships are necessary, not a luxury (Gursoy, Saayman, & Sotiriadis, 2015). Literature (see, for instance, Hagen, 2002; Kanter, 1994) suggests 4 Cs (Compatibility, Capability, Commitment and Control) as criteria for choosing the appropriate partners. Trust has also been identified as an important factor determining whether a partnership could be sustainable or not (Medcof, 1997). The determining factors for successful partner relationships between hotels and travel agencies are trust, commitment, coordination, communication quality, information exchange, participation, usage of constructive resolution techniques and similar relative dependence (Medina & Garcia, 2000).

The main types of marketing partnerships that every small business can look to build are outlined below (Davis, 2017):

- *Revenue partners*: These could simply be the critical customers; they may justify a tailored package or their own account manager. A revenue partner may also be a valuable re-seller or maybe a key distribution channel, or a vital sponsor.
- *Product partners*: Essential suppliers are also, like vital revenue partners, difficult to replace. It could be a key product that you distribute exclusively or a vital component, such as technology or packaging.
- *Alliances*: These partnerships allow businesses to collaborate and exchange value, building and sharing plenty of smart marketing benefits.
- *Promotional and PR partnerships*: These enable the enterprise to leverage additional value by tailoring its marketing activities to fit with those from another business. The enterprise can offer value in various forms, such as cash, free products or services or access to its customer base. At best, you can get a lot from doing something very simple, such as adding reciprocal links between its website and the partner's one.

A more detailed discussion about collaborations and partnerships in the tourism field was presented in Chapter 8 – ‘Collaborative Forms and Strategies for Business Venturing in Tourism Industries’.

15.3.6. Presentation

Marketing is a chain process for identifying, anticipating and satisfying consumers' requirements in a profitable manner. Marketing cannot accomplish any of its purposes without effective presentation (Cardenas, 2017). In the contemporary, highly competitive market environment cluttered with paper, audio and electronic media, the message is the foundation of the presentation that is required to attract attention, build brands and capture sales. At the same time, the Internet, social media and electronic media have exponentially expanded

marketing's reach and the importance of marketing presentation. Creating relevancy, relationships and experiences is required for effective marketing presentations, and the launch should be in a variety of platforms (Kennedy, 2006). Marketing presentation has to compete for attention from people who have short attention spans, little time and overloaded schedules, making a memorable presentation key to any marketing effort (McCormick & Livett, 2012).

By using a platform in the cloud, here are four ways that presentations can be integrated and qualitative (Twila, 2017): branding and messaging consistency, brand equity/version control, time saving and cross team collaboration. Of critical importance is also the digital presence, the website design, layout and appeal (Elliot & Fowell, 2000). Consumers may reduce cognitive effort and save time through online shopping. For example, website designs that use fast presentations, uncluttered screens and easy search paths support a pleasurable and effective shopping experience by reducing shopping time and the cognitive effort of shopping.

Tourism businesses should use and implement the above-mentioned six elements/variables of marketing mix in efficient and effective way to attract potential consumers and persuade them to try, experience their offering. Once this mission has been accomplished, i.e. the consumer purchases the services/experiences on offer and becomes a customer; the business' aim is then to ensure that the offering satisfies the customers' requirements and meets the given promise.

15.4. DURING THE EXPERIENCE ENCOUNTER

Four are the key elements of marketing on which a tourism business should focus during the consumption experience, namely People, Processes, Physical environment and Passion. The main aim is to offer a high-quality offering and a memorable experience by managing the four elements/factors in an efficient way.

15.4.1. People

People are essential in the marketing of any product or service. In the service industries context in general and in the tourism industry in particular, people are not producers, but rather the products themselves (McLean, 2002). The people who provide the services are the ones who represent the company and a key to the success of the experience. People deliver services in all sorts of settings, such as travel agencies, tourist guides, hotels and restaurants and transport companies. A team of people underpins everything about the experience in an organised event (e.g. exposition, music performance and show). Behind-the-scenes, there are project managers and chefs, stewards, waiters, etc. The physical appearance, their dressing code, attitude, behaviour, knowledge/competencies

and skills have a powerful impact on customers' perception of the tourism offering and experience.

