THESIS

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2022

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Marketing strategies and their effect on tourism

Applied study on Hotels of Palmyra in Syria

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2022

Table of contents:

Chapter one:

Chapter two:

Chapter three:

Chapter four:

Introduction

A UNESCO-listed world heritage site located in the Syrian desert, Palmyra, has long been a worldwide crossroads of trade and culture. It drew visitors and academics from all over the world, and it served as a palimpsest of eastern and western histories and civilizations. However, the poor marketing of tourism in Syria and especially Palmyra curbs the tourism burgeoning at both domestic and international level. Therefore, this study aims at exploring the best marketing strategies and elucidate their effect on tourism. The study was applied on the ancient touristic city Palmyra in Syria. This study uses a mixed combination of methods from primary data analysis exemplified in survey to secondary data analysis. The goals of this research are to pinpoint the strengths and weaknesses of Palmyra, identifying the best marketing tool to follow and showing the demand and supply there.

Tourism is one of the most important industries in Syria which has a noticeable contribution to the economy. Therefore, the government is becoming more concerned and taking efforts to promote tourism with new marketing strategies. One of the most important tourism destinations in Syria is Palmyra which was a mosaic built by Assyrians, Parthians, Greeks, and Romans over the course of its colorful history. The magnificent remains and breathtaking landscape of the ancient city have captivated and inspired visitors as witnesses to its glorious past for ages. Palmyra's most significant attraction "The temple of Bel" served as the heart of the religious life in Palmyra and was culturally observed by the United Nation as one of the most remarkable creations of architecture. Also, The Temple of Bel, built in honor of the ancient "God of Gods," was a well-preserved and one of the region's greatest monuments. The Temple of Bel's hybridity further illustrates that ancient Palmyra was a multi-cultural city, and that while the worship and its purpose adhered to Semitic tradition, the temple's construction in the Graeco-Roman style spoke the wide Roman empire's architecture. To conclude, Palmyra was clearly affluent, as evidenced by its aristocrats' lavish spending on grandiose construction.

1. Research objectives

1.1. The aim of the research

I chose to write about hotel marketing because marketing plays a crucial role in helping businesses to maximize bookings and revenue. It is the main way in which those in the hotel industry are able to reach out to potential customers, conveying their unique selling proposition and brand values.

The research is applied research which aims to find the best marketing strategies and tools for hotels in Palmyra city in Syria.

This research aims at identifying the marketing situation and exploring the best marketing tools that should be used in Palmyra's hotels for promotion.

Spotting the strengths and weaknesses of Palmyra's hotels to support the strengths and start working on the weaknesses to enhance them.

1.2 Research hypothesis

1- Hotels of Palmyra do not use enough marketing tools.

2- Hotels of Palmyra are mostly dependent on the offline reservations because the people do not have the option of online booking.

3- Hotels of Palmyra do not use enough online booking because people do not have good internet.

4- Nowadays, tourists have a loyalty towards one hotel.

2. Literature review

2.1 The Concept of Marketing

Markets have existed since old times, but the marketing concept came to light only in the middle of the 20th century. In previous societies, the focus of the economic awareness was only on making profits not satisfying customers' requirements. As markets grew later, the competition of firms went sharper for market share, and they competed by advertising and sales promotion (Whalley, 2010).

THE AMERICAN MARKETING ASSOCIATION (2017). defines marketing as the activity and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, partners and society at large. Also, marketing is defined as the science and art of exploring, creating, and delivering value to satisfy the needs of a target market at a profit. Marketing identifies unfulfilled needs and desires. It measures and quantifies the size of the identified market and the profit potential. It pinpoints which parts the company is capable of serving best and it designs and promotes the appropriate products and services (KOTLER 2001). Marketing is the messages and/or actions that caused by messages and/or actions (BAER 2011). Marketing is a calculated procedure that backs sales, as well as, customers, the first phase is to identify the targeted audience, progressing a marketing strategy which involves many methods, estimating the outcome and always enhancing the process based on learning and experience (LIEB 2009). Marketing contains all the actions that are used to produce the utilities of possessions, place and time. The place utility is designed when the products and services are accessible in the place where they are required, time utility is to have the products in the required time and when the products and services are sent to the people who ordered them, then the possession utility is achieved (CONVERSE et al. 1953).

