
**Level 7 Marketing
Approaches in
Hospitality & Tourism**

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First published in 2026 by UE Campus

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Using your Study Guide

Welcome to the study guide for, designed to support those completing their **Level 7 Diploma in Tourism and Hospitality Management**.

This study guide follows the order of the syllabus, which is the basis for your studies. Each chapter starts by listing the syllabus learning outcomes covered and the assessment criteria.

Level 7 Units

Unit Reference	Mandatory Units	Level	TQT	Credit	GLH
HTM701	Marketing Approaches in Hospitality and Tourism	7	300	30	150
HTM702	Strategic Planning Facets in Hospitality and Tourism	7	300	30	150
HTM703	Tourism Policy in International Context and Development	7	300	30	150
HTM704	The Culture and Society in Tourism	7	300	30	150

The study guide includes a number of features to enhance your studies:



'Over to you': activities for you to apply what you have learned) in the space provided).



Industry Insights: discover up-to-date trends, expert opinions, and examples from leading organisations in the travel and tourism industry to help you understand how theory applies in real-world practice.



Did you know? highlights interesting facts or surprising information to help you deepen your understanding of travel and tourism topics.



Case studies: realistic business scenarios to reinforce and test your understanding of what you have read.



'Revision on the go': use your phone camera to capture these key pieces of learning, then save them on your phone to use as revision notes.



'Need to know': key pieces of information that are highlighted in the text.



Examples: illustrating points made in the text to show how it works in practice.



Learning outcome task: Each task (one per learning outcome) requires you to source, read, and critically engage with a peer-reviewed journal article.

Tables, graphs and charts: to bring data to life.

Reading list: identifying resources for further study.

Source/quotation information to cast further light on the subject from industry sources.

Highlighted words throughout denoting **glossary terms** located at the end of the study guide.

Note

Website addresses current as of March 2026.

Level 7 Marketing Approaches in Hospitality and Tourism

About this unit

This unit aims to consider the competitive business environment which has seen an alteration from traditional marketing to more diverse approaches. The unit explores your knowledge in understanding the current market, importance of marketing to the industry, knowledge in developing marketing, branding and public relations strategies that advances the rivalry position to the organisation.

As an MBA student in Hospitality and Tourism Management, it is crucial to develop a deep understanding of the unique marketing challenges and strategies within these dynamic industries.

The **Marketing Approaches in Tourism and Hospitality** unit will equip you with the theoretical knowledge and practical skills to assess, recommend, and critically evaluate marketing strategies and communication approaches that are tailored to the specific needs of the hospitality and tourism sectors.

To achieve the learning outcomes of this unit, it is essential that you engage with a range of academic sources, including journal articles, industry reports, and textbooks. Consulting the latest research and insights from leading scholars and practitioners will provide you with a comprehensive understanding of the key concepts, frameworks, and best practices in hospitality and tourism marketing.

By delving into the academic literature, you will gain valuable knowledge on topics such as services marketing, relationship marketing, market segmentation, digital marketing, and sustainable marketing practices. This foundational understanding will then enable you to critically assess the marketing strategies of organisations operating in the hospitality and tourism industries, and to recommend innovative, evidence-based approaches that can drive customer engagement, loyalty, and business success.

Furthermore, the ability to classify and evaluate marketing communication strategies is a crucial skill for any aspiring leader in the hospitality and tourism sectors. Through a deep dive into case studies, industry trends, and emerging technologies, you will develop the analytical capabilities to identify effective communication tactics and assess their impact on brand positioning, customer experience, and overall organisational performance.

This **Marketing Approaches in Tourism and Hospitality Study Guide** has been designed to support your learning journey by providing a comprehensive overview of the key theoretical frameworks, content areas, and practical applications relevant to the 'Marketing Approaches in Tourism and Hospitality' unit. By engaging with the materials presented here, and complementing them with your own research and critical analysis, you will be well-equipped to achieve the learning outcomes and excel in this dynamic and rewarding field.

Chapter One – Identify and evaluate marketing strategies for the hospitality and tourism sector.

Introduction

This chapter looks at the marketing strategies for the hospitality and tourism sector.

You will learn how to classify marketing strategies within the hospitality or the tourism sector

On completion of this chapter, you will critically evaluate the identified strategies in the hospitality or the tourism sector.

Learning Outcomes

On completing the chapter, you will be able to:

1. Identify and evaluate marketing strategies for the hospitality and tourism sector

Assessment Criteria

1.1 Classify marketing strategies within the hospitality or the tourism sector

1.2 Critically evaluate the identified strategies in the hospitality or the tourism sector

1.1 Classify marketing strategies within the hospitality or the tourism sector

Marketing Approaches in Tourism and Hospitality

Strategic marketing frameworks help tourism and hospitality organisations analyse markets, understand competition, and develop sustainable competitive advantage. These frameworks provide structured approaches for identifying opportunities, positioning destinations, and targeting specific visitor segments.

In tourism and hospitality, strategic frameworks are particularly important because organisations operate in **highly competitive global markets**, where destinations, hotels, airlines, and travel companies compete for the same customers.

This section introduces four widely used strategic marketing frameworks:

- Ansoff Growth Matrix
- STP Model (Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning)
- Porter’s Competitive Strategies
- Blue Ocean Strategy

1. The Ansoff Growth Matrix

One of the most commonly used tools for analysing the possible strategic directions that an organisation can follow is the product-market matrix devised by Ansoff (1965). The Ansoff product-market matrix (sometimes referred to as the growth vector matrix) illustrates where generic strategies can be deployed (see **Figure 1**). Note that the matrix is related to the amount of risk that marketing planners are prepared to take. Developing new product-offerings or entering new markets presents a level of risk since a large proportion of new product-offerings fail. Ansoff (1988) noted that organisations face four broad options: market penetration, market development, product development, and diversification. The product market matrix helps organisations decide what course of action should be taken given current performance. **Table 1** summarises the four strategic directions or options.

Table 1. The Ansoff (1988) matrix strategic options: Description and examples

Strategy	Description	Example
<i>Market penetration</i>	Selling more of the organisation’s current offerings in an existing market (see Industry Insight 5.4). This is the lowest-risk option for the marketing planner.	A quick-service restaurant (QSR) chain such as <i>Nando’s</i> , might encourage consumers to buy more frequently or it could attempt to attract consumers from one of its competitors, such as <i>KFC</i> , by offering special promotions.
<i>Market development</i>	Looking for new markets for an organisation’s offerings.	A city hotel chain might target new markets such as leisure (holiday and weekend getaway) tourists. The Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT) has been aggressively marketing war tourism as part of its marketing plan.
<i>Product development</i>	Developing new products/offerings for the organisation’s existing markets (see Industry Insight 5.5).	Hotels might pursue this strategy; while continuing to concentrate on their core products such as rooms, food, service, and business facilities, they could develop leisure facilities (such as a gym) to become more attractive to the business market. <i>Pizza Express</i> has attempted to target families more welcome by providing


		children’s menus and play areas, and large flat-screen television sets.
<i>Diversification</i>	Developing and selling new products in new markets. This is the most dynamic and risky of Ansoff’s strategies. It is an appropriate strategy in the following situations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Current products and markets no longer provide financial returns. - The organisation has underutilised resources. - The organisation wants to spread risks. - The organisation wishes to broaden its portfolio of business interests across more than one offering or market segment. 	Pier 70 in San Francisco, California, USA. Once an old fishing harbour, Pier 70 has been revamped into retail shops, restaurants, and hotels, and is now one of San Francisco’s most visited tourist attractions. Similarly, the Virgin (Group) brand provides an excellent example of this high-risk, high-return strategy. By launching Virgin Cola, Virgin Airlines, Virgin Media, Virgin Holidays, and Virgin Money, Richard Branson successfully penetrated new markets with new products.

The Ansoff Matrix (see **Figure 1**.) helps organisations identify growth opportunities by considering **products and markets**.

Figure 1. The Ansoff matrix

		Tourism offerings	
		Existing	New
Markets	Existing	Market penetration	Offering development
	New	Market development	Diversification

Source: Adapted from Ansoff, H.I. (1988). *The New Corporate Strategy*. New York: John Wiley &

	Industry Insight – PREMIER INN: Market penetration
<p>Founder and managing director of Premier Hotels & Resorts, Samuel Nassimov, has been described as a visionary who built an empire of sixteen outstanding properties from</p>	

nothing. From a humble forty bedrooms, the group's portfolio has grown to encompass a number of hotels and resorts throughout South Africa. Offering almost 2 000 bedrooms and employment opportunities to more than 1 500 passionate members of staff, Premier Hotels & Resorts has a proven, long-standing reputation for delivering superior results.



Industry Insight – The Solar Airship One could fly indefinitely on green power

The Solar Airship One is a futuristic airship that promises to go beyond sci-fi fantasy to reality in the not-too-far away future by circumnavigating the globe using green energy—specifically, solar and hydrogen power—without ever touching down. The designer, Euro Airship, has built what it calls the “commercial airship of the future,” predicting the Airship One will have 80 per cent less fuel consumption and CO² emissions than conventional aircraft. Other firms, including Google co-founder Sergey Brin's LTA and the UK's Hybrid Air Vehicles, are also in the process of building eco-friendly airships.

The airship could have the most ambitious initial flight—an equatorial journey around the world of 21,598 nautical miles lasting from 20 to 30 days. Flying at an average altitude of 19,685 feet, the Solar Airship One will have a reinforced envelope with a double layer that provides stability against external pressures, while also regulating internal temperature. The airship's 15 separate gas envelopes will also be managed individually by software, creating faster manoeuvrability in different conditions.

Euro Airship aircraft normally have a range of about 540 nautical miles, but by incorporating solar film into the top half of the envelope to recharge the batteries will allow the airship, at least in theory, to fly perpetually. Its hydrogen fuel cells can then power the aircraft's electric engines by night. The Solar Airship One is timely, given the debate about sustainability in the aviation sector of the tourism industry. Construction of the Solar Airship One started in 2024, and after gaining experimental certification, the company is planning to begin its intrepid voyage in 2027.

Euro Airship sees a future for the aircraft in ecotourism as well as military surveillance.



2. STP Framework (Segmentation, Targeting, Positioning)

The STP model is one of the most widely used frameworks in tourism marketing.

Segmentation, targeting, and positioning (STP) make up a series of steps that are interrelated. The first step, segmentation, involves dividing the market into groups (segments or clusters) of consumers who share similar needs (actual and desired), wants, characteristics, and/or behavioural patterns. By segmenting a market, marketers obtain knowledge of the actual or potential consumers and thus discover particular subgroups whose members will be most profitable to focus their marketing efforts on (Pride et al., 2017: 200). For example, *iExplore*, an online adventure travel company, might satisfy the needs of various international consumers and businesses that want to travel or organise travel to exotic natural destinations such as Alaska, Antarctica, or the Galapagos Islands. The second step, market targeting, refers to the way in which a marketer evaluates the attractiveness of each market segment and selects one or more segments on which to focus. *iExplore*, selects internet users, inbound tour operators, and corporate groups as potential customers to target for its southern African destination packages and offerings. The last step involves a tourism organisation positioning its offerings and marketing mix to meet the expectations of its current or potential consumers. *iExplore*'s slogan is: "The number one ranked website for adventure travel", which attempts to position the company in the marketplace as an online adventure travel portal. **Figure 2.** shows the relationship between these three steps.

Figure 2. Relationship between market segmentation, targeting and positioning



a. Market Segmentation

Consumer purchases are strongly influenced by the people with whom consumers work, live, and socialise. Thus, it is possible to target groups of people who share similar behaviour and attitudes towards a particular offering. In other words, they can be distinguished from other groups making up the total market for the offering. This process is known as “market segmentation” and is one of the fundamental principles of marketing. The concept of market segmentation is based on the premise that consumers are different. However, this concept is underused in tourism marketing, with many marketers taking a wait-and-see approach and delivering a range of offerings without focusing on the needs of an identified market segment.


Market segmentation is the way in which companies divide a market into clearly defined groups of buyers who share similar needs, characteristics or behaviour patterns and might require separate products or marketing programs (Kotler et al., 2021).

Segmentation divides the tourism market into groups with similar characteristics.

Common tourism segments include:

- Demographic (age, income)

The word “demographics” is derived from the Greek words demo (meaning people) and graphics (meaning to write). It is essentially the study of a population of people. Demographic segmentation involves dividing the market into groups based on variables such as age and life-stage, generation group, education level, social class, income, and religion. This is a popular method of segmenting the market, as consumers’ needs, wants, and usage rates are often linked closely with demographic variables. These variables are also relatively easy to measure compared to other variables.

	Industry Insight – Catering to female travellers
<p>Women dominate the adventure travel and ecotourism market. Industry research suggests that women are increasingly going on holidays by themselves or in the company of other women. A tour operator based in the United States, AdventureWomen, which is a women-owned and women-run adventure travel company, specialises in offering inclusive tours to active women over the age of 30. Since its inception in 1982, AdventureWomen has sent female groups to exotic destinations such as Peru, Alaska, Mexico, Morocco, Uganda, Egypt, and Nepal. The company’s holidays are designed for women only. The success of</p>	

AdventureWomen and similar companies depends largely on their responsiveness to the preferences and needs of women. Women tend to place a high value on physical and psychological security as well as physical comfort. A satisfied female client is more likely than a male to remain loyal to a product and will tell other women about her experiences.

- Geographic (domestic vs international)

Dividing the market into groups based on where consumers come from is probably the most common form of segmentation. Geographic segmentation divides the market according to different geographical factors (or areas) such as regions, nations/countries, counties/states/provinces, cities, neighbourhoods, or suburbs, city or metro size, and climate. The needs of potential customers in one geographic area are often different from those of customers in another area, due to climate, custom, or tradition. For example, some European countries such as Finland and the Netherlands are coffee consuming nations, yet in countries like China, Türkiye, Iran, and Morocco, tea is the preferred beverage.

An example of geographic segmentation is a hotel which segments its market into domestic and international regions. The main markets for *Ocean View*, a guesthouse in Cape Town, South Africa might be domestic markets, such as Capetonians, and international markets, such as Western Europeans (from UK, Germany, and the Netherlands for instance). Inbound (or incoming) tour operators often specialise in handling groups of tourists from specific countries. The tour operator Abercrombie and Kent, for instance, caters for the North American market, My Travel caters for the Scandinavian market and *Crown Travel* caters for the Far Eastern market. Markets can also be divided according to climate. Research has shown that people from Northern European climates (such as Sweden) prefer warmer destinations (such as Spain, Croatia, and Thailand). In the past, for most national tourism organisations (NTOs), market segmentation was often limited to attracting international tourism markets. However, since 2001 (the year of the 9/11 terrorist attacks) and more recently the outbreak of Coronavirus (COVID) in 2020), destination marketers have recognised the importance of domestic and regional travel markets.

- Psychographic (lifestyle, values)

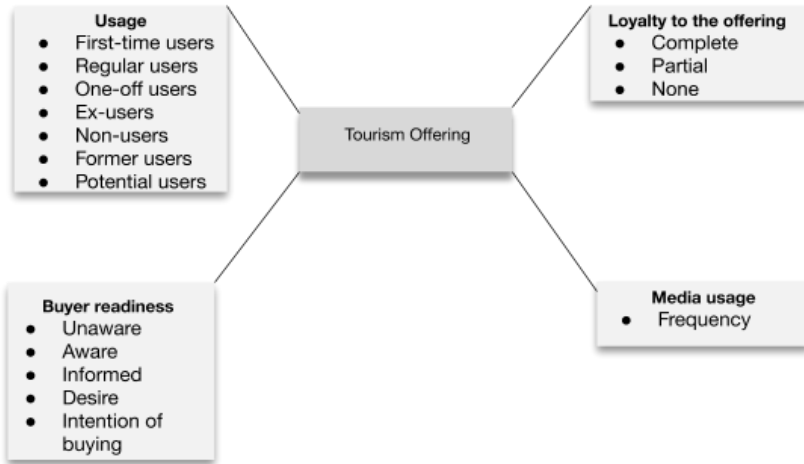
Tourism and hospitality consumers can also be divided into different groups based on psychological rather than physical dimensions. This includes variables such as personality and lifestyle characteristics, as shown in **Table 2**. This division is known as “psychographic segmentation”. The reason for segmenting consumers according to psychological attributes is the belief that common values can be found among groups of consumers and that these values tend to determine their purchasing patterns. Furthermore, consumers in the same demographic group can have very different psychographic profiles (see **Figure 3**).

Table 2. Psychographic variables

Variables	Examples of typical breakdowns
Personality	Outgoing, introverted, or ambitious
Lifestyle	Conservative or liberal

Source: Author’s creation

Figure 3. Different psychographic profiles



- Behavioural (travel motivations)

All of the methods of segmentation discussed so far have focused on the type of person the consumer is. The market can also be divided into groups based on the way in which consumers behave (their attitudes toward, use of or response to a tourism offering). This is known as “behavioural segmentation”.

- Relationship with the Offering

This type of division groups consumers according to their relationship with particular offerings. Offerings such as tourist destinations, car rental companies, airlines, hotels, and visitor attractions may be segmented according to the following variables:

- Usage
- Loyalty to the offering
- Buyer readiness
- Media usage.

AI tools used in Market Segmentation

After segmenting the market, AI tools can be used to further segment the data based on the segmentation criteria. AI machine learning algorithms can analyse customer data and segment customers into groups more likely to respond to specific marketing campaigns. This can be done by collecting data from various sources, such as social media interactions and website analytics. One of the key benefits of AI predictive analytics in digital marketing is the ability to segment customers based on their behaviour, preferences, and demographics. Machine learning algorithms can automatically group customers into distinct segments, allowing businesses to tailor their marketing efforts and provide personalised recommendations. By

understanding customer segments, companies can send targeted promotions, customised emails, and product recommendations, enhancing the overall customer experience and increasing conversion rates.

AI can help marketers segment the market more effectively and efficiently. AI can be used to optimise and personalise customer targeting, by using data-driven algorithms to identify and create segments. It counters the limitations of traditional market segmentation by analysing customer data to create more targeted customer segments. It also has the ability to automatically adjust marketing communications campaigns to be more personalised for each segment.

b. Market Targeting

Having identified the different segments of the market, the next stage for the marketer is to decide how many and which segments to target. As we mentioned in the last section, it is not feasible for a company to target all market segments, thus, a company will target the most valuable segments; which in reality for small businesses is one or two segments. Market targeting is the process of evaluating each segment's attractiveness (its size and growth rate), selecting one or more of the market segments and designing different strategies to reach each segment selected. There are three targeting approaches or strategies:

- Niche marketing
- Differentiated/customised marketing.
- Undifferentiated marketing.

These targeting strategies are discussed in more detail below.

Organisations select the most attractive market segments to focus on.

Examples:

- Luxury travellers
- Digital nomads
- Adventure tourists
- Cultural tourists



Industry Insight – Indonesia targets middle eastern Muslim tourists

Indonesia has positioned itself as a holiday destination for Muslims worldwide. It has gained a reputation across the world as a destination that caters not only to the Muslim population of Indonesia – which comprise about 95% of the country's population – but also as a place that is accommodative to Muslims from all over the world, who seek to enjoy their holidays without having to make sacrifices in order to cater to their religious needs.

The Halal logo (see below) is the mark of assurance for Muslim tourists, and [having] tourism products and services in line with Islamic beliefs means that a destination is becoming more marketable. The types of accommodation that are available to Muslim travellers vary and can be tailored to the kind of holiday that they prefer.



Did you to Know...?

Strategic positioning can significantly influence how travellers perceive a destination.

c. Market Positioning

Once the market has been divided and targeted, the product needs to be positioned for the target audience.

Market positioning is the way in which tourism and hospitality organisations want their consumers to perceive their products in relation to the organisations' competitors. Positioning is not about a product or brand's location; it is about the place the brand occupies in a consumer's mind. It is the way an organisation differentiates itself and its products (see Industry Insight). Positioning involves an organisation identifying **unique selling propositions/points** (USPs) and messages to communicate to targeted customers. "Positioning is not something one does to a product or offering. Rather, it is something one does to the minds of consumers".