Thus, many companies nowadays are interested in specially getting their staff trained in interpersonal skills and customer service with a focus on customer satisfaction/delight. All personnel need a training and skills development to ensure a high quality of personal service. Training should begin as soon as the individual starts working for an organisation during an induction. The induction will involve the person in the organisation's culture, as well as briefing him/her on operational policies and procedures. A training and development plan is designed for every staff member, which sets out personal goals linked to future performance evaluation/assessment. Customer service can add value by offering customers technical support, expertise and advice. As already mentioned in Chapter 11, 'Providing Service Quality and Customer Care in Tourism Businesses', the way staff handles a complaint could have significant impact: retaining or losing a customer, and improving or ruining a company's reputation, both affecting business performance.

15.4.2. Processes

Process refers to 'the set of activities that results in delivery of the product benefits' (Rafiq & Ahmed, 1995). A process could be a sequential order of tasks that an employee undertakes as a part of his/her job. It can represent sequential steps taken by a number of various employees while attempting to complete a task.

The various characteristics of tourism industry affect the process of tourism services. For instance, depending on the seasonality of the tourism service, the service process can be stressed, and fail, during extreme periods of demand. When the operation has too many customers, the service process can fail to cope with the demand, resulting in customer dissatisfaction. When the operation has too few customers, the atmosphere can be missing, resulting in customer disappointment. The service process management should be effective based on the actual condition and deliver a consistent service quality to the customers (Bowie & Buttle, 2004).

It is important to identify the important processes from a customer perspective and design these processes so that they contribute to customer satisfaction and customer retention. The customers who are not satisfied about the service may tell their family, friends and acquaintances (Middleton et al., 2009). These kinds of negative word-of-mouth influences can create a difficult situation for the tourism enterprise. Now, more and more professional companies are aware of the importance of handling customer complaints effectively and through the employee training programs to improve the service process. Instead of disregarding the complaints of the customer, they are encouraging customer complaints so that the company can have the chance to communicate with the customer before the negative effects emerging (Bowie & Buttle, 2004).

15.4.3. Physical Environment

Physical evidence refers to the non-human elements of the service encounter, including equipment, furniture and facilities (Bowie & Buttle, 2004). It may also refer to the more abstract components of the environment in which the service encounter occurs including interior design, colour schemes and layout. Some aspects of physical evidence provide lasting proof that the service has occurred, such as souvenirs, mementos, invoices and other livery of artefacts. Zeithaml and Arvind (2000) describe the physical environment as the space by which customers are surrounded when they experience the service. For a meal, this is the restaurant, and for a journey, it is the aircraft or other transport mode. The physical environment is made up of its ambient conditions, spatial layout and functionality, as well as signs, symbols and artefacts.

The physical environment is very important in attracting customers into the premises and in contributing to the customer experience during the service encounter. Tourism businesses have to continually investing in refurbishment in order to achieve high repeat and recommended sales and nurture customer loyalty (Bowie & Buttle, 2004; Morrison, 2002). The tourism enterprises that fail to maintain the physical environment of their premises will eventually become tired and have to compete based on lower prices to attract consumers, and this will result in lower profitability.

Case Study 15.1: Travel Aboard — Get Instant Refunds with Alipay

The business and market environment are fast changing and the tourism businesses should adapt and comply with the trends and requirements of consumers.

Alipay (or Zhifubao in Chinese Mandarin) is a third-party mobile and online payment platform, established in Hangzhou, China in February 2004 by Alibaba Group. Alipay overtook PayPal as the world's largest mobile payment platform in 2013. In the fourth quarter of 2016, Alipay had a 54 per cent share of China's US\$5.5 trillion mobile payment market, by far the largest in the world, although its share fell from 71 per cent in 2015.

Alipay provides many functions and services, such as cross-border online payments, paying for daily expenses, transferring money, financing function, etc. With the growth of Chinese outbound tourism, Alipay started making face-to-face purchases in the foreign merchant's stores using the Alipay App. Alipay deducts the amount of a payment from the buyer's Alipay account in real-time in Chinese currency and settles the payment to the merchant in a foreign currency.