Marketing is the business activity where goods go with the market and by which ownership transfers are carried out (STILL et al. 1986). Marketing is the economic action where products and services are exchanged while their value is set on in regards to the financial cost (DUDDY et al. 1987). Marketing is the procedure that is responsible for enhancing the efficiency through marketing activities which are carried out by people or companies (BEN 1974). Marketing is the management procedure which is in charge of recognizing, expecting and pleasing consumers demands beneficially (CIM 2015). Marketing is designing and achieving standards of living; it is knowing what the customers require then creating and evolving goods and services which will fulfill their needs (Stanton, 1983). Marketing is a crucial element of business strategy as (ANSOFF 1987) advised firms to have a precise scope and well- defined direction of growth. Marketing is offering products and services to consume through a competitive process in order to achieve a profit because marketing is about acquiring trustworthiness and reputation for the sake of founding a

fruitful work relationship (PETTINGER 1998). The best description of marketing is a process of a two-way communication between a company and its clients (CARTWRIGHT 2002). This is pointed up by (PETTINGER 1998) that the primary concept of marketing is that all business activities in a company are a communication tool between the company itself and the customers as he believes that marketing should focus on the most important element in the business which is the customers where the main concentration of the office workers must be maintaining the clients pleased and at ease because in this case, they will redo the business with the same company or no less than recommend it to other prospects. Marketing is fulfilling demands and necessities, supplying goods and services, making sure the clients are content, establishing a relationship and achieve profitability for the business (PRATT 1997).

2.2 Marketing-Mix

The four Ps of marketing are the most important aspects of selling a product or service. They are four; product, price, place, and promotion. The four Ps, often known as the marketing mix, are influenced by both internal and external elements in the broader corporate environment, and they interact heavily. Companies use the 4 Ps to figure out what their customers want from them, how their product or service fulfills or fails to satisfy those demands, how their product or service is viewed in the world, how they differentiate themselves from their competitors, and how they engage with their customers. The first element of the 4 Ps is product which is a good or service that a business provides to its clients. A product should, in theory, satisfy an existing consumer demand. Alternatively, a product may be so attractive that buyers believe they need it, resulting in a new demand. The sort of product also influences how much a company can charge for it, where it should be placed, and how it should be promoted in the marketplace. The second element in the 4 Ps of marketing is price which is the price that customers pay for a product. Marketers must link the pricing to the product's actual and perceived worth, as well as supplier costs, seasonal reductions, and rival prices. Business executives may boost the price to give the goods the illusion of being a luxury item in specific situations. Alternatively, they may reduce the price to encourage more people to try the product. Marketers must also decide when and whether discounting is necessary. A discount may attract more customers, but it may also give the impression that the product is less unique or luxurious than it was when it was priced higher. The third element is the place, when a corporation makes location selections, it's trying to figure out where they should sell a product or service and how to get it to the market. Business leaders' ultimate goal is to bring their items in front of the customers who are most likely to buy them. The fourth and last element is promotion. Advertising, public relations, and promotional strategy are all included.

The purpose of product promotion is to show customers why they need a product and why they should spend a given price for it (TWIN 2020). However, the 7 Ps of marketing include the same four elements that are included in the 4 Ps in addition to another three elements which are; people, from front-line salespeople to the Managing Director, everyone in a company is reliant on the individuals that govern it. Having the proper people

on board is critical since they are just as important as the products and services you provide. Then, processes, because your service is frequently delivered with the customer present, the manner in which it is delivered is also part of what the customer is paying for. Finally, physical evidence which is everything the clients notice while dealing with the company such as the interior design of the actual place where they sell the product or service, as well as, the packaging and branding, it can also apply to employee's appearance and behavior (BUSINESS QUEENSLAND 2016).