Industry Insight – Greggs targets upper crust festive dining menu

Greggs has repositioned itself as a "fine dining" offering for Xmas 2023. The UK no-frills bakery chain is now competing in the high-end restaurant market where customers can enjoy steak bakes served under silver cloches and £9.50 cocktails. Greggs has stepped up a gear from being a fast-to-go food chain known for its sausage rolls, jam doughnuts, and pastries. It has reinvented itself as 'Bistro Greggs'. The bakery chain opened up a pop-up store in Newcastle serving an à-la-carte menu of Gregg's savoury bakes and sweet treats and has also added soups and salads to its menu. It also has curated a classic wine list chosen to complement the dining experience. There is a 'Pink Jammie Fizz' a prosecco-based cocktail inspired by Greggs' jam doughnuts!

Positioning defines how a destination or brand wants to be perceived.

Examples:

- A destination positioned as a luxury safari destination
- A city positioned as a creative cultural hub

- A resort positioned as a wellness retreat

Effective positioning differentiates tourism products from competitors.

3. Porter's Competitive Strategies

Porter (1980, 1985) was an early analyst who asserted that once an organisation has evaluated its marketing situation, it can choose from one of three alternative strategies: cost leadership, differentiation, or focus (see **Figure 4.**).

I. Cost leadership strategy

The cost leadership strategy is the least sophisticated of the three strategies. It is used when an organisation aims to reduce costs to undercut competitors, and can be used by both large and small tourism organisations. MNCs can benefit from their mass purchasing power and economies of scale. Airline companies (for example, *Emirates Airlines*), tour operators (for example, *TUI*), and online travel agencies (for example, *Booking Holdings* and *Expedia*) can reduce costs (and prices) to undercut their competition. Small and medium-sized tourism enterprises (for example, backpacker hostels, B&Bs and boutique hotels) can maintain strict control of their overheads and minimise costs. These can then be passed on to customers.

SpiceJet, a no-frills or low-cost airline operating in India, provides an example of an organisation that uses less expensive resource inputs. *SpiceJet* has removed additional product features, leading to reduced staffing and other costs (such as entertainment and meals).

The benefits of a cost leadership strategy are as follows:

- It allows the organisation the possibility of increasing both sales and market share by being the lowest-cost producer.
- It can be particularly profitable in a market where consumers are price-sensitive (for example, youth or student travellers).
- The organisation can earn higher profits by charging a lower price than competitors.

The problem with this strategy, however, is that consumers usually want VFM, not just a low price, when purchasing tourism offerings. In recent years, the tourism industry has become more sophisticated and marketers have generally moved away from pricing strategies to other strategies (Porter, 1985).


II. Differentiation strategy

This is a far more commonly used strategy in tourism and hospitality marketing planning. A differentiation strategy is based upon an organisation creating consumer perceptions that an offering is superior in some way to the offerings provided by competitors so that a premium price can be charged (Porter, 1985).

Differentiation can be achieved in the following ways:

- Creating an offering that stands out from the products of competitors by virtue of technology or design. For example, the tour operator *Audley Travel* offers superior quality compared to competitors.

- Offering a very high standard of service delivery. For example, an upmarket private game reserve in Southern Africa such as Sabi differentiates by offering a very high level of service.
- Creating a strong brand name through advertising, design, innovation, frequent-flyer programs (FFPs) and so on. For example, Qantas' development of its FFP creates loyalty for its brand among passengers.

	Did you to Know...?
Many destinations now target digital nomads as a new tourism segment.	

III. Focus strategy

A focus strategy is aimed at a segment of the market rather than the whole market. Within a specific market segment, the marketer can utilise either a differentiation strategy or a cost leadership strategy.

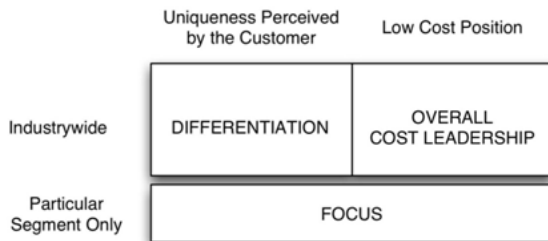
Small-to-medium tourism enterprises (SMTEs) that have fewer resources than multi-national companies (MNCs), but a good understanding of their target markets, often use this market-focus approach. For instance, an independent travel agency might focus on birdwatchers and a boutique hotel might focus on the film and modelling market. Each organisation would provide facilities and services to attract their target segments, such as tours guided by bird experts or a beauty salon, respectively. The main benefit of this strategy is that it allows for specialisation and greater knowledge of the segment being served.

Poon (1993) argued that there are difficulties in applying Porter's (1980) analysis to tourism. Poon identified the following four key strategic principles for effective tourism:

1. Putting customers first
2. Quality leadership
3. Product innovation
4. Strengthening the organisation's strategic position in the value chain.

Figure 4. Porter's 3 competitive strategies

STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE

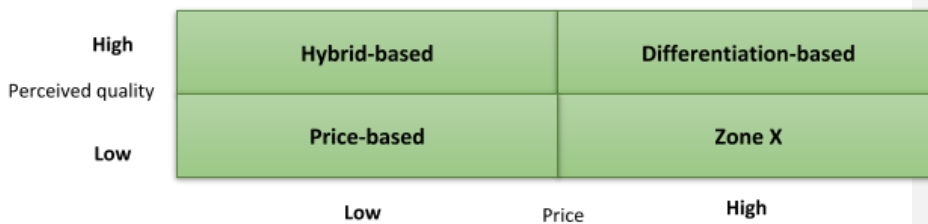


Source: Adapted from Porter, M.E. (1985). *Competitive Advantage*. New York: Free Press.

Tribe (2016) reworked Porter's (1980) typology of strategies using the variable of perceived quality and price (see **Figure 5**).

- A hybrid strategy seeks to provide high-quality offerings at low prices. This is difficult to achieve because adding extra consumer value adds costs and forces up prices.
- A differentiation strategy offers product quality and uniqueness. This is usually achieved through innovation, design, attention to quality, and advertising.
- Some tourism organisations seek to gain a competitive advantage by offering the lowest prices in the industry (a price-based strategy). For example, a limited-service (budget) hotel (for instance, *Ibis Hotels*) offers a basic no-frills accommodation facility.
- Zone X (high prices and low quality) is generally a failure route except where an organisation has a monopoly (for example, a national airline carrier on certain routes) or where consumers lack information about a market.

Figure 5. Price/quality model



Source: Adapted from Tribe, J. (2016). *Strategy for Tourism*, 2nd edn. Oxford: Goodfellow

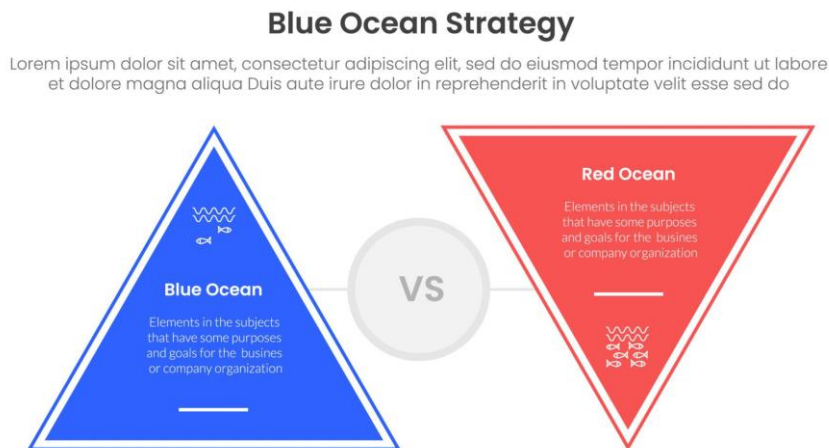


Think of some initiatives that are just not carried out in the tourism and hospitality industry. It could be an airline instituting a dress code for passengers or an airline giving away a free airline ticket to the best-dressed person on the plane. Do you think these are risky or clever (smart) marketing strategies?

4. Blue Ocean Strategy

The Blue Ocean Strategy (see **Figure 6.**) focuses on creating **new market spaces rather than competing in existing markets.**

Figure 6. Blue Ocean Strategy



The framework, developed by W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne, encourages organisations to innovate and create new demand.

Examples in tourism include:

- experiential tourism
- eco-tourism
- digital nomad destinations
- space tourism

Rather than competing directly with other destinations, organisations create entirely new experiences.



Need to Know –

Strategic marketing frameworks help tourism organisations identify growth opportunities, target the right markets, and achieve competitive advantage. Models such as Ansoff, STP, Porter's strategies, and Blue Ocean Strategy are widely used to guide strategic decision-making in tourism and hospitality.



Over to you

Choose a tourism destination, hotel group, or airline and:

1. Identify which strategic marketing framework it appears to follow (Ansoff, STP, Porter, or Blue Ocean).
2. Provide examples of marketing strategies used.
3. Evaluate whether these strategies are effective in attracting visitors.

Prepare a short report (approximately 500 words).



Case Study – Creating a New Tourism Market

A small island destination wants to reduce dependence on seasonal tourism. Instead of competing with nearby beach destinations, the government introduces remote-work visas and invests in co-working spaces, digital infrastructure, and lifestyle marketing campaigns targeting remote professionals.

The destination promotes itself as a **digital nomad hub**, attracting long-stay visitors who work remotely while living on the island.

Discussion Questions

1. Which strategic marketing framework is reflected in this example?
2. How does this strategy differ from traditional tourism marketing?
3. What advantages might this strategy provide for the destination?

Commented [SH1]: Maybe give some guidance for this.
For example, You may want to think about:

- Transport links
- Culture and heritage
- Variety of destinations
- Safety and stability
- Marketing and tourism campaigns

Revision on the Go:

- Strategic frameworks guide tourism marketing decisions.
- The Ansoff Matrix identifies four growth strategies.
- STP helps identify and target market segments.
- Porter's strategies focus on cost leadership, differentiation, and niche markets.
- Blue Ocean Strategy focuses on innovation and creating new markets.
- These frameworks support competitive advantage in tourism.
- Destinations use these models to develop marketing strategies.
- Strategic planning helps tourism organisations respond to global competition.



1.2 Critically evaluate the identified strategies in the hospitality or the tourism sector

- **Criteria for Evaluating Marketing Strategies in Hospitality and Tourism**

To evaluate the effectiveness of a marketing strategy, we need to consider various key performance indicators (KPIs). Here are some important criteria to use when evaluating marketing strategies in the hospitality and tourism sector:

- I. Return on Investment (ROI)**

ROI measures the return on investment for marketing campaigns. For example, if a hotel spends \$1 000 on a social media campaign and gains \$5 000 in bookings, the return on investment (ROI) would be 400%.

- II. Customer Engagement**

Customer engagement refers to the level of interaction between the brand and its customers. Metrics like comments, shares, likes, mentions, and reviews are useful to track engagement on social media platforms.

- III. Brand Awareness**

Brand awareness is the extent to which consumers are familiar with the brand. Metrics like impressions, reach, and follower growth can help measure brand awareness.

- IV. Conversion Rate**

Conversion rate measures the percentage of visitors who take a desired action, such as making a reservation. This can be tracked through website analytics or booking platforms.

- V. Customer Acquisition Cost (CAC)**

CAC is the total cost of acquiring a new customer, including marketing expenses, sales expenses, and other costs.

- VI. Customer Lifetime Value (CLV)**

CLV is an estimation of the total revenue a customer will generate for the business over their lifetime.

- **Comparison of Different Marketing Strategies in the Hospitality and Tourism Sector**

Now let's compare different marketing strategies in the hospitality and tourism sector:

- I. Traditional Marketing**

Print ads, billboards, and brochures are examples of traditional marketing strategies. These types of marketing efforts are difficult to measure in terms of ROI and engagement, and they may not be as effective in today's digital landscape.

- II. Digital Marketing**

Digital marketing includes strategies like search engine optimisation (SEO), email marketing, and online advertising. These strategies are highly measurable and can provide valuable insights into customer behaviour and preferences.

III. Social Media Marketing

Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and X are powerful tools for increasing brand awareness, driving engagement, and generating bookings. For example, a hotel can partner with influencers to promote their property on Instagram or use targeted Facebook ads to reach potential customers.

IV. Content Marketing

Content marketing involves creating and sharing valuable content to attract and engage customers. This can include blog posts, videos, and podcasts. For instance, a travel agency can publish blog posts about popular tourist destinations or create a YouTube series featuring local attractions.

V. Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing involves partnering with influencers to promote a brand's products or services. In the hospitality and tourism sector, influencers can be travel bloggers, vloggers, or social media personalities who have a significant following and can influence their audience's travel decisions.

• Best Practices for Evaluating Marketing Strategies in the Hospitality and Tourism Sector

Here are some best practices to follow when evaluating marketing strategies in the hospitality and tourism sector:

i. Set Clear Goals and KPIs

Define specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals for your marketing efforts. Establish KPIs to track the progress and effectiveness of each strategy.

ii. Continuously Monitor and Analyse Data

Regularly review analytics and performance metrics to understand which strategies are working and which need improvement. Google Analytics, social media insights, and booking platform data are great sources for tracking performance.

iii. A/B Testing

Experiment with different marketing tactics and compare their performance. For example, test different headlines, images, or ad placements to determine which generates the best results.

iv. Keep an Eye on Competitors

Analyse your competitors' marketing efforts to identify trends, strategies, and opportunities that can improve your own marketing efforts.

v. Adapt and Optimise

Based on the data and insights gathered, continuously adapt and optimise your marketing strategies to maximise their effectiveness.

In conclusion, evaluating marketing strategies in the hospitality and tourism sector is crucial for determining their effectiveness and making data-driven decisions. Consider using criteria like ROI, customer engagement, and brand awareness to measure the success of your marketing efforts and apply best practices to optimise your strategies for maximum impact.

1. Ansoff Growth Matrix

The Ansoff Matrix provides a strategic tool for identifying growth opportunities based on products and markets.

The model identifies four strategies:

I. Market Penetration

Increasing sales of existing products within existing markets.

Examples:

- Loyalty programmes for hotel guests
- Airline frequent flyer programmes
- Promotions targeting repeat visitors

Critical evaluation

Strengths:

- Lower risk because it focuses on existing markets
- Builds brand loyalty

Limitations:

- Limited growth potential
- Intense competition in saturated markets

II. Market Development

Introducing existing products to new geographic or demographic markets.

Examples:

- Promoting European destinations to Asian travellers
- Marketing adventure tourism to younger travellers

Critical evaluation

Strengths:

- Expands customer base
- Supports international tourism growth

Limitations:

- Cultural differences may affect success

- Requires investment in marketing and infrastructure

III. Product Development

Creating new tourism products for existing markets.

Examples:

- Wellness tourism packages
- eco-tourism experiences
- cultural tourism experiences

Critical evaluation

Strengths:

- Encourages innovation
- Enhances destination competitiveness

Limitations:

- Development costs can be high
- Demand uncertainty

IV. Diversification

Entering new markets with new products.

Examples:

- Hotels developing wellness retreats
- airlines entering tourism package markets

Critical evaluation

Strengths:

- Reduces reliance on a single market
- High potential for growth

Limitations:

- Highest level of risk
- Requires significant resources

2. The STP Model (Segmentation, Targeting, Positioning)

The STP framework helps tourism organisations identify and target the most profitable markets.

I. Segmentation

Dividing the tourism market into groups with similar characteristics.

Common tourism segments include:

- demographic segments (age, income)
- geographic segments
- psychographic segments (lifestyle)

- behavioural segments (travel motivation)

II. Targeting

Selecting the most attractive market segments.

Examples:

- luxury travellers
- adventure tourists
- digital nomads
- cultural tourists

III. Positioning

Creating a distinct identity in the minds of consumers.

Examples:

- a destination positioned as a luxury safari destination
- a city positioned as a creative cultural hub
- a resort positioned as a wellness retreat

Critical evaluation

Strengths:

- Allows efficient marketing
- improves competitive positioning

Limitations:

- markets are dynamic and change quickly
- segmentation may oversimplify consumer behaviour

3. Porter's Competitive Strategies

The framework developed by Michael Porter identifies three approaches to achieving competitive advantage.

I. Cost Leadership

Offering services at lower prices than competitors.

Examples:

- budget airlines
- budget hotel chains

Strengths:

- attracts price-sensitive travellers
- high market share potential

Limitations:

- profit margins may be low

- difficult to maintain quality

II. Differentiation

Offering unique tourism experiences.

Examples:

- luxury resorts
- heritage tourism experiences
- unique cultural attractions

Strengths:

- allows premium pricing
- strengthens brand identity

Limitations:

- requires continuous innovation
- easily copied by competitors

III. Focus Strategy

Targeting niche markets.

Examples:

- wildlife tourism
- medical tourism
- adventure tourism

Strengths:

- strong customer loyalty
- specialised expertise

Limitations:

- limited market size
- vulnerability to market changes



Over to you

Choose a tourism destination or hospitality organisation and:

1. Identify which strategic marketing framework it uses (Ansoff, STP, Porter, or Blue Ocean).
2. Provide examples of marketing strategies used.
3. Critically evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies

4. Blue Ocean Strategy

Blue Ocean Strategy focuses on creating new market spaces instead of competing directly with rivals.

Developed by W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne, this framework encourages organisations to innovate and create new demand.

Examples in tourism include:

- experiential tourism
- eco-tourism
- digital nomad destinations
- space tourism

Critical evaluation

Strengths:

- reduces competition
- encourages innovation
- creates new demand

Limitations:

- difficult to sustain uniqueness
- high investment and risk



Need to know –

Strategic frameworks such as Ansoff, STP, Porter's strategies, and Blue Ocean Strategy provide important tools for tourism marketing analysis. However, successful marketing strategies require adaptation to changing consumer behaviour, technological innovation, and global tourism trends.



Did you to Know...?

That strategic positioning can significantly influence destination competitiveness.



Industry Insight – Strategic Marketing in Global Tourism

Tourism organisations increasingly rely on strategic marketing frameworks to remain competitive. Destination marketing organisations such as VisitBritain use segmentation and positioning strategies to promote the UK to different international markets.

Hotel chains such as Hilton Worldwide use differentiation strategies by developing multiple brands targeting luxury, mid-scale, and budget segments.

Low-cost airlines such as Ryanair operate using a cost leadership strategy, offering affordable travel options to price-sensitive customers.

More recently, many destinations have adopted Blue Ocean strategies by creating new tourism experiences such as wellness tourism, remote-work destinations, and eco-tourism products. These strategies allow destinations to attract new visitor segments rather than competing directly with established destinations.

As the tourism industry becomes increasingly digital and globalised, organisations must combine traditional strategic frameworks with modern approaches such as data analytics, digital marketing, and artificial intelligence.

- Strategic frameworks guide tourism marketing decisions.
- The Ansoff Matrix identifies four growth strategies.
- STP helps identify and target tourism markets.
- Porter's strategies focus on cost leadership, differentiation, and niche markets.
- Blue Ocean Strategy focuses on innovation and creating new markets.
- Strategic frameworks support competitive advantage.
- Tourism organisations must adapt strategies to changing consumer trends.
- Critical evaluation helps identify strengths and limitations of each framework.



Over to you

Case Study: Digital Nomad Tourism Strategy

A Mediterranean island destination seeks to reduce seasonal tourism dependence. Instead of competing with other beach destinations, the government introduces long-term remote-work visas and promotes the island as a digital nomad hub. Investments are made in co-working spaces, digital infrastructure, and lifestyle marketing campaigns targeting remote professionals.

Discussion Questions

4. Which strategic marketing framework is reflected in this example?
5. How does this strategy create a new tourism market?

6. What risks and opportunities might this strategy create?

Summary

In this chapter you learnt about marketing strategies for the hospitality and tourism sector.

You learnt how to classify marketing strategies within the hospitality or the tourism sector

On completion of this chapter, you critically evaluated the identified strategies in the hospitality or the tourism sector.