An increasingly number of local stores in tourism destinations realized that as the number of Chinese using Alipay increases, providing this way of payment would increase the convenience to the customers. Furthermore, Global Blue now offers an exciting new way for Alipay members to receive VAT refunds — direct to their Alipay wallet in real-time. Available in 14 major airports across Europe, this service allows Alipay members to receive refunds in their home currency within seconds, with all payments visible via the Alipay app.

Now, the participating airports are Milan Malpensa, Barcelona, Madrid, Berlin/Tegel, Amsterdam, Hamburg, Rome, Helsinki, Stockholm, Munich, Copenhagen, Zurich, Frankfurt and Oslo.

The Alipay customers travelling to these destinations can now enjoy a faster tax-free shopping journey and an improved in-airport experience. In addition, because the refund is made in your home currency, there is no further currency exchange fees, saving tourists' time and money.

Source: <https://global.alipay.com>; <http://www.globalblue.com>

15.4.4. *Passion*

Passion is an important aspect of entrepreneurship (Bierly, Kessler, & Christensen, 2000). Entrepreneurial passion has been defined as involving positive and intense feelings experienced from engagement in activities associated with roles that are meaningful to the self-identity of entrepreneurs (Cardon, Wincent, Singh, & Drnovsek, 2009). Vallerand (2015) points out that the object of one's passion can be an activity, an object, another person or even an abstract concept, idea, cause or goal.

This passion is an imperative in the field of marketing. Passion increases entrepreneurs' dedication and commitment to their ventures, their persistence in pursuing venture-related goals and activities, and their ability to get and stay fully engaged in their actions (Drnovsek, Cardon, & Patel, 2016). Entrepreneurial passion is also contagious to other key actors of the enterprise, such as employees. Recently, it is found that passion also affects specific domains of entrepreneurship and outcomes such as persistence (Cardon & Kirk, 2015), firm survival (Stenholm & Renko, 2016), venture growth (Drnovsek et al., 2016) and employee commitment (Breugst, Domurath, Patzelt, & Klaukien, 2017).

An entrepreneur, who does not feel passionate about what the marketing of his/her business offering, can still develop and execute an effective marketing plan. However, it is the passion for the product or service that is marketed that helps the entrepreneur keep the faith during the inevitable slow times. Passion is the driving force that inspires a 'we must win' attitude and helps the entrepreneur to design an efficient and effective marketing plan (Clow, 2013).

15.5. SUMMARY

Service industries are the source of economic leadership. Services lie at the very hub of the economic activity of any society and interlink closely with all other sectors of the economy. Tourism is no longer considered a luxury confined to economically developed countries; it has become an integral component of life-style and, thus, it has emerged as a global industry with producers and consumers being spread throughout the world. Among a host of business perspectives dealing with tourism-related topics, marketing is probably the most active.

The core of marketing is an exchange process where value is given and received between two or more parties. Along the continuum of such relationships, there are 'transactional exchanges' at one end and 'collaborative exchanges' at the other (Day, 2004). In this chapter, we have seen the eight characteristics that make marketing in tourism businesses a managerial function of particular importance (Morrison, 2002). We also introduced and briefly discussed the model of the 10 Ps, the main elements of the marketing mix in communicating and promoting tourism services and experiences.

Tourism businesses should approach and implement all elements/factors of marketing mix as an integral and comprehensive set; all are interlinked and inter-related. For instance, Price and Promotional activities should be compatible with the Product and Place. As a result, a marketing mix plan constitutes a chain of strong bonds that guide the business forward in making the chain longer, stronger and more efficient. Whenever an entrepreneur/manager is considering adding a new feature or changing existing things, he/she has to look at the overall picture and has full perception of the actions and the resulting outputs.

Review Questions

Now you may check your understanding of this chapter by answering the following questions or discussing the topics below:

- Discuss the key factors that differentiate the marketing of tourism services from the general marketing.
- Briefly present the model of the 10 Ps.
- Discuss the available tools for promotional purposes for a tourism business.
- Present some partnerships that small business can look to build.
- Outline the importance and the elements of the physical environment.
- Describe two elements/factors of marketing mix and discuss the adequate approach of using them during the experience encounter.

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