2.3 Hotel marketing

Marketing plays a similar role in the hotel industry as it does in other industries: it helps promote the business, attract clients, and sell services; thus, marketing is critical to a hotel's ability to maximize different revenue earnings from tourists trying to book a room to planning an event looking for function space and catering. There are still traditional advertising outlets to consider, but it appears that the majority of hotel marketing strategy occurs online these days. The process of building and maintaining your hotel's internet presence is known as hotel digital marketing. This necessitates keeping up with hotel social media channels such as Facebook and Instagram. In this day and age, direct bookings are the most crucial and profitable for most hotels and having a website of the hotel and attracting high-quality traffic to it will be critical to marketing the facility because they own the content of the website so they can directly express their services and values to the future prospects in a genuine way. Marketing through the hotel website can be very successful if the website included charming photography of the hotel, a hotel copywriting that is captivating and an online system for direct booking that is easy and homogenized. It should be taken into account that an increasing number of people use their mobile to explore, organize and finally book their vacation. Therefore, a hotel's website should be simple to use on mobiles, load quickly and allow to collect critical booking information from the guests in a secure environment.

2.3.1. Online travel agencies and Tour operators

Another important tool for the hotel marketing is the online travel agencies (OTA) which are becoming more and more popular. They are digital platforms that link customers with a variety of travel providers and make reservations for hotels, flights, car rentals, tours, and more. OTAs are used by millions of people around the world every day to book their business and leisure travel. Booking.com, Expedia, Agoda, Hotels.com, Priceline, Orbitz, Lastminute.com, Ctrip... are some of the most well-known online travel agencies in the world plus a whole lot more. Such tools can market a hotel by suggesting it for the traveler in the city they are traveling to. Also, they display nice selected photos of it with the hotel's website and phone number. OTAs make money by charging hotels a commission fee, which is usually a proportion of each booking's revenue. The fees vary from a platform to another but these fees can be negotiated depending on the brand level of the hotel and whether it is part of a larger hotel chain or an unbranded one. Another marketing tool can be used is the wholesalers. A wholesaler buys room nights in bulk from hotels, packages them, negotiates pricing, and then sells them to online travel agencies and travel brokers.

Large hotels that want to maximize occupancy might benefit the most from wholesalers as it's highly appealing to know that they can count on a regular, guaranteed occupancy rate. Another marketing aid hotels can tend to is the tour operators. They are a type of distributor that is more specialized and they usually concentrate on selling a whole vacation package, which includes lodging, flights/transfers, meals, and activities and they will bargain for the separate parts of the bundle, usually at a lower price. Tour operators usually specialize in a particular region, or a specific type of experience, such as golf, safari, or diving. In contrary, even in the year 2022, some tourists still prefer to call or email the hotel directly and it is called the offline reservation which is a direct channel that eliminates OTA commission costs and the big discounts for tour operators.

It is a challenge for a hotel marketer to decide where and how to spend the time and resources. Because direct distribution channels are the most profitable, most hotels choose to focus on methods and long-term hotel marketing strategies that support them. Depending on the market and other variables, a hotel marketer might want to engage more with tour operators. Alternatively, if they have a restricted hotel budget to spend on brand awareness efforts, they may need to concentrate on OTAs.

2.3.2. Marketing practices

There are some practices that hotel marketers should consider for a better marketing. First of all, content marketing which is a type of marketing that involves the creation and sharing of online material (such as videos, blogs, and social media posts) that does not explicitly promote a brand but is intended to stimulate interest in its products or services. Secondly, social media which hotels use to raise brand awareness, engage with current customers, advertise to attract new guests, and much more. With the development in technology, we are facing nowadays, it is not a complementary matter to have social media accounts but it becomes a must. The third practice is search engine optimization (SEO). It's the process of using non-paid (also known as "organic") search engine results to increase the quality and quantity of website visitors as well as brand exposure. People generally and tourists specifically use Google and other search engines to locate information, obtain answers to particular questions, and do product research before purchasing. Organic search accounts for 53% of all trackable website traffic, according to BrightEdge.