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Learning Outcome TASK 1: Identify and evaluate marketing strategies for the hospitality and tourism sector

Context: Chapter One introduces four strategic marketing frameworks used in hospitality and tourism: the Ansoff Growth Matrix, the STP Model (Segmentation, Targeting, Positioning), Porter’s Competitive Strategies, and Blue Ocean Strategy. This activity deepens your understanding by engaging with how these frameworks are applied and evaluated in academic research.

Task: Source one peer-reviewed journal article that applies or critically evaluates one of these strategic marketing frameworks (or a comparable strategic model) within a hospitality or tourism context. The article should present either empirical research or a substantive case analysis.

Suggested search terms: “Ansoff matrix tourism” • “STP segmentation hospitality” • “Porter competitive strategy hotel industry” • “Blue Ocean strategy tourism destination” • “market positioning hospitality” • “competitive advantage tourism”

What to write (approximately 500–700 words): Prepare a critical summary covering: the article’s research question or objective; which strategic framework is applied and how it is

adapted to the hospitality or tourism context; the key findings regarding the framework's usefulness in classifying or guiding marketing strategy; and any limitations the authors identify in applying the framework to this industry.

Reflection: Conclude with a brief evaluative paragraph in which you assess whether the framework studied offers genuine strategic value for hospitality or tourism practitioners, or whether it oversimplifies the complexity of the sector. Connect your evaluation to the critical discussion of strategy frameworks in Chapter One.

Suggested starting point:

Dev, C.S. & Schultz, D.E. (2005) 'Simply SIVA, *Marketing Management*, 14(2), 36–41.

Tsiotsou, R.H. & Goldsmith, R.E. (2012). 'Strategic Marketing in Tourism Services, Emerald Group Publishing.

You are encouraged to find your own article that aligns with your chosen framework and industry context.

Chapter Two – Assess and recommend marketing strategies for the hospitality and tourism sector

Introduction

In this chapter you will assess and recommend marketing strategies for the hospitality and tourism sector

You will evaluate the role of networking and customer relationship marketing in context of the tourism and hospitality industry.

On completion of this chapter, you will recommend marketing and customer loyalty strategies for an organisation in the hospitality or the tourism industry.

Learning Outcomes

On completing the chapter, you will be able to:

2. Assess and recommend marketing strategies for the hospitality and tourism sector

Assessment Criteria

2.1 Evaluate the role of networking and customer relationship marketing in context of the tourism and hospitality industry

2.2 Recommend marketing and customer loyalty strategies for an organisation in the hospitality or the tourism industry.

2.1 Evaluate the role of networking and customer relationship marketing in context of the tourism and hospitality industry

Customer relationship management (CRM) is where the sale is not viewed as the end of the marketing process, but as the beginning of a relationship between the marketer and the consumer. The purpose of relationship marketing is not solely to secure a sale, but to maintain long-term relationships between the organisation, current and potential consumers, employees, business partners, and all other parties associated with the organisation, including marketing intermediaries, principals, and destination marketing organisations. The key to implementing a relationship marketing programme is delivering a quality service offering upon which to build and maintain a relationship with all consumers.

The hospitality and tourism industry is highly competitive, requiring businesses to adopt effective marketing strategies to attract customers and generate revenue. In this section, we will delve into the world of network and customer relationship marketing, explaining their importance and providing recommendations for organisations in the hospitality and tourism sector.

What is customer relationship marketing (CRM)?

Customer relationship marketing is about attracting and retaining customers, and enhancing their satisfaction. It is based on the premise that getting new consumers is much more expensive than keeping existing consumers. Today's marketers are discovering that relationship marketing is vital to success in the highly competitive tourism industry. CRM is another marketing term that may be defined in several ways depending on the marketer using it. In tourism marketing, one of the most effective ways of defining any concept is in the context of how an organisation's consumers perceive that concept. Therefore, relationship marketing could be described as the way in which an organisation:

- Identifies the consumer
- Gets to know the consumer
- Keeps in touch with the consumer
- Tries to satisfy the needs and wants of the consumer
- Ensures that the organisation keeps all promises made to the consumer.

In essence, relationship marketing is about treating different consumers differently.

CRM is not a new concept. Rather, it is a refocusing of traditional marketing with a greater emphasis on the creation of customer value. However, there are certain marketing activities that do not constitute relationship marketing. Sending out unsolicited e-mails or making unwanted telephone calls, for example, cannot be classified as relationship marketing strategies as they are not long-term oriented and are merely direct marketing or personal selling activities that are sales oriented.

• Importance of relationship marketing

Relationship marketing is crucial to a tourism organisation because acquiring new consumers is much more expensive than keeping existing consumers. The four main reasons for this are explored below.

- *Revenue from repeat business*

Marketers only have to estimate the total value of orders or bookings that a single consumer may place in his or her lifetime with an organisation to realise the importance of maintaining a good relationship with each and every consumer. Over a long period of time, a tourism business may generate large amounts of money from a regular customer. Thus, for example, a restaurant that loses a regular consumer can lose thousands of rands. The same applies to hotels and travel agencies. In addition, when an organisation loses a consumer, it also loses the potential revenue from WoM recommendations to new consumers that might otherwise have been made by that consumer.

- *The costs of acquiring new consumers*

An organisation that has a good relationship with its consumers and retains them needs to spend less on marketing activities to create new consumers. Repeat business and turning prospective consumers into advocates of the organisation are the long-term aims of relationship marketing. Since it costs between four and five times as much to attract consumers as it does to keep them, relationship marketing makes economic sense.

- *Increase in employee satisfaction*

The third benefit derived from relationship marketing is that employees, who are central to building and maintaining a relationship with regular consumers, are also more satisfied. This reduces the costs of hiring and training for management, and results in an increase in levels of service. As with internal marketing, satisfied employees mean a lower staff turnover, which means satisfied consumers.

- *Regular consumers spend more money than non-regular consumers*

The old adage that 80% of revenue is derived from 20% of an organisation's consumers applies to one of the benefits of relationship marketing. Research has shown that regular consumers spend more money than non-regular consumers.

- **The principles of customer relationship marketing**

The principles of CRM include the following:

- Identifying consumer markets
- Devising a relationship marketing planning strategy
- Focusing on quality
- Maintaining consumer retention and loyalty
- Using relationship marketing strategies.

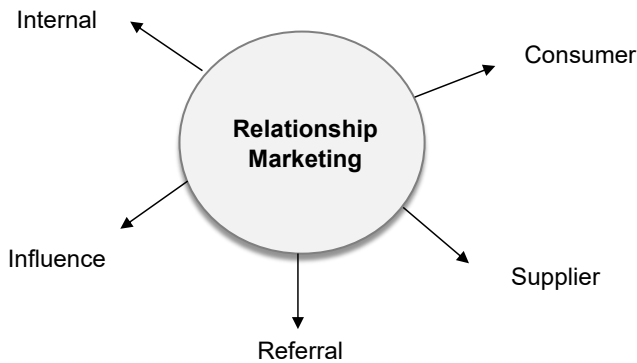
These principles are outlined below.

- **Identifying consumer markets**

The first principle of relationship marketing involves identifying the organisation's various markets (see **Figure 7**). The concept of relationship marketing is not only concerned with consumers, but with all of the people who help the organisation serve its consumers, from employees to marketing intermediaries. The aim of CRM, therefore, is to build and maintain relationships with all of a tourism organisation's internal and external markets. Organisations should focus on their relationships with consumers (internally and externally) as well as their relationships with other elements within the tourism industry and in society, all of which can impact on the organisation's

long-term success.

Figure 7. Various consumer markets



- **Relationships with consumers**

Consumers are the most crucial market that organisations need to retain. After a sale has been achieved, contact with consumers should be kept up since it is cheaper to retain consumers than to attract new ones. CRM enables organisations to recognise repeat consumers and address them individually by name.

A marketer may not, however, want a relationship with every consumer. Occasionally, there are so-called "bad" consumers. The relationship marketer must select the best consumers – the ones worth cultivating – and attempt to satisfy their needs more effectively than competitors.

- **Supplier markets**

Suppliers are organisations that interact directly with a tourism organisation. Suppliers co-operate in an organisation's business activity and it is important to build relationships with them. Organisations that develop good relationships with their suppliers gain a competitive advantage through benefits such as improved service. Tour operators such as *TUI Group*, for example, must have positive relationships with their suppliers (for example, airlines and hotels) and with their distributors (travel agencies), as they are all dependent on the same consumer markets.

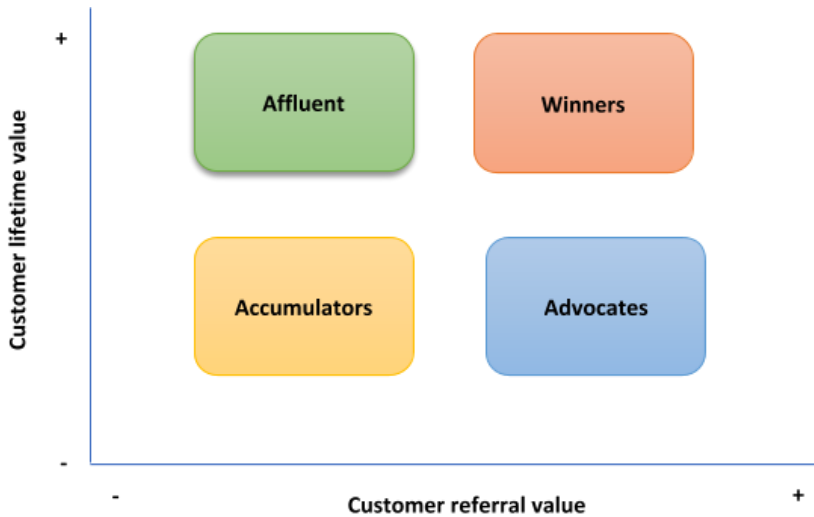
- **Referral markets**

Referrals are intermediaries who influence an organisation's performance. These referrals will not send consumers to an organisation with a bad reputation, so this market can be especially detrimental since WoM and eWoM recommendations (also known as "referral marketing") strongly influence consumer buying behaviour. Referrals may come from friends or family, satisfied consumers, or marketing intermediaries such as sales representatives, concierges, and travel agents. For instance, a city hotel concierge receives commission and other incentives for sending guests to restaurants, visitor attractions, theatres, and theme parks, and on tours. Most tourism and hospitality organisations find that many of their consumers come to them directly as

a result of recommendations. Travel review websites and social media platforms such as *TripAdvisor*, *Trustpilot*, *Yelp*, Facebook, *Lonelyplanet.com*, and Google Reviews/Google My Business provide reviews and are used by travellers during pre-travel, travel, and post-travel. Increasing numbers of consumers seek recommendations from virtual communities, and deviate from their original plans based on information on digital and social media (Pike, 2018: 161). Customer reviews have a significant influence over consumer spending. Three-quarters of consumers read the reviews posted about products and services (Thornhill, 2019). For hotel reviews, for example, consumers tend to focus on the hotel room space and cleanliness, guest service delivery, and hotel food.

Marketers therefore need to attempt to measure the value of customer referrals. This involves analysing a customer's previous purchasing patterns and referrals, and projecting forward. In this way, the company can begin to understand that customer's referral value. This relatively new approach requires gathering data on how new customers chose the service to make a connection between existing customers and new customers. It also requires that marketers distinguish between cases of referral in which the customer would have joined without the referral and cases in which the customer would not have joined without the referral. For example, a new customer who had a long-standing plan to spend a holiday at a game lodge in Botswana would not be as valuable a referral as the undecided family swayed from a beach holiday in Thailand to the wildlife Big Five experience. A research study carried out in the financial services sector in the United States found a gap between customers who were most loyal (with high customer lifetime values) and customers who were the strongest advocates (with high customer referral values). The results suggest that the best referrers may have low purchasing values and vice versa. To account for both the purchasing and referring dimensions, the researchers clustered their sample of customers into segments, separating customer lifetime value and customer referral value. Petersen *et al.* (2007) devised a matrix of four quadrants (see **Figure 8.**) based on the two dimensions.

Figure 8. Customer referral value matrix



Source: Adapted from Petersen, A., Kumar, V. & Leone, R.P. (2007). How valuable is the word of mouth? *Harvard Business Review*, October.

1. Champions are customers who have high lifetime value and high referral value.
2. Affluents are customers with high lifetime value, but low referral value.
3. Advocates are customers with high referral value, but low lifetime value.
4. Misers are the customers who add the least value on both dimensions.

Analysing existing customers' lifetime and referral values thus helps marketers target consumers.

- Internal markets

Another task for the marketer is to build and maintain a relationship with the organisation's internal or employee markets. As we saw in the first section of this chapter, satisfying the workforce is paramount to the success of an organisation. The tourism industry is a people industry in which service quality depends a great deal on the people who are delivering the offerings. Building long-term relationships with employees is as important as building long-term relationships with consumers.

- Influence markets

Influence markets are those individuals, institutions, and organisations that have the ability to influence (positively or negatively) the macroenvironment in which the tourism and hospitality organisation operates. It is important that the organisation have a good relationship with the sources of influence that are relevant to its markets. For instance, a destination marketer should maintain a good relationship with the press and the media.

1. Relationship marketing and technology

The internet is an ideal tourism marketer’s tool for building customer relationships. In particular, e-mail marketing has emerged as a key tool in developing relationships. Many organisations send their customers regular personalised and customised e-mail messages (see Chapter 12: Digital marketing in tourism and hospitality).

The internet and various digital technologies (for example, social media, cookies, and website logs) help organisations collect information about consumer behaviour and characteristics. Some companies have dedicated customer service accounts on X (for example, @easyjetcare). Databases and data warehouses store and distribute this data from online and offline points, enabling tourism marketers to develop better strategies through which to meet the needs and wants of their customers.

Electronic customer relationship management (e-CRM) refers to the efficient handling of all customer relations by web-based methods integrated into an organisation’s back-office system.

We will now look at three customer relationship marketing techniques that are technology based: affiliate marketing, permission marketing, and social media.

1. *Affiliate marketing*


Affiliate marketing is the online version of rewarding referrers for business or leads generated as a result of their efforts. Revenue is generated by promoting and linking one site to another site. With one click, the consumer is directed to the associate’s site. Income is usually calculated on the basis of sales or leads generated in one month.

2. *Permission marketing*

Permission marketing is about building an ongoing relationship of increasing depth with customers. According to Seth Godin, who coined and popularised the term, permission marketing is “turning strangers into friends, and friends into customers” (1999: 43).

3. *Social media*

One of the best tools for building customer relationships is social media. In many ways, social media epitomises what the internet is about: collaborating and sharing content, ideas, and information. TripAdvisor is one of the most popular social media networks for travellers to share reviews and experiences of tourism businesses (see Industry Insight). *Trustpilot*, *Yelp*, *Google My Business*, *Airbnb Experiences* are popular sites for consumers to provide reviews and comments on their holiday experiences.

	Industry Insight – TripAdvisor: The world’s most popular travel website
TripAdvisor.com is a travel website that compiles millions of holidaymakers’ star ratings. The world’s most popular travel website helps customers gather travel information, post reviews	

and opinions of travel-related content, and engage in interactive travel forums. TripAdvisor was an early adopter of user-generated content. Research carried out in 2016 shows that 85% of leisure travellers find user reviews important when determining which hotel to stay at during their trip and nearly half will not book a hotel or accommodation provider if it doesn't have reviews on sites such as TripAdvisor. Online customer reviews provide an excellent source of customer feedback for tourism companies.



Did you to Know...?

Increasingly, companies are now rating customers as good or bad. Restaurants, for instance, blacklist customers if they do not show up.



Over to you –

Tip: Use reliable sources such as national tourism boards, destination marketing organisations (DMOs), academic articles, or UN-Tourism data for accuracy.



Industry Insight – Trade fairs and shows: Important for networking

According to Bogden Dimitrova, director of Wagon Trails, a tour operator based in Bucharest, Romania, trade fairs are extremely important for networking. "It's good to be seen at travel trade fairs," says Bogden. "It's important for overseas agents to see you again and again." Wagon Trails attends all of the major travel trade fairs, including the ITB Berlin, the World Travel Market (WTM) and the Independent Travellers World (ITW) (the latter two both in London). "Travel fairs are good for networking, making contacts and getting business," adds Bogden. "It is said that 90% of new business comes from focused, proactive networking and word-of-mouth referrals. The WTM is really just one big sales pitch; it is a talking shop for

people in the world tourism industry.”

Source: Based on an interview with Bogden Dimitrova, director, Wagon Trails



Industry Insight – WTM: A great networking opportunity

The World Travel Market (WTM) is an excellent way to network with industry professionals and learn about the latest trends in the tourism industry. All major players in the industry, from every continent and country, have representation at the WTM exhibition, and it almost feels like travelling the entire world without leaving your own city. It can take a couple of days to “visit” the whole exhibition, which includes seminars and workshops.



The WTM travel trade show - an excellent event for networking with fellow tourism professionals.

2.2 Recommend marketing and customer loyalty strategies for an organisation in the hospitality or the tourism industry.

- **Marketing and Customer Loyalty Strategies for the Hospitality and Tourism Industry**

To recommend effective marketing and customer loyalty strategies for organisations in the hospitality and tourism sector, let's explore a few ideas:

1. Leverage Social Media and Influencer Marketing

Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, X, Snapchat, and YouTube offer excellent opportunities for showcasing the experiences your business can provide. Collaborating with influencers can help you reach a larger audience and create authentic content that resonates with potential customers.

For example, the Maldives tourism industry leverages influencer marketing by inviting popular travel bloggers and Instagram influencers to visit their luxury resorts, showcasing the stunning scenery and amenities through high-quality content.



Did you know...?

That the global tourism industry was valued at over \$9 trillion in 2025 (UNWTO, 2025).

2. Develop a Loyalty Program

Implementing a loyalty program can encourage repeat visits and strengthen customer relationships. Options include offering points for every stay or purchase, providing exclusive discounts to members, or granting access to special events and services.

An example is the *Hilton Honors* program, which rewards members with points that can be redeemed for free stays, room upgrades, and other perks, encouraging customers to choose Hilton properties for future travels.



Industry Insight – Hyatt gives away miles

In 2022, members of Hyatt's Gold Passport loyalty programme were offered the chance to win 365 nights at its hotels around the world along with a million free air miles. A further 30 000 Hyatt customers were eligible to win one free night each. The hotel group also launched a survey among members of its loyalty programme, who, in order to enter the competition, had

to write a 250-word essay on how they would spend “365 free nights at Hyatt to create an unforgettable experience”.



Did you know...?

Personalisation and hyper-targeted marketing are key trends in the hospitality and tourism sectors (McKinsey, 2024).

3. Focus on Personalisation

Offering personalised experiences can make customers feel valued and create lasting impressions. This can be achieved through tailored communication, offering customised experiences based on customer preferences, or remembering details about their previous interactions with your business.

Disney's *MagicBands* are a prime example of personalisation in action. These wristbands, used at *Walt Disney World Resort*, are linked to guests' tickets, hotel rooms, and personal preferences, allowing for a seamless and customised experience during their stay.



Need to know –

When developing marketing strategies for the hospitality and tourism sectors, it is essential to understand the following:

- The unique characteristics and challenges of these experiential industries
- The importance of segmentation, targeting, and positioning to reach the right customers
- The role of digital and social media marketing in engaging with customers
- The growing emphasis on sustainability and responsible marketing practices
- The key principles of relationship marketing and customer loyalty programs.

4. Invest in Content Marketing and SEO

Creating engaging and informative content can help potential customers find your business and learn more about what you have to offer. This can include blog posts, videos, or podcasts that showcase experiences, provide travel tips, or share behind-the-scenes stories. Investing in **search engine optimisation (SEO)** will also increase your visibility on search engines like Google, making it easier for customers to find you.

For instance, Airbnb's blog, "*Airbnb Magazine*," offers a wealth of travel tips, destination guides, and inspiring stories centred around the unique homes and experiences available on their platform.



Need to know – Search engine optimisation (SEO)

Search engine optimisation (SEO) is the process of improving your website and content so it appears more prominently in search engine results and attracts more relevant organic traffic.

