

SERVICES MARKETING POLICY AND CONSUMPTION OF TOURISM PRODUCTS IN BAYELSA STATE

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Abstract

This research aims to examine the effect of service marketing policy on consumption of tourism products in Bayelsa state, Nigeria. Two research hypotheses were stipulated and tested. The study anchored on Service-Dominant Logic (SDL). Literature was reviewed on service-pricing, service-promotion and other concepts. The study adopted cross-sectional survey research design to sample eighteen tourism establishments selected using ten percent proportion out of one hundred and eighty hotels as well as one hundred and fifty-four tourists. The study adopted primary source of data collection method. Descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis were used in analyzing the data. The findings of the study revealed that, there is significant and positive effect of service-pricing and service-promotion on consumption of tourism products. The study concludes by providing recommendations for improving service marketing in the context of tourism establishments. Management should adjust prices based on demand, time of day, seasonality, and other relevant factors among other things. By implementing these recommendations, tourism establishments can enhance competitive position, attract more visitors, and contribute to the overall economic development of the state.

KEYWORDS: Service-pricing, service-promotion, consumption, tourism products

Introduction

Bayelsa State, nestled in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, which has a wealth of natural beauty, cultural heritage, and unrealized tourism potential. Numerous tourism products, including adventure, culinary, cultural, eco-, and wellness tourism, are abundant in the state. Other things include lodging, transportation, and so forth (Inameti, et al, 2024). Tourism businesses are essential to tourists' consumption of tourism-related goods and, consequently, to the local economy (WTTC, 2017). Nonetheless, in order to prosper in this cutthroat industry, travel agencies need to implement efficient marketing plans that correspond with the changing demands of their clientele. Stated differently, optimizing this potential necessitates a clear service marketing plan that successfully markets and provides upscale tourists with distinctive travel experiences. Stated differently, optimizing this potential necessitates a clear service marketing plan that successfully markets and provides upscale tourists with distinctive travel experiences. Traditional tangible product marketing is very different from services marketing in the tourism industry. Due to their intangible, perishable, and diverse nature, tourism products necessitate a sophisticated strategy that prioritizes client satisfaction, fostering relationships, and providing high-quality services ((Inameti, 2022).

Because tourism experiences are intangible, it can be difficult for prospective tourists to evaluate their worth before traveling. Therefore, in order to effectively communicate the essence of the destination, marketing

strategies must concentrate on developing captivating narratives, employing top-notch imagery, and utilizing customer testimonials. Additionally, it is confirmed that goods related to tourism cannot be kept in storage or inventoried. To optimize occupancy rates and revenue streams, this calls for proactive marketing campaigns, flexible pricing strategies, and accurate demand forecasting. The production and consumption of tourism services often occur simultaneously. However, the quality of services offered, such as lodging, transportation, and hospitality, plays a crucial role in shaping visitor experiences and influencing repeat visits. This underscores the importance of human interaction in providing exceptional experiences. Additionally, well-trained and customer-oriented staff are essential for ensuring guest satisfaction and building positive brand perceptions. Tourism experiences are inherently heterogeneous, varying depending on the time of day, the season, and the individual service providers involved. Maintaining a consistent and positive brand image requires effective quality control measures and consistent service delivery standards.

Attracting travelers on a tight budget requires offering flexible travel packages and competitive pricing. It is more challenging to set and modify prices for services than for tangible goods. This is particularly true considering that the customer still lacks ownership or title to any material possessions even after the transaction (Okpara, 2002). According to Avlonitis et al. (2007), a significant number of writers have emphasized how important pricing is to a business's ability to survive and thrive in the marketplace. Potter (2000), for example, has maintained that the only component of the marketing mix that generates income for the company is pricing. Furthermore, price is the most flexible component of marketing strategy because it can be implemented more quickly than other components. Unlike products, where the final price is determined by the sum of production costs and markup, services are difficult to price, and price cannot readily measure the cost of the services provided. As a result, price setting is essential for service providers, organizations, and marketers to meet their business goals. It is also important to note that, when creating promotional messages, vivid audio-visual items should be used to make the necessary impression on the minds of current and potential clients given the tangibility of services.