The other practice is paid media (PPC). Social media sites and search engines such as Google also provide extensive advertising options, mainly PPC (pay-per-click) meaning that the hotel will be charged each time someone clicks on the hotel's ads. Sometimes, ad platforms can charge by "impressions," or each time a person views (or scrolls past) a hotel's ad. But some platforms are able to do both. While it is a long-term approach that pays off in the long run, it can take some time to see benefits. In addition, there is email marketing which is the channel that always achieve the best return on investment over many different industries.

Email marketing is the process of sending a commercial message, typically to a group of people, using email. In its broadest sense, every email sent to a potential or current

customer could be considered email marketing. Averagely, email marketing brings about 40$ for each 1$ spent. Furthermore, public relation is one of the most important tools for marketing. It is a marketing tool of communicating expertly drafted messages using non-paid/earned media to build mutually beneficial relationships with the public. Individual journalists, traditional media outlets, and even local community leaders are all targets for PR professionals. Bloggers and internet influencers are now a factor to consider, as well as, many "nontraditional" content makers are a joy to deal with, completely professional, and produce excellent, engaging work. Although public relations and marketing are not the same thing, the two are increasingly crossing in new and fascinating ways. The public perception of the hotel and brand will also play a role in the company recovery. Hoteliers can work smarter, not harder, with the correct marketing tools and technology. Marketing in a hotel property or for a hotel group changes constantly. It takes work to keep up with new marketing techniques, platforms, and trends, as well as to gain the most in-demand marketing abilities. Hotel marketers can learn more from online courses as on the internet, there are a plenty of free learning options. Also, they can network with other hoteliers (ZAJAC 2021).

2.3.3. Public relations

There are more properties today than there were even just a few years ago. Hotel marketers must find innovative ways to reach their target audiences in order to stand out. One option for hotel properties to consider is public relations. Public relations (PR) are a set of techniques and strategies for controlling how information about a person or corporation is communicated to the general public, particularly the media. Its main objectives are to convey key company news or events, maintain a positive brand image, and put a positive spin on negative occurrences in order to minimize their consequences. Hotel public relations operations help a hotel stand out for the correct reasons, while also building credibility and changing people's perceptions of the hotel. Public relations operations do help to improve a hotel's internet profile, and the benefits are not insignificant. The goal of public relations in the hospitality business is to increase awareness while also making the resort stand out for all the right reasons. In most cases, marketing techniques are intended to increase awareness of the company.

The goal with PR is different as it is more about perception, either maintaining a positive perception, or building one (whether that is for the first time or an attempt to repair damage). Therefore, hotel marketers need to use many kinds of hotels public relations. First, they can use press release as they are effective tools for drawing attention to the hotel. A hotel press release should be newsworthy and aimed at reaching out to journalists and news sources in print and online. Second, press conference, this can be held if a hotel has important news to share, such as a new hotel development project or other important matter. In addition, they can use the speaking events because they put the hotel in the spotlight and help to promote the brand through human connection, as well as prospective media coverage.

Moreover, hotel can use the news coverage. It is the most well-known sort of public relations for hoteliers and proprietors. Local newspapers are the most common source, but interviews in trade magazines, local news channel coverage, and other methods can also be used. Hotels may gain news coverage by organizing a community event or festival at their location, celebrating the inauguration of a new amenity, forming a collaboration, and more. There are four steps to create the hotel public relations plan, it starts by doing an assessment to figure out what public relations prospects you have in the first place. Some of them can also be combined to increase their impact. For instance, while speaking events will generate headlines, hotel marketers can amplify them by additionally issuing a press release promoting the event. The second step is to make a media kit, this will allow the marketers to be extremely responsive to anyone who contacts them for additional information, event feedback, or other PR needs.

The media kit should entail:

- Information about the history of the hotel.

- Branded marketing assets.

- Information about the team members of the hotel.

- Earlier press releases and references in the media.

- Fact sheet about the hotel.

- Information about prizes and awards the hotel has previously got.

- Contact information.

The third step is being responsive as it is critical to respond promptly to anyone who contacts the hotel for an interview, a speaking engagement, or other public relations work. Finally, making a plan for dealing with negative press (HOTELOGIX 2021).