It typically involves optimising content, site structure, keywords, user experience, and authority signals so search engines can better understand and rank your pages.

Digital marketing has had a profound influence on customer engagement in the tourism and hospitality sectors. Here are some of the keyways in which digital marketing approaches have impacted customer engagement in these industries:

1. **Increased Touchpoints and Accessibility:** The proliferation of digital channels, such as websites, mobile apps, social media, and online booking platforms, has significantly expanded the number of touchpoints through which hospitality and tourism brands can engage with customers. This increased accessibility allows for more frequent and personalised interactions throughout the customer journey.
2. **Enhanced User-Generated Content (UGC) and Social Proof:** Digital platforms have empowered customers to share their experiences, reviews, and recommendations online, which can have a significant impact on the purchasing decisions of prospective customers. Hospitality and tourism brands can leverage this user-generated content to build trust, enhance their brand reputation, and foster deeper customer engagement.



Need to know – User-generated content (UGC)

User-generated content (UGC) is any content – such as travel reviews, photos, videos, testimonials, or social post – created by customers or audiences rather than the brand itself.

In hospitality and tourist marketing, UGC is valuable because it adds authenticity, builds trust, and helps potential travellers see real experiences through the eyes of past visitor



Industry Insight – UGC: Rwanda’s Gorilla Gram’ campaign

In their most basic form, social media platforms are online tools that allow consumers to collaborate and share information, content, and ideas with each other (this is known as UGC). For example, Visit Rwanda (Rwanda’s DMO) devised a ‘Gorilla Gram’ campaign where visitors upload images and videos of Rwanda’s mountain gorillas on Instagram and the Visit Rwanda’s website. SMM involves different types of content for social networking sites (SNSs) in order to promote products and services.

Visit this link to find out more about Visit Rwanda’s ‘Gorilla Gram’ campaign which encourages UGC: <https://www.visitrwanda.com/gorilla-gram/>

3. Targeted and Personalised Marketing: Digital marketing tools and data analytics enable hospitality and tourism companies to segment their customer base, understand their preferences and behaviours, and deliver highly targeted and personalised marketing communications. This level of personalisation can lead to increased customer engagement, loyalty, and lifetime value.
4. Experiential Marketing and Interactive Engagement: Digital platforms allow hospitality and tourism brands to create more immersive and interactive customer experiences, such as virtual tours, augmented reality features, and gamified loyalty programs. These innovative engagement tactics can help to differentiate the brand, enhance the customer experience, and foster deeper emotional connections with the brand.
5. Real-Time Feedback and Responsiveness: Digital channels provide customers with immediate avenues to share their feedback, concerns, and inquiries. Hospitality and tourism brands can leverage these real-time feedback mechanisms to address customer needs more effectively, demonstrate their commitment to customer service, and build stronger relationships.
6. Improved Measurement and Optimisation: The digital landscape offers hospitality and tourism brands a wealth of data and analytics, enabling them to measure the performance of their marketing campaigns, understand customer behaviour, and continuously optimise their engagement strategies for maximum effectiveness.

By effectively integrating digital marketing approaches into their overall marketing mix, hospitality and tourism companies can enhance customer engagement, build stronger brand loyalty, and drive business growth in these highly competitive and experiential industries.



Did you know...?

Millennials and Gen Zs account for over 50% of tourism spending worldwide (Skift, 2025).

- **Theoretical Frameworks and Concepts:**

- i. Services Marketing Theory**

- Intangibility, inseparability, variability, and perishability of services
- The importance of the service encounter and customer experience
- The extended marketing mix (7Ps) for services

- ii. Relationship Marketing**

- Customer lifetime value and the importance of retention
- Strategies for building long-term customer relationships
- The role of loyalty programs and personalisation

- iii. Market Segmentation and Targeting**

- Demographic, psychographic, and behavioural segmentation approaches
- Identifying and profiling target customer segments
- Positioning strategies to differentiate the offering

- iv. Digital and Social Media Marketing**

- The growing importance of online and mobile channels
- Leveraging user-generated content and influencer marketing
- Measuring and optimising digital marketing performance

- v. Sustainable and Responsible Marketing**

- Aligning marketing practices with environmental and social responsibility
- Communicating sustainability credentials to eco-conscious consumers
- The role of certification and accreditation schemes



Industry Insight – The unique characteristics of hospitality and tourism

The hospitality and tourism industries are highly competitive, with evolving customer preferences and emerging technological trends. Successful marketing strategies must

consider the unique characteristics of these experiential sectors, such as the intangible nature of services, the importance of human interaction, and the need for seamless customer experiences. Effective marketing approaches often involve a combination of traditional and digital channels, with a focus on building long-term customer relationships through loyalty programs, personalisation, and responsible, sustainable practices. Understanding target market segments, crafting compelling brand positioning, and optimising the marketing mix are critical to attracting, engaging, and retaining customers in these dynamic industries.



Case Study – Sustainable Tourism in New Zealand's Tourism Industry

Sustainable Tourism in New Zealand New Zealand's tourism industry has long been a significant contributor to the country's economy, but in recent years, there has been a growing focus on sustainable and responsible tourism practices. Tourism New Zealand, the national tourism organisation, has implemented a comprehensive marketing strategy to promote the country as a premier sustainable tourism destination.

The strategy involves several key elements:

1. Positioning New Zealand as a leader in eco-tourism and sustainable travel experiences, highlighting the country's natural beauty, indigenous Māori culture, and commitment to environmental protection.
2. Targeting environmentally conscious travellers, both domestically and internationally, through targeted marketing campaigns and partnerships with like-minded organisations.
3. Developing and promoting a range of sustainable tourism products and experiences, such as eco-lodges, sustainable transportation options, and community-based cultural tours.
4. Encouraging tourism businesses to adopt sustainable practices and obtain relevant certifications, such as the Qualmark Sustainable Tourism Business Award.
5. Engaging with local communities to ensure that tourism development is aligned with their values and priorities, and that they directly benefit from the industry.

The results of this sustainable tourism marketing strategy have been impressive. New Zealand has seen a significant increase in visitor numbers, with a growing proportion of travellers seeking out eco-friendly and culturally authentic experiences. Tourism businesses have also embraced sustainable practices, leading to a more sustainable and responsible tourism industry overall.

The case of New Zealand's sustainable tourism marketing strategy demonstrates the importance of aligning marketing approaches with the unique characteristics and challenges

of the hospitality and tourism sectors, while also addressing the growing demand for sustainable and responsible travel experiences.



Over to you

Imagine you are the marketing manager for a boutique hotel in a popular tourist destination. Develop a customer loyalty program that could be implemented to build long-term relationships with your guests. Consider the key elements of the program, such as rewards, personalisation, and communication touchpoints.

Revision on the Go:

- The unique characteristics of the tourism and hospitality sectors require tailored marketing approaches
- Key marketing concepts include segmentation, targeting, positioning, and the marketing mix (7Ps)
- Relationship marketing and customer loyalty strategies are crucial in these experiential industries
- Digital and social media marketing play a significant role in reaching and engaging customers
- Sustainability and responsible marketing practices are increasingly important



Summary

In this chapter you assessed and recommended marketing strategies for the hospitality and tourism sector.

You studied the role of networking and customer relationship marketing in context of the tourism and hospitality industry.

On completion of this chapter, you recommended marketing and customer loyalty strategies for an organisation in the hospitality or the tourism industry.



Learning Outcome TASK 2: Assess and recommend marketing strategies for the hospitality and tourism sector

Context: Chapter Two examines the role of networking, customer relationship marketing (CRM), and customer loyalty strategies in hospitality and tourism. This activity requires you to engage with the academic literature on how relationship marketing approaches are assessed and recommended in practice.

Task: Source one peer-reviewed journal article that investigates customer relationship marketing, CRM implementation, loyalty programme effectiveness, or networking and partnership strategies within the hospitality or tourism industry. The article should present evidence that enables assessment of the strategy's effectiveness and should ideally include practical recommendations.

Suggested search terms: “customer relationship marketing hospitality” • “CRM hotel performance” • “loyalty programme effectiveness tourism” • “customer retention strategy hotel” • “networking partnerships tourism stakeholders” • “relationship marketing destination management”

What to write (approximately 500–700 words): Prepare a critical analysis covering: the specific relationship marketing or loyalty strategy examined; the research context (e.g. hotel chain, airline, destination, restaurant group); how the article measures or evaluates the strategy's impact (e.g. customer retention rates, lifetime value, satisfaction scores, repeat visitation, revenue uplift); the key findings on what makes the strategy effective or ineffective; and the managerial recommendations the authors offer.

Reflection: Conclude by writing a short recommendation paragraph in which you assess whether the strategy studied could be applied to a different type of hospitality or tourism organisation (one of your choosing), identifying what adaptations would be necessary and what potential challenges might arise. Link your reasoning to the concepts covered in Chapter Two.

Suggested starting point:

Rahimi, R. & Kozak, M. (2017). Impact of customer relationship management on customer satisfaction: The case of a budget hotel chain, *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 34(1), 40–51.

So, K.K.F., King, C., Sparks, B.A. & Wang, Y. (2016). The role of customer engagement in building consumer loyalty to tourism brands, *Journal of Travel Research*, 55(1), 64–78.

You are encouraged to select an article relevant to your own professional interests.

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Chapter Three – Classify and show critical evaluation on marketing communication strategies for hospitality and tourism organisations

Introduction

In this chapter you will classify and show critical evaluation on marketing communication strategies for hospitality and tourism organisations.

You will learn how marketing communications will assist the development of brand identity strategies.

Next, you will assess how effective is digital marketing, viral and guerrilla marketing strategies are towards the hospitality or tourism organisations.

On completion of this chapter, you will recommend marketing communication strategies for the chosen hospitality or tourism organisation with relevant justification.

Learning Outcomes

On completing the chapter, you will be able to:

3. Classify and show critical evaluation on marketing communication strategies for hospitality and tourism organisations

Assessment Criteria

3.1 Inform how marketing communications will assist the development of brand identity strategies.

3.2 Assess how effective is digital marketing, viral and guerrilla marketing strategies are towards the hospitality or tourism organisations.

3.3 Recommend marketing communication strategies for the chosen hospitality or tourism organisation with relevant justification.

3.1 Inform how marketing communications will assist the development of brand identity strategies

- **Marketing Approaches in Tourism and Hospitality**

In hospitality and tourism, brand identity is more than a logo, slogan, or colour palette. It is the distinctive set of meanings, values, personality traits, and promises that an organisation or destination wants audiences to associate with it. Marketing communications play a central role in developing, expressing, and reinforcing that identity.

For hospitality and tourism organisations, brand identity is especially important because the product is often intangible, experiential, and emotionally driven. Visitors do not simply buy a hotel room, airline ticket, attraction pass, or destination package; they buy expectations of service quality, atmosphere, lifestyle, memory, status, safety, authenticity, or transformation. Marketing communications therefore help shape not only awareness, but also perception and emotional connection.

- **Understanding Brand Identity in Hospitality and Tourism**

Brand identity refers to how an organisation wants to be seen by its target audiences. It includes:

- brand values
- brand personality
- visual identity
- tone of voice
- service promise
- positioning in the market

For example, a luxury resort may want to project exclusivity, elegance, and personalised service, while a youth-oriented destination may want to communicate adventure, creativity, and social connection. In both cases, marketing communications help make this identity visible and meaningful to customers.

In tourism and hospitality, brand identity must often appeal to multiple stakeholders, including tourists, investors, intermediaries, local communities, and trade partners. This makes communication strategy more complex and more important.



Did you know...?

That in tourism and hospitality, customer reviews and user-generated content often shape brand identity just as strongly as official advertising?

- **How Marketing Communications Support Brand Identity Development**

Marketing communications assist brand identity strategies in several interrelated ways.

1. Creating Awareness of the Brand

Before a brand identity can influence customer choice, audiences must first know that the brand exists. Communication tools such as digital campaigns, social media, advertising, public relations, and content marketing help create visibility in crowded markets.

In tourism, this is vital because destinations and hospitality brands compete globally for attention. A strong communication strategy ensures the brand enters the consumer's consideration set.

2. Communicating Brand Values and Personality

Marketing communications translate abstract brand values into clear messages and experiences. Through campaign themes, storytelling, imagery, tone, and channel choice, organisations can show whether they are premium, family-friendly, sustainable, adventurous, authentic, innovative, or culturally rich.

For example:

- a boutique hotel may use refined visuals and editorial-style content to communicate sophistication
- an eco-lodge may use sustainability narratives, community stories, and nature imagery to signal responsibility and authenticity

3. Differentiating the Brand from Competitors

A key function of communication is to explain why one brand is distinct from another. In highly competitive markets, communication helps organisations highlight their unique selling propositions, experience design, heritage, service style, or emotional appeal.

Without effective communication, even a strong product may remain poorly differentiated.

4. Building Consistency Across Touchpoints

Brand identity is strengthened when communication is consistent across websites, brochures, email campaigns, social media, booking platforms, PR activity, and face-to-face service interactions. Consistency helps reduce confusion and reinforces recognition and trust.

Inconsistency, by contrast, weakens identity. A brand that claims luxury but communicates through poor visuals or inconsistent service messages risks damaging credibility.

5. Shaping Emotional Connection and Brand Meaning

Hospitality and tourism branding is highly emotional. Marketing communications help organisations create narratives that connect with customers' aspirations, identities, and motivations.

A destination may communicate freedom, belonging, discovery, wellness, prestige, or nostalgia. A hotel brand may communicate comfort, escape, indulgence, or cultural immersion. These meanings are built through communication as much as through the product itself.

6. Reinforcing Identity Through Customer Experience and Advocacy

Modern marketing communication is not only one-way. Reviews, user-generated content, influencer partnerships, and social engagement all contribute to brand identity. When customer experiences align with brand messaging, positive advocacy strengthens brand meaning. When experience and communication do not match, brand identity is undermined.



Industry Insight – Brand Identity

In the hospitality and tourism sector, brand identity is increasingly built through integrated communication ecosystems rather than single campaigns. Leading hotel groups, airlines, and destination brands no longer rely only on traditional advertising. Instead, they combine paid, owned, earned, and shared media to create a coherent identity across the customer journey.

For example, a destination brand may use cinematic advertising to build awareness, social media to show lifestyle appeal, PR to reinforce credibility, and influencer partnerships to reach niche audiences. At the same time, visitor reviews, online ratings, and user-generated imagery influence how the brand is actually interpreted. This means that brand identity is now co-created between the organisation and its audiences.

For hospitality businesses, this is particularly significant because brand promises must be matched by service experience. A hotel may communicate warmth, authenticity, or luxury, but if the booking journey, staff interaction, or guest experience fails to reflect this, the communication strategy becomes ineffective. In this sense, brand identity strategy in hospitality and tourism is not only a marketing issue but also an operational and reputational one.

The strongest brands therefore use marketing communications not simply to promote products, but to create a consistent narrative that links positioning, service culture, visual identity, and customer advocacy.

- **Classification of Marketing Communication Strategies Relevant to Brand Identity**

Selecting the type of promotion

The role of marketing communications is to convince potential consumers of the benefits of purchasing or using the tourism product-offerings of a particular organisation. The tourism and hospitality marketer has eight distinct ways (tools) of communicating promotional messages (*the promotions mix*) to the public:

- *Advertising* the offering through a selected medium, such as digital/broadcast (television, radio, cinema, Internet, mobile), print media (newspapers, trade magazines, and consumer magazines), or OOHM (billboards, transit posters).
- Using *digital marketing*, Creating website content (e.g. video, photographs, text, apps, newsletter, e-brochures, press releases, and newsletters), social media (e.g. Facebook,

Instagram, Tik Tok, X, Snapchat, Linked-In, and Flickr), and e-mail to communicate with consumers and promote tourism and hospitality products.

- Carrying out *direct marketing* activities to evoke a direct response from the targeted market via mobile phone (telemarketing), direct e-mail or mail (postal), SMS/ text, and travel trade exhibitions and events.
- Engaging in *sales promotion* activities such as point-of-sale merchandising, sampling, flyers, in-store (travel agency) window displays, coupons or pounds- or euros-off deals, contests, and sweepstakes (these short-term activities may be aimed at salespeople, intermediaries such as travel agents or consumers).
- Generating publicity about the offering through *public relations (PR)*, for example, by inviting travel writers or sales reps from the travel trade to experience the offering (known as “educational” or “fam” trips).
- Persuading consumers to purchase offerings in face-to-face situations using *personal selling* techniques (e.g. up-selling).
- Using various forms of *marketing collateral*, such as e-brochures, guidebooks, business cards, and posters, to convert an enquiry into a sale.
- Engaging in *sponsorship* of sports events and teams, festivals, and causes.

Some of these tools overlap with one another, for example, marketing collateral such as brochures and newsletters are also digital marketing tools when accessible on a business's website).

In addition to these promotional techniques, marketers should remember the power of word-of-mouth (WoM) advertising and electronic (eWoM), such as online ratings and reviews (e.g. TripAdvisor, Google Reviews and individual business's ratings). This so-called hidden sales force may be the most effective of all the marketing communications techniques. However, we will not discuss it in great detail in this chapter because it is not a technique that the marketer performs. The benefits of having a satisfied consumer recommending an offering to another potential consumer can never be overestimated. This form of advertising costs the organisation nothing. An experienced consumer convinces a potential consumer of the value of the tourism organisation's product offering.

The components that serve to achieve a marketer's communication campaign are called the "promotions mix". This is the marketer's tool kit (see **Figure 9**).

Figure 9. The tourism and hospitality communications/promotions mix



The marketer adjusts the promotions mix according to the organisation’s current situation (situational analysis) and marketing objectives (where the organisation wants to get to). A marketer may choose one of these tools or a combination of tools. In the case of integrated marketing communications (IMC), a marketer can achieve a sales target with varied mixes of advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, digital marketing and social media, direct marketing, marketing collateral, sponsorship, and PR. Integrated marketing communications is also known as “platform convergence” because different communication channels work together to enhance the customer experience. For example, mobile marketing could be combined with print media.

The tourism and hospitality marketer must alternate the use of these tools to improve promotion and reduce costs to the organisation. For example, a marketer may choose to replace advertising activities temporarily with PR, or to increase advertising expenditure in relation to sales promotion to gain faster sales.

Each promotional tool has its own features. Tourism and hospitality marketers must understand these features if they are to select their tools wisely (see Industry Insight). We discuss each of these tools in more detail in the two chapters that follow.

Table 3. The advantages and disadvantages of each below-the-line promotional tool

Promotional tool	Advantages	Disadvantages
<i>Sales promotions</i>	Short-term results (quick increase in sales) Flexible; can be used at any stage of the product life cycle Can shift slow-moving tourism and hospitality offerings (excess capacity/inventory) Ability to measure responses Increases awareness of new offerings or price	Does not provide investment in long-term sales Provides little information about the market If sale is run for too long, consumers expect a discount (it is a short-term tactic) Promotion and perceived quality may be lowered May conceal management problems
<i>Personal selling</i>	Aimed at specific target markets (external selling) Gets far more information across to the consumer than an advertisement (more persuasive) The process is interactive Builds consumer relationships (repeat business) Passive sales are inexpensive; it doesn't cost anything to smile and be polite	Limited target audience Expensive to set up and train a sales force Telephone selling viewed as irritating and intrusive by consumers
<i>Marketing collateral</i>	e-brochures is that they can be embedded into a company's website, quickly and easily making a website more interactive.	
<i>Public relations</i>	High credibility Low cost	Low level of control
<i>Sponsorship</i>	Enhances the image and reputation of the company. Sales and merchandising opportunities. generates goodwill Costs can be offset against taxes. Increasing brand awareness and publicity	Can be expensive and is not always effective. Difficult to evaluate the impact of sponsorship activity. There is no guarantee that the sponsored team or individual will live up to expectations.

Industry Insight – Integrated Marketing Communications

Zhang Chan, the owner of a small tourism business specialising in airport shuttle runs and ground handling, often complained that he spent too much on marketing without any results. “I bought some radio ads and got a few calls,” he says. “A few weeks later, I put an ad in the newspaper and set up a page on X. Then I got a call from a guy doing a flyer campaign and thought I'd go with that for a week or two. Not much came from any of it.”