Despite the importance of services marketing strategy, there aren't many empirical studies on the consumption of tourism products in this context, and Bayelsa state specifically in recent time. When comparing services to physical products, the dearth of empirical research is even more pronounced. Services have historically received less attention than goods in terms of pricing and promotion (Docters et al. 2004). Price is still one of the least studied and understood aspects of marketing today (Hoffman et al., 2002). However, the need to comprehend services marketing strategy has increased as services become a more significant component of the economy and a larger source of profit for many businesses. An outline of particular subjects of possible interest has not yet been created, despite the fact that the necessity of service-pricing and service-promotion researches are regularly mentioned during conference sessions centered on services marketing strategy. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate how Bayelsa state's tourism product consumption is impacted by services marketing policies. Specifically, the study examines effect of service-pricing and service-promotion on consumption of tourism products. Two hypothetical statements were made and tested thus: service-pricing and service-promotion would positively and significantly affect consumption of tourism products.

Literature Review

Theoretical underpinning

Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) served as the study's foundation. The concept of Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) was not developed by a single person at one particular moment. A number of academics contributed to its development and spread, including Stephen L. Vargo and Robert F. Lusch, and it became a prevailing viewpoint in the early 2000s. With SDL, value creation becomes more service-centric rather than goods-centric. It highlights that, at their core, all economic endeavors—including the manufacturing of goods—involve the provision of services. SDL emphasizes that interactions between visitors, local communities, and service providers co-create value in the context of the Bayelsa state tourism industry. The value that visitors get from their experiences is determined by how they engage with the location, its residents, and the services provided. This suggests that in order to co-create distinctive and significant tourism experiences, stakeholders in the industry—including local communities, companies, and governmental organizations—must work together.

Conceptual Clarification

Concept of services marketing

The primary idea behind services marketing is to improve customer relations, production value, and marketing power. When compared to the traditional marketing perspective (the marketing mix view), the concept of service marketing has a different viewpoint. This may have to do with advertising goods or services. Due to the highly competitive nature of marketing in the current global economy, where service marketing and quality marketing strategies have become fundamental subjects, the service sector has gained additional prominence. Because of the special qualities, traits, and nature of services, marketing services and quality marketing are very different from marketing goods (Baht et al., 2016). Accordingly, when we talk about service marketing, the primary focus is on the interaction rather than the transaction; additionally, because service marketing naturally involves relationships, interactions provide services, and relationships in turn provide interactions; therefore, service management is important and serves as the foundation for relationships, which cannot exist without service management. In fact, this is a common perspective drawn from the Nordic School of service marketing (Gummesson, 2012).

Services Marketing policy

Instead of emphasizing tangible goods and transactions, services marketing policy focuses on providing customers with processes, experiences, and intangibles. It entails instilling a customer-centric mindset across the entire organization and all departments. A successful services marketing strategy requires collaboration from all business departments, including marketing, sales, operations, human resources, and research and development (R&D). According to Vargo et al. (2004) in Jagdish et al. (2010), services marketing strategies are focused on the customer, usage, and relationships rather than the traditional goods marketing focus on transactions and exchange. To carry out an efficient services marketing strategy, the four Ps of marketing—product, price, promotion, and place—are only partially sufficient. People, process, and tangible proof are the other three Ps that are required. Since services are typically created and consumed at the same time, clients frequently visit the business's factory, speak with staff members face-to-face, and participate in the service creation process.