The competition between hotels have leveled up across the world. Now, more than ever, a solid hotel marketing plan is essential. According to HubSpot's recent report, 70% of companies are investing in a digital marketing plan. Marketing the hotel can help reach a wider audience, attract more customers, and enhance revenue. Despite these benefits, only a few hotels employ a well-thought-out marketing approach. Others, on the other hand, make needless errors that lose them their reputation and their business.

The few common marketing mistakes are:

- Not having a clear marketing strategy: most hotels make the error of marketing in the hospitality industry without a strategy. Hotel promotion attempts with no prior expertise, research, or consistency might return limited to no earnings. Making a plan is the first step toward a successful hotel marketing campaign. Content marketing, advertorials, pay-per-click ads, search engine optimization, social media marketing, and email marketing are the six key pillars of hospitality marketing. Use the right tools to locate and reach your target audience, and establish a strong online brand presence.

- Marketing based on discount alone: while offering unrestricted discounts may attract more people, it will also lower the value of the brand. This will eventually result in more losses.

- Talking with no action: to stay ahead of the competition, hoteliers occasionally employ flamboyant marketing gimmicks. Customers are frequently dissatisfied as a result of this. Therefore, marketers should avoid flashy freebies like free drinks, free coupons, lavish dinners, or event passes and instead concentrate on getting the essentials right.

- Not having social media accounts: 94% of businesses utilize social media to attract clients and increase revenue. As a result, hotels that do not develop an internet presence are essentially handing money over to their competitors. Inconsistency in posting or posting unrelated material can harm the brand's image. Consistent (at least 2 to 3 posts per day), engaging, and participatory hotel social media marketing is required. Responding to comments, surveys, and messages sets a pleasant tone for the guests. If they do not have enough time to handle the posts, they can use programs like Hootsuite and Buffer to automate them.

- Failure to respond to the feedback of guests: engage with the customers online, regardless of the sort of review. Actively seek out and respond to guest comments to make them feel valued. When you get positive feedback, you can use it to improve your marketing efforts. Even when facing a negative feedback, a prompt and courteous reaction will demonstrate to future guests that their experience is important. And by doing so, marketers are enhancing the brand's credibility (HOTELOGIX 2021).

By developing a solid hotel marketing plan, hotels can take advantage of the predicted industry revival. In an ever-competitive industry, there are according to BHATNAGAR (2020) a few key hotel marketing methods that might help stay ahead:

- Getting to know the visitors: when consumers are looking to reserve a hotel stay, it is critical to understand their needs and preferences. Knowing the target market can assist in developing the finest hotel marketing strategy to deliver the best amenities to the visitors.

- Creating a user-friendly hotel website: the hotel's website should be created in such a way that visitors can easily find all what the hotel offers, and that it is quick and reliable. It should also be mobile-friendly.

- Display the individuality of the hotel and its strengths: those distinguishing characteristics of a hotel should be emphasized on the social media accounts, website, and hotel marketing initiatives. For instance, if a hotel is pet-friendly, images of clients strolling into the hotel and spending time with their pets would be ideal.

- Rewarding a guest when booking directly: when guests book through a median, this will cost the hotel a commission fee. Therefore, the hotel should reward visitors when they book directly because they make the hotel avoid the fees. It can be extraordinary services or unexpected gifts. These kinds of gestures will make a lasting impression on them and will aid in the development of long-term visitor relationship. It would also enhance the guest

experience, increasing the likelihood of them suggesting the hotel to friends and family or leaving glowing online reviews.

- Distinguishing loyal customers: when a guest book for the second time in the hotel, they might expect recognizing them by the staff. Thus, small gestures, such as a 'Welcome Back' email or a complementary beverage, can make them feel unique and welcomed.

- Seasonal factors should be considered when pricing hotel rooms: when setting a price for hotel rooms, it should be taken into account a variety of things such as the season, a special day, or even local events taking place at the time. Remembering these peak seasons, and ramp up the hotel marketing efforts to boost visibility and draw more visitors during these periods.

- Guests should be able to easily review the hotel: according to a TripAdvisor survey, 96% of its users consider reviews to be extremely significant when making travel plans or reserving a hotel, and more than half of them say they would not stay at a hotel with no ratings. Thus, it is important to politely ask the guests to provide a review of the hotel when they are about to check out and request that they publish their experience on OTA, TripAdvisor, or even the hotel's website.