Zhang was spending a lot of money, but it is not surprising that he got poor results. In today's world, prospective consumers are bombarded with countless marketing messages. While Zhang was right to use diverse media, his communication strategies were wrong because they had no sense of continuity, targeting, consistency, integration, frequency, or brand building. To see results, John needs to get his marketing efforts organised and integrated.

Critical Evaluation

Marketing communications are essential to brand identity strategy, but their effectiveness depends on alignment, authenticity, and integration.

Strengths

Marketing communications:

- make the brand visible in competitive markets
- translate strategy into customer-facing meaning
- support differentiation and positioning
- build consistency and recall
- create emotional connection and loyalty

Limitations

However, communications also have limitations:

- they cannot compensate for weak service or poor visitor experience
- over-promotion can create expectations the product cannot meet
- inconsistent messaging across channels can dilute identity
- reliance on digital trends may produce short-term attention but weak long-term meaning
- different stakeholder groups may interpret the same messages differently



Need to know – Integrated marketing communications

It is important to recognise that communications do not create brand identity in isolation. They work best when integrated with service design, operational delivery, customer experience, and organisational culture.



Case Study – Marketing Communications

A coastal destination wants to reposition itself from a low-cost summer market to a premium wellness and lifestyle destination. Its new brand identity focuses on wellbeing, authenticity, sustainability, and slow travel. To support this shift, the destination launches a new visual identity, collaborates with wellness influencers, creates high-quality video content, and promotes boutique accommodation, healthy cuisine, and nature-based experiences across digital channels.

However, many online reviews still describe overcrowding, inconsistent service, and outdated facilities.

Questions for discussion

1. How are marketing communications being used to support the destination's new brand identity?
2. Why might the communication strategy be only partly effective?
3. What must the destination do beyond communications to strengthen its brand identity?



Need to know – Marketing communications

Marketing communications help develop brand identity by creating awareness, expressing values, differentiating the brand, and reinforcing consistent meaning across customer touchpoints. In hospitality and tourism, strong communication must be aligned with actual experience, otherwise brand credibility will weaken.



Over to you

Choose a hospitality or tourism brand such as a hotel, resort, airline, destination, or attraction.

Write a short analysis that:

- identifies the organisation's likely brand identity
- explains which communication channels it uses to express that identity
- evaluates whether the communication appears consistent with the experience or reputation of the brand

Aim for 300 to 400 words and include one recommendation for improving brand identity communication.

Revision on the Go:

- Brand identity is how an organisation wants to be perceived.
- Marketing communications make brand identity visible and meaningful.
- Communications help create awareness, differentiation, and emotional connection.
- Consistency across channels strengthens brand recognition and trust.
- Advertising, PR, digital media, content, and CRM all support brand identity.
- Strong communication cannot replace weak service delivery.
- Brand identity is shaped by both organisational messages and customer experiences.
- Effective communication must align with positioning, values, and experience.



3.2 Assess how effective is digital marketing, viral and guerrilla marketing strategies are towards the hospitality or tourism organisations

Marketing communication in hospitality and tourism has changed significantly with the growth of digital media, mobile technology, social platforms, and experience-led consumer behaviour. Traditional communication methods such as print advertising and brochures still exist, but organisations increasingly rely on faster, more interactive, and more cost-efficient approaches to reach target audiences. Among the most discussed are **digital marketing, viral marketing, and guerrilla marketing**.

For hospitality and tourism organisations, these strategies can be highly effective because the sector depends heavily on image, storytelling, emotion, peer influence, and real-time decision-making. However, their effectiveness varies according to the nature of the organisation, target market, campaign objective, budget, and brand positioning.

- **Understanding the Three Strategies**

Digital marketing

Digital marketing in tourism and hospitality refers to the use of online channels, platforms, and technologies to promote destinations, hotels, airlines, restaurants, and travel experiences to potential guests and travellers. It encompasses all marketing efforts that leverage the internet and electronic devices to reach, engage, convert, and retain customers throughout the travel decision-making journey.

This is arguably the most transformative area of modern hospitality marketing because the way people discover, research, book, experience, and review travel has shifted almost entirely to digital platforms. The traveller's journey – from initial inspiration to post-trip sharing – now unfolds largely online, making a strong digital presence not just advantageous but essential.

The 5Ds of Digital Marketing

The 5Ds of digital marketing outline the opportunities for consumers to interact with brands and for tourism and hospitality businesses to reach consumers:

- I. *Digital devices* – users experience brands as they interact with company websites and mobile apps typically through a combination of connected devices including smartphones, smartwatches, mobile devices, servers, tablets, cloud-sharing, laptops, digital cameras, desktop computers/PCs, LED/Smart TVs, touch screen devices, digital voice assistant technology or 'smart speakers' (such as *Amazon Alexa* or *Google's Siri*), headphones, navigation systems (e.g. global positioning system), e-readers, and gaming devices.
- II. *Digital platforms* – most interactions on these devices are through a browser or apps from the major platforms or services, namely *Facebook, Instagram, Google Search, Bing, WeChat, iQIYI, YouTube, Youku, Vimeo, Rumble, X, Mastodon, Snapchat, VKontakte (VK), TikTok/Douyin, Weibo, and LinkedIn*.

- III. *Digital media* – paid, owned, and earned media channels for reaching and engaging consumers including online advertising, email marketing and mobile messaging (e.g. through SMS, *Facebook Messenger*, *WhatsApp* platforms), quick-response (QR) codes, digital display advertising, influencer marketing, search engine optimisation (SEO), and social networking sites.
- IV. *Digital data* – the insight businesses collect about their user profiles and their interactions with the business, which now needs to be protected by law in most countries. This is called ‘analytics’ and will be discussed later in the chapter.
- V. *Digital technology* – the media formats that businesses use to create interactive experiences: video, websites, podcasts or other audio content, blog posts and articles, case studies, interviews, multi-media kiosks, VR, AR, mobile apps, chatbots, AI, images, infographics, and email campaigns.

Digital marketing in this context spans several interconnected disciplines. Search engine optimisation ensures that a hotel or destination appears prominently when potential travellers search for relevant terms like "boutique hotels in Lisbon" or "best beach resorts." Search engine marketing and pay-per-click advertising allow businesses to bid on these terms for immediate visibility. Social media marketing across platforms like Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, YouTube, Snapchat, and Pinterest serves as both an inspiration engine and a direct booking channel, capitalising on the highly visual nature of travel. Email marketing remains a powerful tool for nurturing relationships with past guests, promoting seasonal offers, and driving repeat bookings.

Content marketing (CM) is the [on-going] process of creating and distributing relevant and valuable content to attract, acquire, and engage a clearly defined target audience with the objective of driving profitable customer action. It is a strategy involving the creation, writing, and publication of content on websites, social media sites, and other digital marketing platforms to a targeted audience. In simple terms, content marketing is about allowing people to get to know your organisation's products and services. For many years, tourism and hospitality marketers have created content offline in the form of paper flyers, newsletters, brochures, catalogues, leaflets, posters, and so on. This content in the pre-digital age was distributed by direct mail. Many mail order customers wanted to read this content, which took the form of ideas, product information, and reviews. In the days before Google Search, consumers needed information in order to make their purchases. Millions of these purchases were based on branded content that consumers read via direct mail marketing material (Ryan, 2020: 299). What is new is that tourism marketers now use digital content as inbound marketing that attracts customers and prospects.

Content is at the heart and soul of any digital marketing campaign; it is the foundation on which a company's search, social, email, and paid traffic campaigns are built. Without content, Google Search has nothing to discover on a company or personal website, Facebook fans have nothing to share, digital newsletters have no news, and paid traffic campaigns become one-dimensional sales pitches. There are two main elements of content marketing: i. Content creation. Such as video, blog posts, case studies (an ideal tool for showcasing a specific product or service), images, text, podcasts or other audio content, and ii. Content distribution and marketing through social media and search marketing: SEO, SEM, and social media

platforms and networks. Creating a short-form video and posting it on YouTube Shorts, Instagram Reels, on TikTok, or posting a photo on Instagram or Pinterest are basic examples of content marketing. Video marketing is especially important to engage, attract, and convert potential consumers.

At its core, the internet is a place where people gather to discover, interact with, and share content. Engaging with valuable content is a natural, or “native”, experience on the internet. People are drawn to content that teaches them something, inspires them, or makes them laugh or cry, and people share and talk about content that has provided them with some form of value. CM works and will always work because it offers value to a potential customer; in addition, it fulfills his or her immediate requirement for information, it engages the customer, and it does not use coercive methods to “sell” to him or her. Done right, it is a powerful brand-building and business-building tool. Well-executed content marketing includes planning what content you will produce, for what audience, and for what purpose.



Need to know – Content marketing

What makes content marketing particularly effective in this industry is the nature of the product itself. Hospitality experiences cannot be physically sampled before purchase, so content serves as the bridge between anticipation and reality. A well-crafted article about hidden beaches near a coastal resort or an immersive video walkthrough of a boutique hotel's rooms allows potential guests to mentally place themselves in the experience, reducing uncertainty and building confidence in their booking decision.

CM is an effective marketing technique of creating distributing valuable online content (e.g. blogs posts, text, images, videos) to targeted audiences. Most of the content consumed online has a specific purpose: to get consumers to buy something, to gain awareness, to sign up for something, or to learn more about an offering. Even seemingly banal articles such as “The 10 best visitor attractions in Bulgaria” have been crafted to influence a specific response. The content should be unique and not plagiarised for better reach and ranking.

What distinguishes digital marketing in tourism and hospitality from other industries is the centrality of experience and emotion. Tourists are not purchasing a tangible product they can hold before buying – they are investing in an anticipated experience. Digital marketing must therefore bridge that gap through immersive visual storytelling, virtual tours, user-generated content, and credible social proof that helps potential guests imagine themselves in the experience.

Another critical dimension is the complexity of the booking funnel. A tourist might be inspired by an Instagram post, research options through Google, compare prices on an online travel agency, read reviews on *TripAdvisor*, visit the hotel's own website, and finally book through a mobile app – all before ever arriving. Effective digital marketing in this industry requires a coordinated,

multi-channel strategy that maintains a consistent and persuasive brand presence across every one of these touchpoints.

!	Need to know
<p>For MBA-level understanding, it is also important to recognise the strategic tension between direct and intermediary digital channels. Hotels and airlines invest heavily in driving direct bookings through their own websites and apps to avoid commission fees charged by online travel agencies, yet they also depend on those same intermediaries for visibility and volume. Managing this balance – often through loyalty programs, best-rate guarantees, and exclusive direct-booking perks – is a key strategic consideration in hospitality digital marketing.</p>	

The measurability of digital marketing is another significant advantage. Unlike traditional advertising, digital channels provide detailed data on impressions, clicks, engagement, conversion rates, cost per acquisition, and return on investment, enabling hospitality marketers to continuously optimise their strategies based on real performance rather than intuition.

- **Digital channels used in digital marketing in tourism and hospitality marketing**

In tourism and hospitality marketing, digital channels can be broadly organised into several categories based on their function within the traveller’s journey.

- **Search Channels** serve as the primary gateway for tourists actively researching trips. Google Search and Bing are where most travel planning begins, whether through organic results driven by SEO or paid placements through Google Ads and Microsoft Advertising. Google Maps and Google Business Profile are particularly important for local discovery, helping travellers find nearby hotels, restaurants, and attractions with reviews, photos, and directions readily available.
- **Social Media Platforms** function as both inspiration and engagement channels. Instagram remains central to travel marketing due to its visual nature, while TikTok has rapidly become a powerful discovery platform where short-form destination and experience videos can reach enormous audiences organically. Facebook continues to serve as an advertising platform with sophisticated targeting capabilities and is especially effective for reaching older demographics and group travel planners. Pinterest operates as a visual search engine where travellers create boards for trip planning and inspiration. YouTube hosts long-form content like destination guides, hotel tours, and travel vlogs that influence decisions during the research phase. LinkedIn has a more niche role, primarily relevant for business travel, MICE marketing, and B2B hospitality partnerships.
- **Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) and Travel Aggregators** represent a critical distribution and visibility channel. Platforms like Booking.com, Expedia, Hotels.com, and Agoda function simultaneously as booking engines and marketing channels, exposing properties to millions of travellers who begin their search on these sites rather than on brand websites. Metasearch engines such as Google Hotel Search, Trivago, Kayak, and Skyscanner

aggregate pricing across multiple sources, and hospitality businesses bid for placement within these comparison results.

- **Travel Review Sites and Reputation Management Platforms** carry enormous influence in travel decision-making. TripAdvisor, Google Reviews, Yelp, and Trustpilot are spaces where past guest experiences directly shape future booking behaviour. These platforms function as marketing channels because actively managing presence, responding to reviews, and maintaining high ratings significantly impacts visibility and conversion.
- **Direct Digital Channels** are those owned and controlled by the hospitality business itself. The brand website is the most important owned asset, serving as the primary platform for direct bookings and brand storytelling. Mobile apps offer personalised experiences, loyalty program integration, and streamlined booking and on-property functionality. Email remains one of the highest-ROI digital channels, used for pre-arrival communication, promotional campaigns, loyalty engagement, and post-stay relationship building. SMS and messaging apps like WhatsApp are increasingly used for time-sensitive offers, booking confirmations, and concierge-style guest communication.
- **Digital Content and Media Channels** support storytelling and brand authority. Brand blogs and online travel magazines publish destination guides, insider tips, and experience-driven content that attracts organic search traffic. Podcasts have emerged as a growing channel for destination marketing organisations and travel brands to build deeper narrative connections with audiences. Influencer partnerships across YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok leverage the credibility and reach of travel creators to showcase destinations and properties to engaged audiences.
- **Programmatic and Display Advertising** enables hospitality brands to reach potential travellers across thousands of websites through targeted banner ads, video ads, and native advertising. Retargeting is especially valuable in this industry given the long consideration period typical of travel purchases – a tourist who browsed a hotel website but did not book can be served relevant ads across the web for days or weeks afterward, keeping the property top of mind.
- **Emerging and Experiential Digital Channels** are gaining traction as technology evolves. Virtual reality and 360-degree video tours allow potential guests to explore rooms, facilities, and destinations before booking. **Augmented reality (AR)** features can overlay information onto real-world environments through a smartphone. Voice search through assistants like Alexa, Google Assistant, and Siri is increasingly relevant as more travellers use voice queries for travel-related questions. AI-powered chatbots on websites and messaging platforms handle inquiries, recommend options, and facilitate bookings in real time.



Need to know

For strategic purposes at the MBA level, it is important to understand that these channels do not operate in isolation. An effective hospitality digital marketing strategy integrates multiple channels into a cohesive ecosystem where each plays a defined role at different stages of the

traveller's journey – from awareness and inspiration through to booking, on-property engagement, and post-stay advocacy. The allocation of budget and effort across these channels depends on the specific business model, target market, competitive landscape, and strategic objectives of the hospitality organisation.

Viral Marketing

Viral marketing in tourism and hospitality refers to a strategy designed to encourage people to share promotional content rapidly and organically across their networks, creating exponential exposure for a destination, hotel, airline, or tourism experience – much like a virus spreading from person to person.

The core idea is to craft content so compelling, entertaining, emotional, or surprising that travellers and audiences feel naturally motivated to share it with friends, family, and followers without being asked. In tourism and hospitality, this works particularly well because travel is inherently visual, aspirational, and social – people already love sharing travel experiences.

What makes it distinct in this industry is the type of content that tends to go viral: stunning drone footage of a hidden destination, a heartwarming story of a hotel going above and beyond for a guest, a quirky airline safety video, a travel challenge or hashtag campaign, or a user-generated content initiative where guests share their own experiences under a branded tag.

Several elements make tourism-related viral marketing effective. The content needs a strong emotional hook – awe, humour, wanderlust, or surprise. It should be easily shareable across platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, which are already central to how people discover and plan travel. It also benefits from authenticity, since modern travellers tend to trust peer recommendations and real guest experiences over polished corporate messaging.

A well-known example is tourism boards launching hashtag campaigns that invite visitors to post their own photos and stories, effectively turning every guest into a brand ambassador. Airlines have also achieved viral success with humorous or emotionally resonant videos that reach millions organically.

The appeal for tourism and hospitality businesses is clear: viral marketing can deliver massive reach and brand awareness with relatively modest investment, leveraging the audience itself as the primary distribution channel.

Viral marketing is a strategy designed to encourage rapid sharing of content between users, usually through social media, messaging apps, or online communities. Its aim is to generate wide exposure through peer-to-peer communication rather than paid distribution alone.

Examples include:

- highly shareable destination videos
- humorous hotel campaigns
- influencer-led travel content
- interactive online challenges

Viral marketing depends on emotional engagement, originality, and audience participation.

Guerrilla Marketing

Guerrilla marketing in tourism and hospitality refers to unconventional, low-cost, high-impact promotional strategies that rely on creativity, surprise, and imagination rather than large advertising budgets to attract travellers and guests.

Instead of traditional ads or billboards, a hotel, destination, or tourism board might use tactics like staging an unexpected interactive experience in a busy urban area (for example, setting up a mini "beach paradise" in a city square to promote a tropical resort), creating viral social media stunts, using street art or flash mobs tied to a destination's identity, or placing surprising branded installations in high-traffic locations.

A few key characteristics in the tourism and hospitality context: it tends to create memorable, shareable experiences that generate word-of-mouth and social media buzz; it often brings elements of the destination or hospitality experience directly to potential travellers in unexpected settings; and it typically targets emotional engagement – making people *feel* something about a place or brand rather than just informing them.

Examples might include a boutique hotel hiding golden room keys around a city with free stay prizes, an airline turning a subway station into an immersive destination experience, or a tourism board using augmented reality in a public space to let passersby "step into" a destination.

The approach is especially appealing in this industry because travel decisions are highly emotional and experience-driven, so surprising, creative encounters can be more persuasive than conventional advertising – often at a fraction of the cost

Guerrilla marketing uses unconventional, low-cost, attention-grabbing tactics to generate awareness and discussion. It often appears in public spaces or unexpected settings and aims to create memorable impact.

Examples in tourism and hospitality might include:

- pop-up destination installations
- immersive travel-themed street activations
- unexpected hotel brand experiences in city centres
- interactive airport campaigns

Guerrilla marketing is often associated with creativity, surprise, and strong visual impact.



Need to know – Digital marketing, viral marketing, and guerrilla marketing

Digital marketing, viral marketing, and guerrilla marketing can all support hospitality and tourism communication, but they differ in purpose and effectiveness. Digital marketing is

usually the most measurable and commercially useful; viral marketing is strong for reach and engagement; guerrilla marketing is strong for attention and memorability. Their effectiveness increases when they are integrated into a broader brand and communication strategy.

- **Assessing the Effectiveness of Digital marketing**

Digital marketing is often the most effective of the three in the hospitality and tourism sector because it fits modern customer behaviour.

- **Strengths of digital marketing**

Digital marketing is effective because it:

- reaches global audiences quickly
- allows precise targeting
- supports real-time communication
- is measurable through analytics
- integrates with booking systems and customer journeys
- enables personalisation

For example, a hotel can target business travellers with LinkedIn ads, families through email campaigns, and younger leisure travellers through social media video content. A destination can combine **search engine optimisation (SEO)**, **generative engine optimisation (GEO)**, paid search, social/travel influencer content, and remarketing to move consumers from inspiration to booking.



Need to know – Generative engine optimisation (GEO)

Generative engine optimisation (GEO) is the practice of structuring your brand's content so AI tools and answer engines can easily find it, trust it, and cite it in their responses.

Unlike traditional SEO, which focuses on ranking in search results, GEO focuses on becoming the source an AI pulls from when it generates an answer. That usually means clear expertise, strong factual signals, well-organised content, original insights, and content published on platforms AI systems are likely to reference.