Service-Pricing

A "service pricing strategy" is the intentional process a business employs to establish the price of its services, taking into consideration variables such as market conditions, competition, customer perception

of value, and service delivery costs, in order to maximize revenue and accomplish targeted business goals like market share or profit margin. For firms, the pricing strategy determines income generation. To optimize the amount of money made from available capacity at any given time, service companies must use revenue management. From the standpoint of the consumer, price is a significant component of the expenses they must bear in order to receive the intended advantages. Nevertheless, the customer's cost frequently consists of substantial non-monetary expenses as well. A macro analysis of retail service pricing has not yet been created, despite the fact that the need for service pricing research is regularly mentioned during conference sessions centered on services marketing strategy (Hoffman et al., 2002).

Service-promotion

Businesses should use education and promotion to inform their clientele about their offerings. Since customers are co-producers and have the power to influence how others perceive a service performance, a large portion of communications in services marketing are instructional in nature, aimed at teaching customers how to navigate service processes efficiently. Organizations need to have a completely integrated communications program in order to market a service successfully. Informing, influencing, and persuading consumers are all part of communications in the marketing context (Dionco-Adetayo et al., 2006). Globalization, competition, and the nature of business are currently altering the nature of marketing communication. Naturally, using the Internet as a source of information and entertainment is a good way to advertise products (Yibeltal, 2023). When different communication channels are used in concert to achieve a common goal, this is known as an integrated communications program. Advertising, sales promotions, and personal selling are examples of promotional options that fall under the category of communications. The firm's servicescape is another aspect of communications in the service industry. (Clow and others, 2009).

Tourism products

According to Hall (2000), a tourism product is the entirety of the experiences a visitor has while traveling, not just one particular tourist attraction or service. With a focus on market segmentation, product development, sustainability, and the impact on local communities, tourism products would analyze the different elements that comprise a tourist experience at a destination, including tangible elements like natural landscapes, historical sites, and infrastructure, as well as intangible elements like culture, hospitality, and local traditions. According to Weaver et al. (2002), the dimensions of tourism products include: Core Product: This is the main reason for the trip; it could be a particular attraction (like the Eiffel Tower), a kind of experience (like adventure travel), or a cultural event; Tangible Components: These are the trip's physical components, like: • Accommodation: Hotels, resorts, guesthouses, homestays; • Transportation: Flights, trains, buses, and rental cars; • Food and Beverage: Restaurants, cafes, and bars; • Attractions: Museums, historical sites, theme parks, and natural wonders; • Shopping: souvenirs, crafts, and other items (Inameti, et al, 2023) The less physical but significant elements are known as intangible components: • Customer service: The standard of care given by lodging establishments, tour operators, and other service providers. • Cultural Experiences: Possibilities to engage with locals, discover their traditions, and take in their culture. • Overall Experience: The ambience, atmosphere, and general sense of the place; • Safety and Security: The sense of safety and security during the journey. According to marketing literature, these goods are the focus of transactions between businesses and tourists, meeting both their primary and secondary needs (Koutoula, 2001).

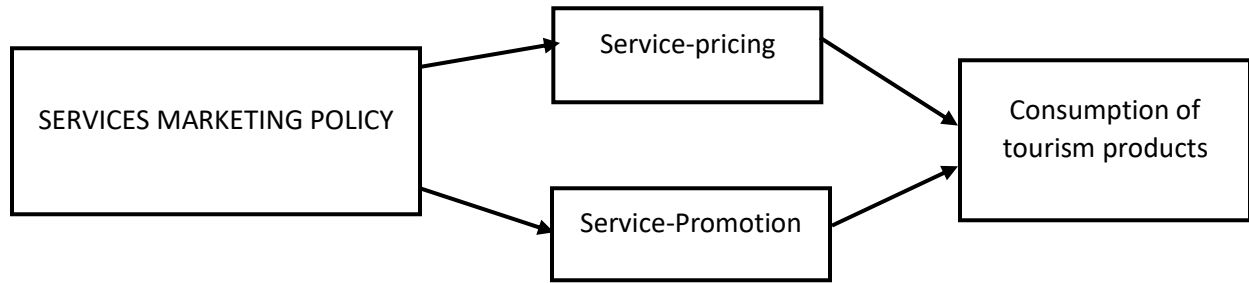
Service-pricing and consumption of tourism products