- Featuring charming photos of the hotel: a hotelier must verify that the property photos on the hotel website or any other online travel agency (OTA) are genuine and appealing. For better results, they might also employ a professional photographer for this. They can also share these photographs on the hotel's social media accounts to encourage direct reservations.

- Recommendations should be tailored to the individual: the majority of today's vacationers want vacations that focus on their experiences. To enhance the guest experience, hotels should provide personalized recommendations for the greatest things to do or places to see in the nearby area.

- Encouraging the upgrade: hotel marketers can send an email to the guests a few days before their arrival offering them to upgrade their room or take advantage of other hotel amenities, such as a candlelit supper or a spa treatment, or any other add-on service.

- Keeping an eye on the competitors: hoteliers should know their competitors well in order to understand how they promote their service. They should not imitate exactly what the competitors are doing, but it will give them an idea of the techniques they are doing. They can then adapt the concepts and apply them to their own property.

- Offer off-season offers to attract more guests: some people prefer to travel during the off-season, and it is possible to attract bookings during that time by offering special packages or hosting events at the property. During the off-season, this will assist increase the bookings and earnings.

- Establishing for groups and extended stays, special packages and discounts: guests matter, whether they make individual bookings, book in a group, or represent a huge corporation.

Hoteliers should create specific packages for them, and give discounts to guests who stay for an extended period of time. In the hospitality business, this is a successful marketing approach. Ultimately, it is the guests who will spread the news.

2.3.4. LinkedIn

For those in charge of marketing a hotel, big or small, LinkedIn is not typically the first marketing tool that comes to mind as they focus more on the platform such as Facebook and Instagram. These two platforms are the most popular for the young generation. However, if the hoteliers want to attract businesspeople who might be older, they should also consider LinkedIn as it is a platform that hugely used by businessmen. It should be taken into account to versatile the content on each marketing platform because the most typical error some hotels make is to publish the same information across all of their digital channels, hoping that some of it sticks. These will lead to customers not following the hotel in many platforms and only get enough with one channel.

As a result, this method is a complete waste of time. Not only is the time valuable, but so is budget for marketing. According to research done by Hootsuite's, LinkedIn currently has over 590 million users, with 45% of them classified as top management or decision-makers. With 265.5 million users, it's evident that LinkedIn is the place to be for business professionals. Even though most hoteliers make ads only in Facebook and Instagram, they should now realize the importance of LinkedIn ads. In addition, there are some benefits to using LinkedIn ads. They're extremely targetable, allowing to narrow down the targeted audience to precise job descriptions, something Facebook and Instagram ads lack. While LinkedIn ads are worth a try if a hotel need that degree of specificity, normally it is found that diverting the majority of advertising expenditure to Facebook ads is more cost-effective (WALKER 2019).

2.3.5. Marketing analytics strategies

Hotel marketers should also use marketing analytics strategies which is the study of data to evaluate the performance of a marketing activity. Many established hotels have based their marketing strategies on analytics since it is an effective approach to compare the performance to actual client feedback. It's all about setting clear objectives and getting to know the company and its clients (past, present, and future). The greatest technique to determine how the business is performing and if it is hitting the aims is to ask questions and obtain answers through data segmentation. Some hotels avoid data analysis since it may disclose gaps that they do not want to see. However, marketing analytics is not necessarily about how fantastic the property is. In order to improve the entire user experience, it is sometimes more about identifying gaps and developing solutions to address them. When looking at statistics on a regular basis, it is critical not to get caught up in the illusion of numbers (hotel performance varies a lot in the short term). Instead, employees must adhere to senior management's key performance indicators. Instead of KPIs that vary frequently and produce a lot of confusion with weekly tracking and targets,

hotel stakeholders should define and assist the marketing team in defining and following measurable values. They must also ensure that the metrics correspond to their KPIs.