- **Limitations of digital marketing**

Despite its strengths, digital marketing also has limitations:

- online channels are crowded and competitive
- paid digital media can become expensive
- consumers may ignore or block content

- algorithm changes can reduce visibility
- poor online reviews can undermine campaigns

Its effectiveness also depends on content quality, audience targeting, and website or booking experience. A strong digital campaign will not succeed if the customer journey is weak or the brand lacks clarity.

Evaluation

Overall, digital marketing is highly effective for hospitality and tourism because it aligns with how travellers search, plan, compare, and purchase. It is especially valuable for conversion, relationship-building, and performance measurement. However, its success depends on strategic integration, not simply digital presence.

- **Assessing the Effectiveness of Viral Marketing**

Viral marketing can be powerful in hospitality and tourism because travel is inherently visual, emotional, and socially shareable.

- **Strengths of viral marketing**

Viral marketing can:

- generate high awareness at low media cost
- increase brand reach rapidly
- encourage peer endorsement
- create strong emotional and cultural relevance
- enhance destination or brand visibility among younger audiences

A destination video showing a hidden gem, unusual experience, or lifestyle aspiration may spread quickly if it captures attention and invites sharing. Viral campaigns are especially effective when targeting Millennials and Gen Zs, who often discover travel ideas through social platforms.

- **Limitations of viral marketing**

However, viral marketing is difficult to control:

- virality cannot be guaranteed
- content may attract attention but not bookings
- short-term visibility may not lead to long-term brand value
- campaigns may be misunderstood or copied
- audience reaction can become negative very quickly

In addition, what becomes viral may not always align with brand identity. A campaign may achieve reach but fail to communicate the intended positioning.

Evaluation

Viral marketing is effective for awareness, engagement, and brand conversation, but less reliable for strategic consistency and long-term control. In hospitality and tourism, it works best

when linked to wider brand and communication goals rather than treated as a standalone solution.

- **Assessing the Effectiveness of Guerrilla Marketing**

Guerrilla marketing is less common than digital marketing in tourism and hospitality, but it can be highly effective in the right context.

- **Strengths of guerrilla marketing**

Guerrilla marketing can:

- create memorable brand experiences
- attract media attention
- generate strong word-of-mouth
- differentiate a brand in crowded markets
- work well with limited budgets if creatively executed

For example, a destination might install an immersive beach or safari-themed activation in a city centre to stimulate curiosity and social sharing. A boutique hotel brand may use unexpected pop-up experiences to communicate personality and distinctiveness.

- **Limitations of guerrilla marketing**

Its limitations include:

- limited geographic reach unless supported digitally
- risk of confusing audiences if the message is unclear
- possible reputational risk if perceived as disruptive
- difficulty measuring direct commercial impact
- may not suit premium or conservative brands

Guerrilla tactics are often strongest at generating attention, but weaker at sustaining long-term engagement unless followed by broader campaigns.

Evaluation

Guerrilla marketing is effective for disruption, publicity, and differentiation, especially in urban, event-based, or youth-oriented markets. However, it is usually most effective as a complementary tactic rather than a core communication strategy.

Comparative Critical Evaluation

When assessed together, these three strategies offer different types of value.

- **Digital marketing** is the most strategically reliable and operationally useful. It supports awareness, engagement, conversion, loyalty, and measurement.
- **Viral marketing** is highly powerful for attention and social amplification, but unpredictable and difficult to control.
- **Guerrilla marketing** is useful for impact and memorability, but usually limited in scale and duration.



Need to know

At MBA level, it is important to recognise that no strategy is universally effective. Their success depends on:

- target audience
- campaign objective
- brand identity
- budget and resources
- integration with wider communication planning
- consistency with customer experience

A luxury resort may benefit more from refined digital marketing and selective viral storytelling than from aggressive guerrilla tactics. A youth-oriented destination or festival may benefit from all three, especially if used together.



Did you know...?

That in tourism, highly shareable short-form video content can sometimes influence destination interest more quickly than traditional advertising.



Case Study

A city tourism board wants to attract younger international visitors. It launches a digital campaign using short-form video, paid social media advertising, and an interactive city guide app. At the same time, it partners with travel creators to produce highly shareable nightlife and cultural content. To increase attention further, it creates a temporary immersive street installation in a major international airport that allows travellers to experience the city's music, food, and visual identity.

The campaign generates strong online engagement and media attention, but visitor surveys later show that some tourists expected a more vibrant experience than they actually received.

Questions for discussion

1. Which elements of the campaign reflect digital marketing, viral marketing, and guerrilla marketing?
2. Which strategy appears to be the most effective in this case, and why?

3. Why might strong communication results still lead to visitor dissatisfaction?
4. What should the tourism board do to improve long-term effectiveness?



Industry Insight:

Hospitality and tourism organisations increasingly blend digital marketing, viral tactics, and experience-led communication to compete in a crowded digital marketplace. Large hotel groups, airlines, and destination marketing organisations now rely on digital marketing as the foundation of communication because it supports targeting, analytics, customer relationship management, and direct conversion. This makes it especially valuable in a sector where the path from inspiration to booking often happens online.

At the same time, the sector is strongly influenced by social proof and visual storytelling. This is why viral marketing has become important, particularly for lifestyle-led tourism products, city breaks, experiential travel, and youth-oriented destinations. A single piece of content can rapidly shape destination image, but this also creates risk. Brands may gain visibility without gaining the right kind of reputation, or they may generate attention that exceeds operational capacity.

Guerrilla marketing remains more selective, but when used well it can support strong destination or brand recall. Tourism is an experiential industry, so physical activations and unexpected public experiences can reinforce emotional engagement. However, organisations must ensure that creative communication tactics match the brand promise and can be translated into real visitor satisfaction.

The most effective organisations do not treat these strategies separately. Instead, they use them as part of an integrated communication system in which attention, engagement, conversion, and loyalty are linked across multiple touchpoints.



Over to you

Choose a hospitality or tourism organisation such as a hotel, airline, destination, attraction, or tour operator.

Write a short analysis that:

- identifies one example of digital marketing, viral marketing, or guerrilla marketing used by the organisation
- evaluates how effective that strategy is likely to be

- explains whether the strategy supports brand identity and customer engagement
- gives one recommendation for improvement

Aim for 350 to 450 words.

Revision on the Go:

- Digital marketing uses digital channels such as websites, email, search, and social media.
- It is highly effective in tourism because travellers search and book online.
- Viral marketing depends on shareable content and peer-to-peer spread.
- It is useful for awareness but difficult to control.
- Guerrilla marketing uses unconventional tactics to attract attention.
- It can create strong impact but is often short term.
- No single strategy is always best; effectiveness depends on context and objectives.
- Integrated campaigns are usually more effective than isolated tactics.



3.3 Recommend marketing communication strategies for the chosen hospitality or tourism organisation with relevant justification

At MBA level, recommending marketing communication strategies requires more than listing promotional tools. It involves selecting the most appropriate communication mix for a specific hospitality or tourism organisation, linking that mix to strategic objectives, target markets, brand identity, competitive context, and customer behaviour.

In hospitality and tourism, communication strategy is especially important because products are largely intangible and experience-based. Customers often make decisions based on expectations created through images, reviews, stories, digital content, and e-word-of-mouth. A destination, hotel, resort, airline, visitor attraction, or tour operator must therefore communicate not only what it offers, but also why it is distinctive, credible, and valuable.

A strong recommendation must show clear justification. It should explain why certain communication strategies are appropriate for the chosen organisation, how they support business goals, and how they improve brand visibility, engagement, conversion, and long-term loyalty.

- **Recommending Marketing Communication Strategies**

Recommending effective marketing communication strategies in tourism and hospitality requires a systematic approach that connects business objectives, audience insights, and channel selection into a coherent plan. At the MBA level, this goes beyond simply listing tactics – it demands strategic reasoning that justifies why particular approaches are suited to a specific hospitality context, target market, and competitive environment.

A marketing communication strategy is essentially a plan for how a tourism or hospitality organisation will deliver the right message, to the right audience, through the right channels, at the right time, in order to achieve defined business outcomes. The recommendation process should reflect analytical thinking, industry awareness, and practical feasibility.

- **The Strategic Framework for Making Recommendations**

When recommending marketing communication strategies, a structured framework ensures that proposals are grounded in evidence rather than assumption.

- **Situational Analysis** forms the starting point. Before recommending any strategy, it is essential to assess the current position of the organisation. This includes understanding the brand's strengths and weaknesses, the competitive landscape, market trends, seasonality patterns, and any existing communication efforts and their performance. Tools such as SWOT analysis, competitor benchmarking, and guest feedback analysis provide the diagnostic foundation upon which recommendations are built. A boutique resort struggling with low occupancy during shoulder season faces a fundamentally different communication challenge than an urban hotel chain seeking to differentiate itself in a saturated market, and the recommendations should reflect that difference.

- **Target Audience Identification and Segmentation** is the next critical step. Tourism and hospitality markets are diverse, and effective communication depends on understanding precisely who the organisation is trying to reach. Segmentation in this industry can be based on demographics such as age, income, and family status; psychographics such as travel motivations, lifestyle, and values; behavioural patterns such as booking lead time, channel preferences, and loyalty status; or geographic origin. A luxury safari lodge marketing to high-net-worth couples from Europe requires a vastly different communication approach than a budget hostel chain targeting solo backpackers from Southeast Asia. The recommendation should clearly define the priority segments and demonstrate an understanding of their media consumption habits, decision-making processes, and emotional triggers.

- **Setting Communication Objectives** ensures that every recommendation is tied to a measurable purpose. Objectives should follow the SMART framework – specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound. In tourism and hospitality, communication objectives typically fall into several categories: building awareness of a destination or property among a new market segment, shifting brand perception or positioning, driving direct bookings during a defined period, increasing guest engagement and loyalty, managing reputation following a crisis, or launching a new product such as a renovated property or a new experience package. The nature of the objective directly shapes which communication strategies are most appropriate. Awareness objectives call for broad-reach channels and emotionally compelling content, while conversion objectives demand more targeted, action-oriented approaches.

- **Recommended Marketing Communication Strategies and Justification**

A strong recommendation draws from a range of communication strategies and justifies the selection based on the situation, audience, and objectives identified above.

- **Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC)** is a strategic planning framework that ensures all forms of marketing communication – advertising, public relations (PR), social media, email, content marketing, influencer partnerships, sales promotions, direct marketing, and on-property guest interactions – work together cohesively to deliver a unified, consistent, and mutually reinforcing brand message across every channel and touchpoint. In tourism and hospitality, IMC is not merely a best practice but a strategic imperative because the customer journey is exceptionally fragmented and multi-channel – a single traveller might first encounter a destination through a friend's Instagram post, then read a blog article surfaced through organic search, compare properties on an online travel agency, watch a video tour on YouTube, receive a targeted social media advertisement, visit the brand's own website, read reviews on TripAdvisor, book through a mobile app, receive a pre-arrival email sequence, experience the physical property, and subsequently share their own content and reviews, creating a complex web of interactions across owned, earned, and paid media that spans weeks or even months before and after the actual stay. Without an integrated approach, these touchpoints risk delivering fragmented, contradictory, or totally inconsistent messages that confuse the traveller, dilute brand identity, and erode the

trust that is essential to converting interest into commitment in an industry where the purchase is high-involvement, emotionally significant, and non-returnable. The foundational principle of IMC is that the brand must speak with one voice regardless of where the guest encounters it, meaning that the visual identity, core messaging, value proposition, tone, and emotional register must remain coherent whether the traveller is reading a press feature, scrolling through a social media feed, opening a promotional email, speaking with a reservations agent, or standing in the hotel lobby – consistency across these encounters builds cumulative brand recognition and reinforces the positioning that differentiates the organisation from its competitors. Implementing IMC in a hospitality context requires breaking down the organisational silos that traditionally separate marketing, communications, sales, revenue management, guest relations, and operations, because the guest does not experience these functions as separate departments but as a single continuous relationship with the brand, and any disconnect between what marketing promises and what operations delivers represents the most damaging form of communication inconsistency possible in the industry.

IMC framework for a hospitality organisation begins with a clearly defined brand positioning and messaging architecture that serves as the reference point for all communication activity, followed by a channel strategy that assigns specific roles to each platform based on its strengths and the audience behaviour it serves – social media for inspiration and community, search for capturing active intent, email for personalised relationship nurturing, public relations for third-party credibility, content marketing for depth and authority, and on-property touchpoints for experiential reinforcement – all coordinated through a unified content calendar, shared performance dashboards, and cross-functional planning processes that ensure every team contributing to the guest experience is aligned around the same strategic narrative. The justification for adopting an IMC approach extends beyond message consistency to measurable commercial impact: integrated campaigns that coordinate activity across multiple channels generate significantly stronger awareness, engagement, and conversion outcomes than isolated single-channel efforts because they create multiple reinforcing impressions that move travellers progressively through the decision funnel, and the synergies between channels – where social media content drives search interest, which leads to website visits, which trigger retargeting advertisements, which are followed by email nurture sequences – produce a cumulative effect that exceeds the sum of individual channel contributions. Furthermore, IMC enables more efficient resource allocation by identifying redundancies, ensuring that content and creative assets are strategically repurposed across channels rather than recreated in isolation, and providing a holistic view of marketing performance that reveals how channels interact rather than evaluating each in a vacuum, which is critical in an industry where marketing budgets must be carefully balanced against the commission costs of third-party distribution and the operational investments that underpin the guest experience itself.

- Integrated marketing communications should be understood as the overarching strategic discipline within which all other communication strategies – content marketing, social media, email, influencer partnerships, online reputation management (ORM), PR, and digital advertising – are coordinated and harmonised, and its effectiveness ultimately

depends not only on the sophistication of the planning framework but on the organisational culture, leadership commitment, and cross-functional collaboration required to ensure that every person and every platform contributing to the guest experience is telling the same story with the same conviction and the same attention to the promise that first inspired the traveller to book.

- **Content Marketing and Storytelling** is a strategic communication approach centred on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and compelling narrative-driven content that attracts, engages, and retains a defined audience of potential and existing travellers by offering genuine utility or emotional resonance rather than overt promotional messaging. In tourism and hospitality, this strategy holds particular significance because the core product is an intangible experience that cannot be physically examined, sampled, or returned – travellers are essentially purchasing a promise, and content serves as the primary vehicle through which that promise is made tangible, credible, and emotionally compelling before any transaction occurs. Storytelling elevates content marketing beyond the purely informational by weaving brand messages into narratives that connect with travellers on a human level – a heritage hotel does not merely list its amenities but tells the story of its restoration and the families who have shaped its character across generations, a safari lodge does not simply advertise game drives but shares the personal account of a guest witnessing a leopard at dawn, and a coastal destination does not just promote its beaches but narrates the journey of a local fisherman whose traditions have defined the region's culinary identity for centuries.

This narrative approach is strategically powerful because human decision-making, particularly in discretionary and emotionally significant purchases like travel, is driven far more by feeling and imagination than by feature comparison, and stories activate emotional engagement, memory retention, and personal identification in ways that factual descriptions and promotional copy fundamentally cannot. In practice, a hospitality content marketing strategy encompasses a diverse ecosystem of formats deployed across the customer journey – long-form destination guides, blog articles, and travel planning resources serve travellers in the research phase, immersive video tours and behind-the-scenes features build familiarity and trust during consideration, guest experience narratives and testimonial stories provide social proof approaching conversion, and post-stay content such as curated memory collections, loyalty-focused storytelling, and invitations to share personal travel narratives sustain the relationship beyond checkout and nurture advocacy.

The distribution of this content must be strategically aligned with where the target audience consumes information, spanning owned channels such as the brand website, blog, and email programme, earned channels where media coverage and guest sharing amplify reach organically, and paid channels where sponsored content and social promotion extend visibility to precisely targeted segments who have not yet encountered the brand. A critical principle underpinning effective content marketing is that the content must deliver standalone value to the audience – it must educate, inspire, entertain, or solve a genuine problem on its own merits, because modern travellers are sophisticated consumers of digital content who instinctively disengage from material that exists solely to sell, and the

brands that earn sustained attention are those that consistently contribute something meaningful to the traveller's experience of researching, planning, and dreaming about their next journey. The strategic justification for investing in content marketing and storytelling within a hospitality communication plan is multifaceted: it builds brand authority and trust over time in a way that transactional advertising cannot, it improves organic search visibility as high-quality content attracts inbound links and satisfies search engine algorithms that increasingly reward depth and relevance, it provides a continuous supply of material that fuels social media, email, and public relations activity across the entire integrated communication ecosystem, it differentiates the brand in crowded markets where competing properties often share similar physical attributes and price points but rarely invest in distinctive narrative identities, and it generates compounding returns as evergreen content continues to attract and engage new audiences long after its initial publication. Furthermore, in an era where generative AI platforms are increasingly mediating travel discovery and recommendation, brands with rich, distinctive, and widely distributed content are more likely to be surfaced in AI-generated responses, connecting content marketing directly to the emerging discipline of generative engine optimisation.

Content marketing and storytelling should be understood not as a supplementary or discretionary activity but as a foundational strategic capability that shapes how the brand is perceived, discovered, and chosen – and that its effectiveness depends on sustained commitment, editorial quality, authentic voice, and rigorous alignment between the stories told and the experiences actually delivered, because in hospitality, the fastest way to destroy brand credibility is to tell a story that the guest experience fails to honour.

- **Social Media Marketing Strategy** in tourism and hospitality is a planned, platform-specific approach to using social networks as channels for brand building, audience engagement, travel inspiration, community cultivation, and increasingly, direct commercial conversion. Unlike many industries where social media serves primarily as an awareness or customer service tool, hospitality occupies a privileged position within the social media landscape because travel is inherently visual, aspirational, and shareable – people naturally document and broadcast their travel experiences, making every guest a potential content creator and brand advocate without any prompting from the organisation itself. A strategic approach to social media in this context requires far more than maintaining an active posting schedule – it demands deliberate platform selection based on where the target audience spends attention and how they consume travel content, with each platform serving a distinct strategic function. Instagram remains central to hospitality marketing for its visual storytelling capability, serving as both an inspiration engine where stunning imagery and short-form video capture wanderlust and a social proof mechanism where tagged guest content validates the brand promise. TikTok has rapidly emerged as a powerful discovery platform, particularly among younger demographics, where short, authentic, and often spontaneous video content can achieve extraordinary organic reach and position a property or destination in front of audiences who were not actively searching but are receptive to inspiration. Facebook continues to offer sophisticated advertising infrastructure with granular targeting capabilities based on demographics, interests, and behaviours, and remains particularly relevant for reaching older travellers, group travel organisers, and

family holiday planners. Pinterest functions as a visual search and planning tool where travellers actively curate boards for upcoming trips, making it a valuable channel for reaching audiences during the early consideration phase. YouTube supports long-form content such as property tours, destination guides, and immersive experience videos that serve travellers deeper in the research stage who are seeking detailed visual information before committing to a booking. A critical dimension of hospitality social media strategy is the role of user-generated content, which serves as one of the most powerful forms of social proof available to the industry – strategically encouraging guests to share their experiences through branded hashtags, photo-worthy on-property moments, interactive challenges, or repost incentives creates a continuously renewing stream of authentic content that carries significantly more credibility with prospective guests than polished brand-produced material. Paid social media amplification complements organic efforts by extending reach beyond existing followers, enabling precise targeting of high-potential traveller segments, supporting retargeting of users who have previously engaged with the brand, and driving traffic to direct booking channels – and the ability to set precise budgets, test creative variations in real time, and measure performance at a granular level makes paid social one of the most controllable and optimisable tools in the hospitality marketing arsenal. The strategic justification for investing in a comprehensive social media strategy rests on the convergence of several factors: the platforms are where modern travellers spend significant daily attention, the visual and experiential nature of hospitality content aligns naturally with how these platforms are designed to be used, the combination of organic and paid capabilities allows both brand-building and performance-driven objectives to be pursued simultaneously, and the data generated through social engagement provides continuous insight into audience preferences, content resonance, and emerging travel sentiment that can inform broader marketing and operational decisions.