Customers rely on price to indicate the quality of the services because they are intangible. Customers frequently use price when evaluating the quality of a product before making a purchase (Verma, 2008). In addition to meeting competitors' prices and covering service costs, the price should communicate quality. The creation of successful pricing strategies is still arguably the most difficult of the conventional marketing mix elements used to sway consumer purchasing decisions. For both researchers and practitioners, pricing is frequently a confusing topic (Hoffman et al., 2002). From the standpoint of strategic marketing, understanding how consumers use the price-quality cue in their decision-making is essential to the brand's ideal positioning. Prices that are too low may give customers the impression that the services are of poor quality. High costs, however, might cause consumers to have higher standards for quality. Therefore, it needs to be carefully decided. Hoffman et al. (2002) state that there are three main issues with service pricing strategy. First, there is a lack of knowledge about the special factors that go into pricing intangibles, which have a direct bearing on how customers buy, use, and gain from retail services. Second, the problem is exacerbated by the lack of a well-developed research stream or a dominant research agenda in service pricing. The literature currently available on service pricing is often very specialized, disjointed, and occasionally appears to be unconnected. Lastly, it appears that the literatures on retail pricing and service pricing are expanding largely independently of one another. Service theorists are the primary reviewers and citers of service pricing research, which is typically sent to service outlets and venues. Even at most conferences, intangible pricing papers are grouped with other service papers rather than presented alongside pricing papers for goods.

Service-promotion and consumption of tourism products

Although communication is the most obvious, audible, and some would even say intrusive of marketing activities, its usefulness is limited unless it is strategically combined with other marketing initiatives. A company's success depends on marketing communications in one way or another (Inameti, et al, 2022, Yibeltal, 2023). Public relations, media advertising, and professional salespeople must all be considered in a broader context than communications. A service company can communicate with both present and potential clients in a variety of other ways. Customer perceptions are influenced by a variety of factors, including the location and ambiance of a service delivery facility, corporate design elements like the consistent use of colors and graphic elements, employee appearance and behavior, and website design. These factors can either support or contradict the specific content of formal communication messages. Rao (2013). Making sure that each component of the promotion mix functions as a whole to carry out the organization's overall promotion activities is the evident aim of promotion management (Dionco-Adetayo, 2006). Theoretically, sales volume and promotion should be directly correlated. This isn't always the case, as some researchers have shown (Aliata et al., 2012). In the hopes of increasing its market share, sales volume, and profits, a company may step up its promotional activities. Customers' perceptions of the product, price, and location, however, may prevent them from making a purchase for a variety of reasons. Promotions by themselves are therefore insufficient and ineffective. Promotion is an inducement strategy used to temporarily boost sales. The goal of advertising is to create a desire to purchase; it focuses on creating an allure to purchase (Yibeltal, 2023).

Conceptual framework



The model reveals that, services marketing policy as an independent variable has dimensions of service-pricing and service-promotion that have the power to create awareness, persuade, educate and motivate tourists to take real action in consumption of tourism products in Bayelsa state, Nigeria.

Methodology

The study uses a cross-sectional survey research design, which allows for the collection of the necessary primary data from target respondents at a single point in time for analysis and the generation of findings. It is quantitative research that focuses on gathering detailed amounts of primary data from relatively small samples of subjects. Two hundred (180) tourism establishments made up the study's population (NBS, 2024). As a result, the researchers used the ten percent (10%) proportion technique to arrive at twenty (20) carefully chosen tourist destinations. According to authors like Owojori (2002) and Peretomde (1992), a sample size that is at least 10% of the study population is considered to be representative of the population. In 2024, the number of tourists was projected to be 12,000, or 10,000. Therefore, in order to statistically determine the sample size for the study, the researchers used the Finite Population Correction (FPC) sample size determination procedure.

FPC formula states thus:

$$n = (N * Z^2 * \delta^2) / (e^2 * (N-1) + Z^2 * \delta^2)$$

Where: n: Sample size required =?