A marketing dashboard is the simplest way to keep track of all of the key performance indicators in a straightforward and understandable manner. In order for marketers to visualize KPIs over time, a thorough dashboard should collect data from every data source the hotel uses. Campaign, channel, and revenue tracking, engagement metrics, and attribution modeling are all examples of marketing metrics that should be included. A dashboard that can generate real-time data is always the ideal because it gives a clear and accurate picture of the marketing efforts. Setting up a marketing dashboard will make it easy to assess how near a hotel is to achieve its objectives, whether they be profit, visitor count, or website traffic, and will allow employees to report on how the hotel marketing activities are performing over time. Marketers may analyze the work of their competitors using a site like Ahrefs or Moz to guarantee they stay ahead of the game. They will also be able to examine how the website compares to others, so they will know exactly what they need to do to outperform the rivals (DIGITAL AUTHORITY PARTNERS 2019).

2.3.6. Influencers

An untraditional way of marketing has appeared to light recently. The influencer explosion is one of the trendiest marketing trends in the hotel sector, thanks to the growth of social media. Both independent hotels and chains are capitalizing on the fact that they may earn six times more money and acquire massive exposure in their target regions. Online travel agencies (OTAs) have replaced traditional travel agencies. They're doing fantastically well, but it comes with a steep price of up to 20% commission, and direct bookings are still struggling to increase. Similarly, ad blocking is on the rise, and alternative lodging options like Airbnb are gaining traction among millennials, who, according to Marriott, are now the largest segment of hotel guests. As a result, intelligent hotels are changing to how customers choose to interact with them. In today's mobile-addicted, Instagram-obsessed world, influencer marketing addresses the shifting dynamics of the booking journey. This is where influencers enter the picture.

Influencers are viewed as a non-traditional kind of advertising, which is why they are receiving an increase in advertising budgets across all industries. Credible and professional travel influencers, when used correctly, may be a very effective means of promoting the hotel, bringing thousands of visitors to the website and allowing to create a community around the property. Hotels can improve direct reservations by up to 18% with strategies like these. Millennials now share 97% of their travel photos on social media, and 87% of them get ideas for places to visit from social media. Most notably, Instagram has evolved from a platform where people share their experiences to one where people go for inspiration when booking vacations. This has now become a crucial competitive advantage for smart hotels, allowing them to attract consumers before they even visit OTAs and learn about their competition. Travel accounts have exploded in popularity, with many able to reach thousands of potential clients who might be appropriate for hotels based on their target demographic. In addition, any influencer marketing should be done in conjunction with a

fully realized social media strategy: this approach will frequently serve as the first point of contact for potential customers once they are directed to the venue's social media channels by the influencer. However, when going for influencers it should be taken into account to avoid influencers who have fake followers.

A smart marketer would not t be fooled by influencer's number of followers. Instead, focus on the content (quality, tone, aesthetic, and overall topic) and how engaged their audience is. It is always a good idea to dig a little deeper. What are the opinions of the public? Are there a lot of devoted fans asking for advice, or are there a lot of bots leaving spam comments on their photos? When an influencer's brand is ruined as a result of buying followers, the influencer's own brand suffers, and marketers are unable to reach the audiences they desire. This might have a detrimental impact on both the marketer and the influencer's reputation. Checking the ratio between followers and likes/comments is a simple approach to spot phony followers, although it is a limited strategy. Checking their profile with Fake Follower Detection software like is a more reliable way. Marketers should use influencers as a way to promote to highly targeted groups of potential clients, regardless of platform. Someone with a smaller but more engaged and targeted audience will be more beneficial than someone with a huge but irrelevant audience. This is where the true value of micro-influencers emerges.

Studies show that 92% of consumers prefer earned media to all other forms of advertising. Prospects are more likely to listen to recommendations from word of a mouth than to a static advertisement. On a global scale, using influencers in the proper way is a highly successful approach of doing this. When working with an influencer, all of the hotel's unique features and benefits should be highlighted. They have come to tell the narrative and give their firsthand impressions of the location. Marketers should not be hesitant to express their concerns to the influencer, but also allow them to do what they do best. Produce content that will provoke the curiosity of admirers who watch their every move. The best aspect of the influencer explosion is that it is accessible to even the tiniest independent hotels, allowing them to compete with larger chains in the long run. An influencer will not only direct traffic to a hotel website, but also to its social media accounts (GABRIELE 2018).