- **Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) Strategy** in tourism and hospitality is a long-term communication approach focused on improving the organic visibility of a brand's digital presence in search engine results for the queries that potential travellers use when researching destinations, accommodation, dining, activities, and travel experiences. The strategic importance of SEO in this industry cannot be overstated because search engines remain the single most significant gateway through which travellers begin their journey from intent to booking — when a potential guest types a query such as "best family resorts in the Maldives," "romantic boutique hotels in Santorini," or "things to do in Kyoto in autumn," the properties and destinations that appear prominently in those organic results capture attention at the precise moment of active interest, which represents the highest-value stage of the marketing funnel because the traveller has self-identified their intent and is actively seeking options rather than passively encountering an advertisement.

A comprehensive hospitality SEO strategy operates across three interconnected dimensions: technical SEO, which ensures that the website is fast, mobile-responsive, secure, properly indexed, and structured in a way that search engine crawlers can efficiently read and understand, including the implementation of schema markup that enables rich results such as star ratings, pricing, and availability to appear directly in the search listing; on-page SEO, which involves creating high-quality, relevant content that aligns with the

search intent behind target queries, optimising page titles, meta descriptions, heading structures, image alt text, and internal linking architecture to signal topical authority and relevance to search algorithms; and off-page SEO, which builds the website's domain authority through earning backlinks from reputable travel publications, tourism directories, media features, and industry partners, signalling to search engines that the site is a trusted and authoritative source within its niche. Content plays a central and expanding role in hospitality SEO strategy because modern search algorithms increasingly reward depth, originality, and genuine usefulness over keyword density and technical manipulation – a hotel that publishes comprehensive neighbourhood guides, seasonal travel advice, local dining recommendations, and detailed experience descriptions not only provides value to potential guests but simultaneously builds a library of indexed pages that capture long-tail search queries which collectively represent a substantial volume of high-intent traffic that competitors relying solely on their core booking pages will never reach.

SEO deserves particular emphasis in hospitality because a significant proportion of travel-related searches carry geographic intent, making Google Business profile optimisation, local citation consistency, map pack visibility, and location-specific content creation essential components of the strategy – a restaurant, attraction, or hotel that dominates local search results gains a decisive advantage in capturing travellers who are already in or actively planning to visit the area. The competitive landscape of hospitality SEO is uniquely challenging because individual properties and destinations compete not only against each other but against powerful online travel agencies, metasearch platforms, and review aggregators that invest enormous resources in SEO and often dominate the first page of results for high-volume queries, meaning that hospitality brands must be strategically selective about the queries they pursue, focusing on branded terms, long-tail queries, and content-rich informational searches where they can realistically achieve visibility rather than competing head-to-head with OTAs for generic high-volume terms where the cost of competition outweighs the likely return. The strategic justification for sustained investment in SEO within a hospitality marketing communication plan is grounded in its compounding economics – unlike paid search where visibility ceases the moment spending stops, organic rankings built through consistent technical excellence, content quality, and authority development generate ongoing traffic and bookings without incremental per-click costs, meaning that the return on investment appreciates over time as the cumulative library of optimised content continues to attract new visitors, making SEO one of the most cost-effective long-term demand generation channels available when measured against the lifetime value of the organic traffic it delivers. Moreover, SEO and content marketing operate in a symbiotic relationship within the integrated communication plan – the content created for storytelling, guest engagement, and brand authority simultaneously serves the technical requirements of search visibility, while the keyword research and search intent analysis that inform SEO strategy reveal precisely what travellers want to know, guiding content creation toward topics of genuine audience demand rather than internal assumption.

SEO strategy should be understood not as a narrow technical discipline delegated entirely to specialists but as a strategic communication investment that shapes how a hospitality brand is discovered, evaluated, and chosen in the digital environment, and one that must be

planned with patience and sustained commitment because meaningful organic visibility is built over months and years rather than days and weeks, yet once established, it creates a durable competitive advantage that is significantly harder for competitors to replicate than any paid media campaign.



- **Generative Engine Optimisation (GEO) Strategy** is an emerging marketing communication strategy that focuses on ensuring a hospitality brand, property, or destination appears prominently in the responses generated by AI-powered search and conversational platforms such as ChatGPT, Google AI Overviews, Perplexity, and Microsoft Copilot. As travellers increasingly turn to these generative AI tools to research destinations, compare hotels, plan itineraries, and seek personalised travel recommendations, the traditional model of optimising solely for conventional search engine results pages is no longer sufficient.

GEO requires hospitality marketers to think beyond keywords and rankings and instead consider how their brand information is structured, cited, and represented across the sources that large language models draw upon when generating answers. In practice, this means ensuring that brand content is factually accurate, clearly structured, widely cited across authoritative third-party sources, and rich in the kind of specific, contextual detail that AI systems favour when synthesising responses – such as precise descriptions of location, amenities, guest experience, pricing context, and unique differentiators. For a boutique heritage hotel, for example, a GEO strategy might involve ensuring that the property is consistently described across its own website, travel publications, review platforms, and industry directories with coherent, detailed, and distinctive language that an AI model would surface when a traveller asks for recommendations matching that profile.

The strategic justification for investing in GEO within a hospitality marketing communication plan is rooted in the fundamental shift in how travellers discover and shortlist options: if a property or destination does not appear in AI-generated recommendations, it risks being excluded from consideration entirely, regardless of how well it performs in traditional search.

GEO does not replace SEO but rather extends it, recognising that the gatekeepers of travel information are evolving and that visibility must now be pursued across both algorithmic search results and AI-generated conversational answers.



Email Marketing is a direct, permission-based communication strategy that enables hospitality organisations to deliver targeted, personalised messages to prospective and existing guests at every stage of the customer journey, from initial inspiration through to post-stay loyalty nurturing. In tourism and hospitality, email occupies a uniquely valuable position within the marketing communication mix because it provides direct access to an owned audience without dependence on the algorithmic visibility constraints of social media platforms or the commission structures of third-party distribution channels, giving the brand full control over message timing, content, and frequency.

A strategically designed hospitality email programme extends far beyond generic promotional blasts – it encompasses segmented campaigns tailored to distinct guest profiles and behavioural triggers, including pre-arrival sequences that build anticipation and offer relevant upsell opportunities such as room upgrades, dining reservations, or spa packages, post-stay communications that express gratitude, solicit reviews, and invite future bookings, seasonal campaigns that promote shoulder-period offers to guests whose travel history suggests receptiveness, abandoned booking recovery emails that re-engage travellers who began but did not complete a reservation, and loyalty programme communications that reward repeat guests with exclusive access, personalised recognition, and tier-based incentives.

The strategic power of email in hospitality and tourism lies in its capacity for personalisation driven by guest data held within the property management system and customer relationship management platform – a returning couple can receive anniversary stay suggestions, a business traveller can be offered their preferred room type at a corporate rate, and a family that visited during summer can receive an early-bird promotion for the following year, all delivered with a level of individual relevance that mass advertising channels cannot replicate. The justification for investing in email as a core communication strategy is reinforced by its consistently strong return on investment relative to other digital channels, its measurability through open rates, click-through rates, conversion rates, and

direct revenue attribution, and its role in reducing acquisition costs by cultivating repeat business from guests who have already demonstrated intent and satisfaction.

Critically, effective email marketing in hospitality demands discipline around frequency, relevance, and value – every message must offer something genuinely useful or meaningful to the recipient, because in an environment of inbox saturation, poorly targeted or excessively frequent communication erodes trust and drives unsubscription, converting a valuable owned audience into a lost one. At the MBA level, email marketing should be understood not as a standalone tactic but as the connective tissue of a broader integrated communication strategy, linking brand awareness efforts with conversion activity and long-term relationship management, and providing a measurable, scalable, and deeply personalised channel through which hospitality organisations can sustain meaningful dialogue with their most valuable asset – the guest who has already chosen to engage.

- **Influencer and partnership marketing** is a communication strategy that leverages the credibility, reach, and audience trust of individuals or organisations outside the hospitality brand itself to amplify awareness, shape perception, and drive bookings. In tourism and hospitality, this strategy is particularly powerful because travel decisions are deeply personal and emotionally driven, meaning potential guests are far more likely to be influenced by a trusted voice sharing an authentic experience than by a brand delivering its own promotional message. Influencer marketing in this context ranges from collaborations with macro-influencers and celebrity travel creators who command large followings and generate broad awareness, to partnerships with micro-influencers and niche content creators whose smaller but highly engaged audiences often deliver stronger conversion rates and more authentic resonance within specific segments such as luxury travel, solo backpacking, family holidays, or sustainable tourism.

Partnership marketing extends beyond individual influencers to encompass strategic collaborations with complementary brands, airlines, lifestyle companies, local tourism boards, cultural institutions, and event organisers, creating co-marketing initiatives that expand reach and add value for the traveller. A boutique wine country hotel might partner with regional vineyards and a premium luggage brand to create a co-branded travel experience campaign, simultaneously reaching the audiences of all three partners with a unified narrative. The strategic justification for this approach lies in the concept of borrowed credibility – the hospitality brand gains access to pre-established trust between the influencer or partner and their audience, which is significantly harder and more expensive to build independently through owned or paid channels alone.

Effective implementation requires careful selection of partners whose values, aesthetic, and audience profile align authentically with the brand, as misalignment is quickly detected by audiences and can damage credibility rather than enhance it. Measurement should go beyond vanity metrics such as follower counts and impressions to evaluate meaningful indicators including engagement quality, referral traffic, booking attribution, content longevity, and the long-term impact on brand perception within the target segment.



Need to know – Communication strategies

At the MBA level, it is important to recognise that influencer and partnership marketing sits at the intersection of earned and paid media, offering a hybrid form of communication that combines the reach of advertising with the authenticity of word-of-mouth, making it one of the most strategically versatile tools available to hospitality marketers when executed with rigour and genuine alignment.

- **Public Relations Strategy** in tourism and hospitality is a planned, sustained communication approach focused on building and maintaining favourable relationships between a hospitality organisation and its key publics – including media, guests, local communities, industry partners, investors, government bodies, and the broader travelling public – with the objective of shaping perception, earning credibility, and establishing a reputational foundation that supports all other marketing and commercial activities.
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- In an industry where trust is paramount and the purchase decision involves significant financial and emotional investment in an experience that cannot be previewed, the credibility conferred by third-party endorsement through earned media carries a weight that paid advertising fundamentally cannot replicate – a glowing feature in a respected travel publication, a segment on a broadcast travel programme, or a recommendation from a trusted journalist reaches the audience with an implicit editorial endorsement that signals quality and authenticity in a way that a brand's own promotional messaging, no matter how polished, is inherently unable to achieve because the audience understands the difference between a brand speaking about itself and an independent voice choosing to speak about the brand.

A hospitality public relations (PR) strategy encompasses several interconnected activities: media relations, which involves identifying, cultivating, and maintaining relationships with travel journalists, editors, broadcasters, and digital content creators who cover the destinations, segments, and themes relevant to the brand, and providing them with compelling story angles, expert commentary, and timely information that makes their work easier and more engaging; press trips and familiarisation visits, which invite media professionals to experience the property or destination firsthand so that their subsequent coverage is grounded in genuine personal experience rather than press release language, producing richer, more vivid, and more credible storytelling; thought leadership, which positions senior figures within the organisation as authoritative voices on industry trends, sustainability practices, destination development, or hospitality innovation through opinion pieces, conference speaking, and expert commentary in trade and consumer media; community relations, which builds goodwill and social licence to operate by engaging meaningfully with the local population, supporting community initiatives, and communicating the positive economic and social impact of tourism activity in the region; and crisis communication, which is arguably the most consequential dimension of

hospitality PR because the hospitality and tourism industry is uniquely vulnerable to reputational damage from events such as food safety incidents, natural disasters, security concerns, negative viral social media episodes, or public health emergencies, and the speed, transparency, and empathy with which an organisation communicates during a crisis can determine whether the event becomes a temporary setback or a lasting brand wound.

The relationship between PR and digital communications has evolved significantly in the hospitality sector, with traditional media relations now extending to encompass online travel publications, influential blogs, podcasts, and digital-first editorial platforms that often command larger and more engaged audiences than their print predecessors, while social media monitoring and rapid response capability have become essential PR functions as a single guest complaint or operational incident can escalate into a widely shared public narrative within hours if not addressed with skill and speed.

The strategic justification for investing in public relations within a hospitality marketing communication plan rests on several reinforcing arguments: earned media coverage provides credibility that money cannot buy and that audiences increasingly value as they grow more sceptical of paid advertising and sponsored content; PR activity generates high-quality backlinks from authoritative media websites that directly strengthen search engine optimisation performance, creating a tangible connection between reputation building and digital visibility; media features and editorial mentions produce content that can be repurposed and amplified across owned channels including the brand website, social media, and email campaigns, extending the value of a single placement across the entire communication ecosystem; strong community and stakeholder relations create a supportive operating environment that reduces regulatory friction, attracts talent, and builds local advocacy; and a well-prepared crisis communication capability protects the brand equity that has been painstakingly constructed through years of marketing investment, ensuring that inevitable operational challenges are managed in a way that preserves rather than destroys guest confidence.

A PR strategy should be understood as a long-term investment in institutional credibility and stakeholder trust that operates on a fundamentally different logic to performance marketing – its returns are not measured in immediate clicks and conversions but in the depth and durability of the brand's reputation, the quality of relationships that open doors to opportunities and provide resilience in adversity, and the cumulative authority that makes every other element of the marketing communication plan more effective because it is built upon a foundation of genuine public confidence and respect.

- **Online reputation management** is a proactive and continuous communication strategy focused on monitoring, influencing, and responding to what is said about a hospitality brand across digital platforms, with the strategic objective of shaping public perception and building the trust that directly underpins booking decisions. In tourism and hospitality, reputation management carries exceptional weight because the product is an intangible experience that cannot be evaluated before purchase, making prospective guests heavily reliant on the reported experiences of others to reduce perceived risk. Platforms such as

TripAdvisor, Google Reviews, Booking.com, and Yelp function not merely as review repositories but as active decision-making environments where travellers compare options, filter by rating, and read detailed guest accounts before committing financially and emotionally to a stay or experience.

A strategic approach to online reputation management goes far beyond passively monitoring what guests say – it involves systematically encouraging satisfied guests to share their experiences through well-timed post-stay prompts, responding thoughtfully and promptly to both positive and negative feedback in a tone that reflects the brand's values, analysing review content for recurring themes that reveal operational strengths and weaknesses, and integrating reputation insights into service improvement and marketing messaging. The manner in which a hotel or restaurant responds to a negative review is itself a powerful form of public communication, as prospective guests frequently judge a brand not by the existence of criticism but by the quality and sincerity of its response, meaning that a well-handled complaint can enhance perception more than a flawless five-star review. The strategic justification for prioritising reputation management within a hospitality marketing communication plan is supported by substantial evidence that online ratings directly influence both visibility and revenue – properties with higher review scores achieve better algorithmic placement on OTAs and metasearch platforms, command stronger pricing power, and convert lookers into bookers at significantly higher rates than lower-rated competitors. Furthermore, reputation management creates a virtuous feedback loop between marketing and operations: guest feedback informs service enhancements, which in turn generate better reviews, which strengthen the brand narrative that marketing communication can amplify across all other channels.



Need to know – Online Reputation Management (ORM)

At the MBA level, it is essential to understand that ORM is not a peripheral or reactive exercise but a core strategic function that sits at the intersection of marketing communication, guest experience, and operational excellence, and that neglecting it effectively cedes control of the brand narrative to external voices in an environment where a single viral complaint can reach thousands of potential guests within hours.

- **Guerrilla Marketing** in tourism and hospitality is an unconventional, creativity-driven communication strategy that relies on imagination, surprise, and bold execution rather than large media budgets to generate outsized attention, emotional engagement, and word-of-mouth amplification for a destination, property, or travel experience. The term, originally coined by Jay Conrad Levinson in 1984, draws its metaphor from irregular warfare – small, agile forces using unexpected tactics to achieve disproportionate impact against larger, better-resourced opponents – and in the hospitality and tourism context, this translates to

marketing interventions that break through the noise of conventional travel advertising by placing the brand in unexpected places, creating surprising encounters, or staging memorable experiences that compel people to talk, share, and remember.

In practice, guerrilla marketing in tourism and hospitality takes diverse forms: a destination marketing organisation might transform a grey urban bus shelter in a key source market into an immersive tropical beach scene complete with sand, sound, and scent to transport commuters momentarily into the destination experience; a boutique hotel might scatter beautifully designed golden room keys across a city with each key unlocking a complimentary stay for the finder, generating excitement, social media activity, and press coverage simultaneously; an airline might stage a flash mob performance in an airport arrivals hall that surprises passengers and rapidly circulates online; or a resort might create a temporary pop-up experience in a high-footfall urban location that allows passersby to sample an element of the guest experience through virtual reality (VR), interactive installations, or sensory immersion, planting the seed of desire in an audience that was not actively considering travel at that moment.

The strategic power of guerrilla marketing lies in its ability to generate earned media and organic social sharing that dramatically extends the reach of the initial activation far beyond the people who physically witnessed it – a well-executed guerrilla campaign is designed not only for the immediate audience but for the secondary audience of thousands or millions who encounter it through photographs, videos, news coverage, and social media posts shared by those who were present, meaning that the true reach of the activation is measured not by the footfall at the physical location but by the velocity and breadth of its digital afterlife. This characteristic makes guerrilla marketing particularly well-suited to tourism and hospitality because travel content is among the most widely shared and engaged-with material on social media, and a surprising, visually striking, or emotionally resonant brand experience naturally invites the kind of documentation and sharing behaviour that the industry depends upon for organic amplification.

The strategic justification for incorporating guerrilla marketing within a hospitality communication plan is most compelling for organisations that face one or more of the following conditions: limited marketing budgets that preclude competing with larger rivals on traditional paid media spend, a need to disrupt established perceptions and reposition a destination or brand that has become overlooked or misunderstood, a desire to reach younger and digitally native audiences who are largely resistant to conventional advertising but highly responsive to novel and shareable experiences, or a competitive environment in which multiple similar properties or destinations are communicating through identical channels with interchangeable messages and the brand needs to differentiate through the boldness and creativity of its communication rather than its volume.

It is equally important to understand the strategic risks and limitations of guerrilla marketing – campaigns that misjudge tone, cultural context, or public sensitivity can generate negative attention rather than positive buzz, the unpredictable nature of public and media response means outcomes are inherently less controllable than traditional advertising, the impact is

often concentrated in a single burst of attention that must be capitalised upon quickly before the news cycle moves on, and guerrilla tactics alone cannot sustain a brand over time without being anchored within a broader integrated marketing communication strategy that provides the consistency, depth, and ongoing relationship-building that unconventional one-off activations are structurally unable to deliver. The most effective use of guerrilla marketing in hospitality, therefore, is as a strategic punctuation within the wider communication plan – a carefully timed, creatively ambitious intervention that captures attention, generates conversation, and creates a surge of brand visibility that the organisation is prepared to convert into lasting engagement through the supporting channels of content marketing, social media, email, public relations, and direct booking infrastructure that are already in place and ready to receive the audience that the guerrilla activation has attracted.

- **Channel Selection and Integration**

A credible recommendation does not simply list strategies – it explains how they connect. The channel mix should be justified based on where the target audience spends their attention, which channels are most effective for the stated objectives, how the budget will be distributed across channels, and how channels will work together to guide the traveller from awareness through to booking and advocacy.

For instance, a recommendation for a new eco-resort targeting environmentally conscious millennial travellers might propose building awareness through Instagram and TikTok content partnerships with sustainability-focused travel influencers, driving consideration through SEO-optimised blog content about responsible travel, converting interest into bookings through retargeting ads and email nurture sequences, and building post-stay advocacy through a user-generated content campaign and review solicitation program. Each channel has a clear role, and together they form a coherent journey.

- **Budget and Resource Considerations**

MBA-level recommendations must acknowledge practical constraints. A proposed strategy should be realistic given the organisation's budget, team capabilities, and technological infrastructure. Recommending an ambitious AI-driven personalisation strategy to a small independent hotel with a two-person marketing team is not credible. Equally, recommending only organic social media to a large resort chain launching in a new market underestimates the need for paid amplification. The recommendation should prioritise strategies that deliver the greatest impact relative to available resources and suggest phased implementation if budget is limited.