N: Population size = (10,000)

Z: Z-Score = (1.96)

δ : Population Standard Deviation = 30

e: Margin of error (5%)

therefore, the required sample size (n) is = 154

According to the sampling procedure, nine (9) copies of the questionnaire were distributed to visitors of each of the eighteen tourism establishments that were chosen using the judgmental sampling technique. Respondents' information was gathered using a primary source (questionnaire). After all of its measurement scales yielded Cronbach alpha coefficients of 0.82 and higher, the instrument was subsequently accepted as reliable. Using SPSS version 23, multiple regression was used to test the study's hypothesis at the 0.05 level of significance, while descriptive statistics were used to precisely analyze the data.

Results And Discussion

Table1: Descriptive Statistics of items based of market segmentation variables

| CONSTRUCT/ITEMS | N | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--------------------|-----|------|----------------|
| SERVICE-PRICING | | | |
| Fair pricing | 154 | 3.62 | 1.401 |
| Flexible pricing | 154 | 3.47 | 1.344 |
| Affordable pricing | 154 | 3.23 | 1.390 |
| Outrageous pricing | 154 | 2.34 | 1.279 |
| Normal pricing | 154 | 3.35 | 1.375 |
| SERVICE-PROMOTION | | | |
| Awareness | 154 | 3.69 | 1.370 |
| Informative | 154 | 3.26 | 1.450 |
| Educative | 154 | 3.79 | 1.273 |
| Persuasive | 154 | 3.12 | 1.423 |
| Entertaining | 154 | 3.74 | 1.204 |

Source: SPSS output, 2024

Fair pricing is ranked first, as indicated by Table 1 above, with a mean of 3.62 and a standard deviation of 1.401. Flexible pricing came next, with a mean of 3.47 and SD of 1.344. Normal pricing comes next in terms of service pricing, with a mean of 3.35 and SD of 1.375. Next in line are reasonable prices (mean of 3.23, SD 1.390) and outrageous prices (mean of 2.34, SD 1.279). With a mean of 3,79 with SD 1,273, educational items rank highest among service-promotion items. Entertainment comes in second with a mean of 3,74 with SD 1.204. Awareness came next with 3,69 and SD 1.370. informative has an SD of 1.450 and a mean of 3.26. Persuasive has a mean of 3.12 and a standard deviation of 1,423.

Table 2: Model Summary of service market policy and consumption of tourism products

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | .917 ^a | .840 | .838 | 2.282 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), service-pricing, service-promotion

Table 3: ANOVA^a of service market policy and consumption of tourism products

| Model | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------|----------------|----|-------------|---|------|
|-------|----------------|----|-------------|---|------|

| | | | | | | |
|---|------------|----------|-----|----------|---------|-------------------|
| 1 | Regression | 4131.366 | 2 | 2065.683 | 396.575 | .000 ^b |
| | Residual | 786.530 | 151 | 5.209 | | |
| | Total | 4917.896 | 153 | | | |

a. Dependent Variable: Consumption of tourism products

b. Predictors: (Constant), service-pricing, service-promotion

Table 4: Coefficients of service market policy and consumption of tourism products

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | T | Sig. |
|-------|-------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | .593 | .632 | | .939 | .349 |
| | Service-pricing | .748 | .061 | .712 | 12.163 | .000 |
| | Service-promotion | .245 | .061 | .235 | 4.008 | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: Consumption of tourism products

The service market strategy dimensions of service pricing and service promotion are evaluated for their capacity to influence tourism product consumption in the regression tables (Tables 2, 3, and 4). According to the R column in Table 2, the model summary, there is a 91.70 percent correlation between the two variables. When all other factors are held constant, the R² value (0.84) indicates that the service market strategy dimensions of service pricing and service promotion account for up to 84% of the consumption of tourism products. Strong and statistically significant is this relationship. This suggests that the population mean can be accurately estimated by the model.