- **Measurement and Evaluation**


Every recommended strategy must include a clear plan for measuring effectiveness. Key performance indicators should be defined for each communication channel and tied back to the overarching objectives. In hospitality digital marketing, important metrics include website traffic, conversion rates, cost per acquisition, direct booking revenue, email engagement, social media growth, review scores, return on ad spend, and revenue per available room. Regularly


reviewing performance and adjusting strategies is essential, emphasising that marketing communications require continuous optimisation, not a one-time effort.


- **Crafting the Recommendation**

When presenting marketing communication strategy recommendations – whether in an assessment, a boardroom, or a consultancy report – the structure should follow a logical flow. Begin with the situational context that justifies the need for the strategy. Define the target audience with specificity. State the communication objectives clearly. Present the recommended strategies and channels with a rationale for each. Explain how they integrate into a cohesive plan. Address budget and resource implications. And conclude with the measurement framework that will determine success.

The strongest recommendations demonstrate not just knowledge of available tools and tactics, but strategic judgment – the ability to discern which approaches are most likely to succeed in a given context and to articulate a compelling case for why. This is ultimately what distinguishes tactical execution from strategic thinking in tourism and hospitality marketing.

	Need to know – Communication strategies
To recommend marketing effectively, you must link communication choices to organisational objectives, target audience, brand identity, available resources, and the customer journey. In hospitality and tourism, the strongest recommendations are usually integrated, targeted, and justified through clear strategic reasoning.	

	Did you know...?
That in hospitality and tourism, repeat business and customer advocacy often depend as much on post-visit communication as on pre-booking promotion.	

	Case Study –
A boutique mountain resort wants to attract high-spending wellness travellers aged 30 to 55 from international markets. The resort has recently upgraded its spa offering, introduced nature-based wellness experiences, and repositioned itself around exclusivity, mindfulness, and personalised service. However, awareness remains low outside its domestic market.	

Management is considering a range of communication options including paid digital advertising, wellness influencers, public relations, email campaigns, and social media storytelling.

Questions for discussion

1. Which communication strategies would you recommend for this resort, and why?
2. Which strategies would be less appropriate, and why?
3. How should the resort ensure its communication supports its premium brand identity?
4. What metrics could be used to judge whether the communication strategy is effective?



Over to you

Choose a hospitality or tourism organisation such as a hotel, resort, airline, destination, attraction, or tour operator.

Prepare a short recommendation of 400 to 500 words that:

- identifies the organisation's likely communication challenge or opportunity
- recommends two or three suitable marketing communication strategies
- justifies why these strategies are appropriate for the target audience and brand
- explains how success could be measured

Focus on relevance, not quantity.



Industry Insight

In practice, hospitality and tourism organisations increasingly move away from one-size-fits-all communication plans and toward highly segmented, data-informed strategies. Leading brands now recognise that communication effectiveness depends not only on reach, but also on relevance, timing, and consistency across touchpoints.

For example, a luxury hospitality brand may use PR, premium content, and personalised CRM to reinforce exclusivity, while a destination targeting younger travellers may rely more heavily on creators, social platforms, short-form video, and interactive digital campaigns. At the same time, both must ensure that customer reviews, service delivery, and brand storytelling remain aligned.

One of the most important shifts in the industry is the move from campaign-led communication to journey-led communication. This means that organisations plan messages not only to attract customers, but also to guide them through consideration, booking, experience, and advocacy. As a result, successful communication strategy is now closely tied to customer relationship management, data analytics, digital performance, and brand reputation management.

For managers, this means recommendation skills must be strategic rather than tactical. The strongest communication strategies are those that are clearly justified, measurable, brand-aligned, and adaptable to changing market conditions.

Revision on the Go:

- Marketing communication strategy must support wider business and brand goals.
- Recommendations should be tailored to the chosen hospitality or tourism organisation.
- Audience behaviour is central to channel selection.
- Digital marketing is often the foundation of communication in tourism.
- Social media, PR, content, influencer activity, and CRM each serve different purposes.
- Integrated communication is usually more effective than isolated tactics.
- Strong recommendations require justification, not just description.
- Communication must align with brand promise and actual customer experience.



Summary

In this chapter you learnt classified and show critical evaluation on marketing communication strategies for hospitality and tourism organisations.

You studied how marketing communications assist the development of brand identity strategies.

You learnt about how to assess how effective is digital marketing, viral and guerrilla marketing strategies are towards the hospitality or tourism organisations.

On completion of this chapter, you recommended marketing communication strategies for the chosen hospitality or tourism organisation.



Learning Outcome TASK 3: Classify and show critical evaluation on marketing communication strategies for hospitality and tourism organisations

Context: Chapter Three explores how marketing communication strategies — including brand identity development, digital marketing, viral marketing, guerrilla marketing, integrated marketing communications, content marketing, social media, email, SEO, public relations, influencer partnerships, and reputation management — are classified and critically evaluated in hospitality and tourism. This activity challenges you to engage with how the academic literature classifies and assesses these communication approaches.

Task: Source one peer-reviewed journal article that classifies, compares, or critically evaluates one or more marketing communication strategies within a hospitality or tourism context. Suitable articles might examine the effectiveness of a specific communication tool, compare multiple channels or approaches, propose a classification framework for communication strategies, or evaluate the role of integrated marketing communications in building brand identity.

Suggested search terms: “marketing communication strategies hospitality” • “digital marketing classification tourism” • “integrated marketing communications hotel brand” • “social media effectiveness destination marketing” • “viral guerrilla marketing tourism evaluation” • “brand identity communication hospitality”

What to write (approximately 500–700 words): Prepare a critical analysis covering: how the article classifies or categorises the communication strategy or strategies examined; the theoretical framework or model underpinning the analysis (e.g. IMC theory, the promotions mix, the PESO model, Keller’s brand equity framework); the empirical evidence or case study evidence presented on the strategy’s effectiveness; and the authors’ conclusions about when, why, and for whom the strategy works best.

Reflection: Conclude with a brief evaluative paragraph in which you critically assess the article’s contribution. Consider: does the classification framework hold up across different types of hospitality or tourism organisations? Are there communication strategies the article overlooks? How might emerging developments such as generative engine optimisation, AI-driven personalisation, or short-form video platforms challenge or extend the article’s conclusions? Connect your evaluation to the broader themes of Chapter Three.

Suggested starting point:

Kliatchko, J. (2008). Revisiting the IMC construct: A revised definition and four pillars, *International Journal of Advertising*, 27(1), 133–160.

Leung, D., Law, R., van Hoof, H. & Buhalis, D. (2013). Social media in tourism and hospitality: A literature review, *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 30(1-2), 3–22.

You are encouraged to find a more recent article that reflects current communication trends and technologies.

Reading List

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- Chaffey, D., & Ellis-Chadwick, F. (2022). *Digital marketing* (8th ed.). Harlow, Essex: Pearson.
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Glossary

Term	Definition
Augmented Reality (AR)	Technology that overlays digital information such as directions, reviews, or interactive content onto the real-world environment through a smartphone or wearable device. In hospitality, AR enhances on-site guest experiences and destination exploration.
B2B (Business-to-Business)	Marketing activities directed at other businesses rather than individual consumers. In tourism and hospitality, B2B marketing includes promoting conference facilities to corporate clients, selling wholesale room inventory to tour operators, or partnering with travel agencies.
B2C (Business-to-Consumer)	Marketing activities directed at individual end consumers. Most leisure travel marketing, direct hotel booking campaigns, and destination advertising fall under B2C communication.
Benchmarking	The practice of comparing an organisation's marketing performance against competitors or industry standards. In hospitality, common benchmarks include RevPAR, occupancy rates, direct booking ratios, and online review scores.
Brand Equity	The commercial value derived from consumer perception of a brand name rather than the product or service itself. In hospitality, strong brand equity allows a hotel chain or destination to command premium pricing and generate loyalty beyond functional attributes.
Brand Positioning	The strategic process of establishing a distinct image and identity for a hospitality brand in the minds of the target market relative to competitors. Effective positioning articulates what makes the brand different and why the target audience should choose it.
Buyer Persona	A semi-fictional, research-based profile representing a key segment of a hospitality organisation's target audience. Personas typically include demographic details, travel motivations, booking behaviours, media habits, and pain points to guide communication strategy.
Channel Mix	The combination of marketing communication channels selected to deliver messages to target audiences. In hospitality, the channel mix might include social media, email, paid search, influencer partnerships, public relations, and OTA presence, balanced according to objectives and budget.
Click-Through Rate (CTR)	The percentage of people who click on a link or advertisement after viewing it. CTR is a key performance metric in digital hospitality marketing, measuring the effectiveness of email campaigns, display ads, and search engine listings.

Term	Definition
Content Marketing	A strategic approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant content to attract and engage a target audience. In tourism, this includes destination guides, travel blogs, video tours, and social media storytelling designed to inspire and inform potential travellers.
Conversion Rate	The percentage of users who complete a desired action, such as making a booking, after engaging with a marketing communication. Optimising conversion rates across digital channels is a central concern in hospitality marketing.
Cost Per Acquisition (CPA)	The total marketing cost required to acquire one new customer or booking. CPA is a critical efficiency metric that helps hospitality marketers evaluate the return on investment of different channels and campaigns.
Customer Journey	The complete sequence of interactions and experiences a traveller has with a brand, from initial awareness and inspiration through research, booking, the on-site experience, and post-stay engagement. Mapping the customer journey helps identify key communication touchpoints.
Customer Lifetime Value (CLV)	The projected total revenue a hospitality business can expect from a single guest account over the entire duration of the relationship. CLV informs decisions about acquisition spending, loyalty programme investment, and retention strategies.
Customer Relationship Management (CRM)	A system and strategy for managing interactions with current and potential guests using data to personalise communication, improve service, and drive loyalty. In hospitality, CRM integrates with property management systems to enable targeted marketing.
Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO)	A public or quasi-public body responsible for promoting a geographic area as a travel destination. DMOs coordinate marketing efforts among local stakeholders including hotels, attractions, restaurants, and transport providers.
Digital Marketing	The use of online channels, platforms, and technologies to promote hospitality products and services. Encompasses search engine marketing, social media, email, content marketing, display advertising, and all other internet-based communication strategies.
Artificial intelligence (AI)	When computers or machines are designed to act like humans – for example, by answering questions, solving problems, or giving suggestions.
Augmented reality (AR)	A technology that superimposes a computer-generated image on a user's view of the real world to provide a composite view

Term	Definition
Earned Media	Publicity gained through editorial coverage, guest reviews, social media shares, and word-of-mouth rather than paid advertising. In hospitality, positive earned media such as press features and organic guest posts builds credibility and trust.
Email Marketing	The use of email to communicate with prospective and existing guests. In hospitality, email campaigns include pre-arrival information, promotional offers, loyalty communications, post-stay review requests, and re-engagement sequences.
Experiential Marketing	A strategy that invites consumers to interact with a brand through immersive, hands-on experiences. In tourism, this might include pop-up destination previews, tasting events, or interactive installations that bring the travel experience to potential guests.
Generative engine optimisation (GEO)	the practice of structuring your brand's content so AI tools and answer engines can easily find it, trust it, and cite it in their responses.
Guerrilla Marketing	Unconventional, low-cost, high-impact promotional tactics that rely on creativity and surprise to generate attention and word-of-mouth. In tourism, guerrilla tactics might include staging unexpected destination-themed experiences in urban centres or creating viral street-level installations.
Influencer Marketing	A strategy that leverages individuals with significant online followings and credibility to promote hospitality brands and destinations. Influencer partnerships range from sponsored posts by micro-influencers with niche audiences to large-scale collaborations with celebrity travel creators.
Interactive marketing	Using interactive media to enable a situation or mechanism through which a tourism marketer and a customer interact, usually in real time.
Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC)	A strategic approach ensuring that all forms of marketing communication work together cohesively to deliver a unified, consistent brand message across every channel and touchpoint. IMC is essential in hospitality where guests interact with brands across numerous platforms.
Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	A measurable value that demonstrates how effectively a marketing objective is being achieved. Common hospitality marketing KPIs include website conversion rate, cost per acquisition, direct booking ratio, social media engagement rate, and review scores.
Market Segmentation	The process of dividing a broad travel market into distinct subgroups based on shared characteristics such as demographics, psychographics, travel behaviour, or geographic origin. Segmentation

Term	Definition
	enables targeted communication strategies tailored to each group's needs and preferences.
Marketing Funnel	A model describing the stages a potential guest moves through from initial awareness of a brand or destination to the final booking decision and post-experience advocacy. Stages typically include awareness, consideration, conversion, and loyalty.
Metasearch Engine	A platform that aggregates and compares hotel rates and availability from multiple sources, allowing travellers to find the best price. Examples include Google Hotel Search, Trivago, and Kayak. Hospitality businesses bid for visibility on these platforms as a marketing channel.
MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions)	A segment of the tourism industry focused on business events. MICE marketing involves distinct communication strategies targeting corporate decision-makers, event planners, and associations, typically emphasising facilities, logistics, and professional services.
Mobile Marketing	Marketing strategies specifically designed for smartphones and tablets. In hospitality, this includes mobile-optimised websites, branded apps, push notifications, location-based offers, and SMS communication.
Net Promoter Score (NPS)	A metric measuring guest loyalty by asking how likely they are to recommend a hospitality brand or destination to others on a scale of zero to ten. NPS provides insight into overall guest satisfaction and the likelihood of organic advocacy.
Omnichannel Marketing	A fully integrated approach that provides guests with a seamless, consistent experience across all channels and devices, whether online, mobile, or in-person. Omnichannel strategy goes beyond multichannel by ensuring channels are interconnected rather than operating in parallel.
Online Reputation Management (ORM)	The practice of monitoring, influencing, and responding to what is said about a hospitality brand online. ORM includes managing reviews on platforms such as TripAdvisor and Google, addressing negative feedback, and amplifying positive guest sentiment.
Online Travel Agency (OTA)	A third-party digital platform that sells travel products including hotel rooms, flights, and packages on behalf of providers. Major OTAs include Booking.com, Expedia, and Agoda. OTAs function as both distribution and marketing channels for hospitality businesses.
Owned Media	Communication channels fully controlled by the hospitality organisation, including its website, blog, email database, mobile app, and social media profiles. Owned media provides direct access to

Term	Definition
	audiences without reliance on paid placement or third-party editorial decisions.
Paid Media	Marketing exposure obtained through paid placement, including search engine advertising, social media ads, display banners, sponsored content, and OTA commission-based visibility. Paid media provides immediate reach and is typically used to amplify owned and earned efforts.
Pay-Per-Click (PPC)	An online advertising model where the advertiser pays a fee each time their ad is clicked. In hospitality marketing, PPC campaigns on Google Ads and social platforms drive targeted traffic to booking pages for high-intent search queries.
Personalisation	The practice of tailoring marketing messages, offers, and experiences to individual guests based on their data, preferences, and behaviour. Personalisation in hospitality ranges from customised email offers to dynamic website content and individually curated on-property experiences.
Public Relations (PR)	The strategic management of communication between a hospitality organisation and its publics, including media, guests, communities, and industry stakeholders. PR activities include media relations, press trips, crisis communication, and reputation building through earned coverage.
Return on Investment (ROI)	A measure of the profitability of a marketing investment, calculated as the net revenue generated divided by the cost of the campaign. ROI analysis helps hospitality marketers allocate budgets to the most effective channels and strategies.
Search Engine Marketing (SEM)	The practice of increasing visibility in search engine results through paid advertising. In hospitality, SEM targets travellers actively searching for accommodation, flights, or experiences, capturing high-intent demand at a critical decision point.
Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)	The practice of optimising a website's content, structure, and authority to achieve higher organic rankings in search engine results. For hospitality businesses, strong SEO ensures visibility when travellers search for relevant destinations, properties, or experiences.
SMART Objectives	A framework for setting marketing objectives that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. SMART objectives provide clarity and accountability in hospitality marketing planning and performance evaluation.

Term	Definition
Social media marketing (SMM)	A type of digital marketing using social media and social web (that is, social networks, online communities, blogs, and wikis) or any other online collaborative technology for marketing activities.
Stakeholder	Any individual, group, or organisation that has an interest in or is affected by the marketing activities of a hospitality business. Stakeholders include guests, employees, local communities, investors, government bodies, industry partners, and suppliers.
SWOT Analysis	A strategic planning tool that evaluates an organisation's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. In hospitality marketing, SWOT analysis provides the situational foundation upon which communication strategy recommendations are built.
Touchpoint	Any point of interaction between a traveller and a hospitality brand, whether physical or digital. Touchpoints include advertisements, website visits, booking confirmations, check-in experiences, on-property service encounters, and post-stay emails.
Unique Selling Proposition (USP)	The distinctive benefit or characteristic that sets a hospitality brand or destination apart from its competitors. A clearly articulated USP forms the foundation of all marketing communication and brand positioning.
User-Generated Content (UGC)	Any content created by guests and travellers rather than the brand itself, including reviews, photos, videos, and social media posts. UGC is a powerful form of social proof in hospitality marketing, often perceived as more authentic and trustworthy than branded content.
Viral Marketing	A strategy designed to encourage rapid, organic sharing of promotional content across personal networks, creating exponential exposure. In tourism, viral campaigns leverage the highly visual and emotional nature of travel to generate widespread awareness at relatively low cost.
Yield Management	A pricing strategy that adjusts rates dynamically based on predicted demand patterns to maximise revenue. While primarily a revenue management discipline, yield management intersects with marketing communication through promotional pricing, flash sales, and demand-stimulation campaigns.

Self-Check Questions

Unit: Marketing Approaches in Tourism and Hospitality

MBA / Level 7 Diploma in Hospitality & Tourism Management

Use these questions to review your understanding of the unit. The model answer prompts show the kind of points you should be able to cover in your response.

1. Can you explain the difference between a marketing strategy and a marketing communication strategy?

Model answer:

Your answer should show that a marketing strategy is the wider long-term plan for achieving market goals, while a marketing communication strategy focuses on how the organisation delivers messages to target audiences through channels such as advertising, digital media, PR, and social media.

2. Can you identify the main factors that influence marketing strategy decisions in hospitality and tourism?

Model answer:

You should refer to both internal and external factors, such as organisational goals, budget, brand position, customer needs, competitor activity, technology, economic conditions, and tourism trends.

3. Can you apply Ansoff, STP, Porter's Competitive Strategies, and Blue Ocean Strategy to hospitality or tourism examples?

Model answer:

A strong answer should briefly explain each framework and show how it can be used in practice, for example market penetration for hotels, STP for destination targeting, Porter for differentiation, and Blue Ocean for creating new tourism experiences.

4. Can you recommend a suitable marketing strategy for a hospitality or tourism organisation and justify your choice?

Model answer:

Your response should identify a strategy, explain why it is suitable for the organisation's goals and market context, and support the recommendation with clear reasoning linked to customer demand, competition, or growth opportunities.

5. Can you explain why segmentation, targeting, and positioning (STP) are important in tourism and hospitality marketing?

Model answer:

You should explain that STP helps organisations divide markets into groups, select the most attractive audiences, and position their products or destinations clearly to create competitive advantage.

6. Can you identify the main marketing communication strategies used in hospitality and tourism?

Model answer:

Your answer should mention key communication tools such as advertising, public relations, sales promotion, direct marketing, digital marketing, social media, influencer marketing, and content marketing.

7. Can you critically evaluate the strengths and limitations of digital marketing and social media in the sector?

Model answer:

A balanced response should include strengths such as reach, targeting, engagement, and cost-effectiveness, as well as limitations such as overdependence on platforms, content saturation, reputational risk, and difficulties in measuring long-term impact.

8. Can you assess whether a hospitality or tourism organisation's marketing strategy is effective and sustainable in the long term?

Model answer:

Your answer should show how effectiveness can be judged using measures such as brand awareness, customer engagement, conversion, repeat business, market share, and long-term fit with trends such as sustainability, digital change, and evolving customer expectations.