Therefore, the regression model offers enough evidence to conclude that the service market strategy dimensions of service-pricing and service-promotion significantly affect consumption of tourism products. The F-test (396.575, $p < 0.05$) of the relationship in Table 3 shows that the overall prediction of the independent variable to the dependent variable is statistically significant.

The coefficients table, found in Table 4, offers the information required to assess how well service pricing and promotion can forecast tourism product consumption. The aforementioned table shows that service pricing and promotion have a significant positive impact on tourism product consumption, with a p value of less than 0.05 and positive t-test results. Furthermore, the standardized beta coefficient column in Table 4 demonstrates that service-pricing contributes the most positively to the model, with a beta coefficient of .712 (71.20 percent). In contrast, the beta coefficient for service promotion is .235, or 23.50 percent. We must accept the alternative and reject the null hypothesis in light of the regression analyses' findings. Consequently, the consumption of tourism products is greatly and favorably impacted by service pricing and promotion.

Discussion

This study looked at Bayelsa State, Nigeria's tourism product consumption and service market strategy. To improve comprehension based on the study's research questions and hypothesis, the two aspects of services

market strategy were analyzed both jointly and item-by-item. According to item-by-item descriptive analysis, fair pricing ranks the most crucial item in terms of service pricing. This demonstrates that if service prices are reasonable, tourists will purchase tourism-related goods. This result supports Verma's (2008) assertion that consumers frequently use price when evaluating the quality of a product before making a purchase. However, the item that ranks highest is educational, suggesting that tourists place a high value on service promotion. This claim is supported by Yibeltal's (2023) findings that marketing communications, in one way or another, are critical to a business's success.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The crucial interaction between service pricing and marketing tactics in the context of service businesses was examined in this study. The results highlight how dynamic service marketing is and how pricing choices have a big influence on revenue generation, customer perception, and overall company success. A sophisticated grasp of consumer behavior, market dynamics, and competitive pressures is necessary for effective service pricing and promotion. In today's competitive market, service businesses can improve customer satisfaction, optimize pricing, and achieve sustainable growth by carefully weighing these factors and putting data-driven strategies into practice. The results highlight how dynamic and complex service marketing is, with pricing choices being essential parts of a larger strategic framework rather than discrete occurrences. One important discovery was how important customer-centricity is to effective service pricing. It became clear that knowing the wants, needs, and willingness to pay of the customer was crucial. Value-based pricing tactics, which emphasize providing customers with perceived value, have shown a great deal of promise for raising customer satisfaction and boosting sales. The study also emphasized the growing significance of digital marketing for promoting services. Businesses can reach a larger audience, increase brand awareness, and improve customer engagement by utilizing digital channels like social media, search engine optimization (SEO), and online advertising.

The following suggestions are made to service companies looking to maximize their pricing and marketing tactics in light of the study's findings:

Prices should be changed by the management of tourist attractions in response to demand, the time of day, seasonality, and other pertinent variables.

To reach target audiences, one should make use of platforms such as social media advertising and Google Ads.

Limitations and Suggestion for Future Studies

- Although this study offers insightful information about Bayelsa State's service market strategy and tourism product consumption, it is crucial to recognize its limitations:
- Geographic Scope: Because the study was conducted only in Bayelsa State, its conclusions might not apply to other areas or nations.
- Data Availability: The accuracy and thoroughness of the analysis may be impacted by the lack of trustworthy and thorough data on Bayelsa State's tourism sector.
- Self-Reported Data: The study uses visitor self-reported data, which could be inaccurate and biased.
- Time Frame: Because the study is restricted to a particular period of time, modifications to consumer preferences, market conditions, and industry trends may have an effect on the results.

- Sample Size: The study's sample size might be small, which could have an impact on the results' statistical significance.
- Notwithstanding these drawbacks, the study offers a strong basis for comprehending the opportunities and difficulties facing Bayelsa State's tourism sector. By conducting comparative studies to examine the efficacy of various pricing and promotional strategies across various industries and markets, future research can expand on these findings.

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