2.3.7. Google Ads

Google is becoming one of the most popular hotel search engines. It appears that they are always releasing new features to assist searchers in finding their ideal hotel. Understanding the technologies available and knowing how to use them more effectively than the competitors is the issue for hotel marketers. Google is helping hotel marketers market their hotel by different method such as native Gmail ads. Ads that appear in the Gmail inbox are known as native Gmail Ads. This is a significant tool because 66% of consumers check their email numerous times per day, according to research. This provides hotel marketers with numerous opportunities to get their advertisements in front of their target audience. Because there are 900 million Gmail addresses, native Gmail ads have the potential to reach a large number of people. They can also be expanded, allowing marketers far more

room to display their property than other forms of advertising. The enlarged ad has a number of template possibilities as well as custom HTML formats, allowing to construct a number of different adverts.

Most of the standard display targeting tools, including keywords, demographics, and affinity audiences, are available in Gmail advertising, so it is not very different from any other marketing campaigns. Furthermore, as Gmail advertising grow more polished, the targeting becomes even more complex, allowing marketers to maximize the click through rate. In addition, there are the ad variations. It helps marketers choosing the best action. For instance, "Book Now" or "Book Today" which one is catchier for prospects? Marketers can discover out by experimenting with different ad versions. They can examine the performance of multiple versions of the advertising and apply the successes throughout the account using this Google Ads tool. By allowing them to make adjustments rapidly, ad variations save marketers time and increase efficiency. They can also experiment with other hotel characteristics to determine which produces the best results.

For example, they might find that "5 Star Service" performs better in the marketing than "Inclusive Mini Bar". Campaign drafts and experiments are great for testing numerous simultaneous changes on a smaller scale, whereas ad variations are best for testing one change across multiple campaigns or your entire account. Campaign Experiments should be used if marketers wish to make a lot of modifications throughout their campaigns. This Google Ads tool enables to experiment with new ideas without having to rebuild and maybe destroy the current campaigns. Campaign Experiments are essentially checkers for the adverts. This application allows marketers to collect real-world data that can be used to fine-tune the hotel marketing. There is no need to overthink; simply test. When the trial goes live, potential consumers may see the experimental ad instead of the regular one. The likelihood of this happening is determined by how marketers split the traffic share.

Google will email marketers an alert once they have statistically significant data to work with, letting them know that the data they are using to evaluate their experiment is useful. Marketers can change the experiment's termination date, giving them complete control over their test campaigns. The most significant advantage of employing Campaign Experiments is that marketers can test with minimal risk. If they are experimenting with successful campaigns, this is very crucial. However, using Campaign Experiments, may use a portion of the existing budget to test a new strategy and perhaps improve the success of the campaigns. Marketers should not forget to keep track of what they tested once they have completed their experiments. They should be keeping a track of the results in AdWords account or in a spreadsheet to use as a reference for planning and testing future ad campaigns. These three Google Ads capabilities are critical components of the complicated paid search landscape. Even seasoned marketers will find the hospitality and tourism industries to be competitive and diversified environments (MILLS 2018).

2.3.8. Instagram

In the hotel industry, there is a lot of competition. Every day, more hotels open their doors, making it increasingly difficult to stand out amid the crowd. Unless the hotel is the only one in town, marketers should definitely be looking for new ways to attract more customers and improve bookings. This is when Instagram stories actually be useful. They are an excellent approach to connect with the target demographic and demonstrate that the hotel is not simply some other hotel on the street. Instagram is not only a prominent social media site, but it is also the most popular platform for travelers and individuals who want to travel. That is the type of person hotel marketers would really like to attract so they are the target market. The Stories, on the other hand, take that target group and assist marketers form a genuine connection with them. When marketers combine the fact that story content is not as well-curated as static Instagram photographs, plus the fact that it vanishes after 24 hours, they get raw, real-time sharing. Instagram stories are a terrific way to invite the audience into the hotel and show them what the hotel and culture are all about. (Figure 1.)
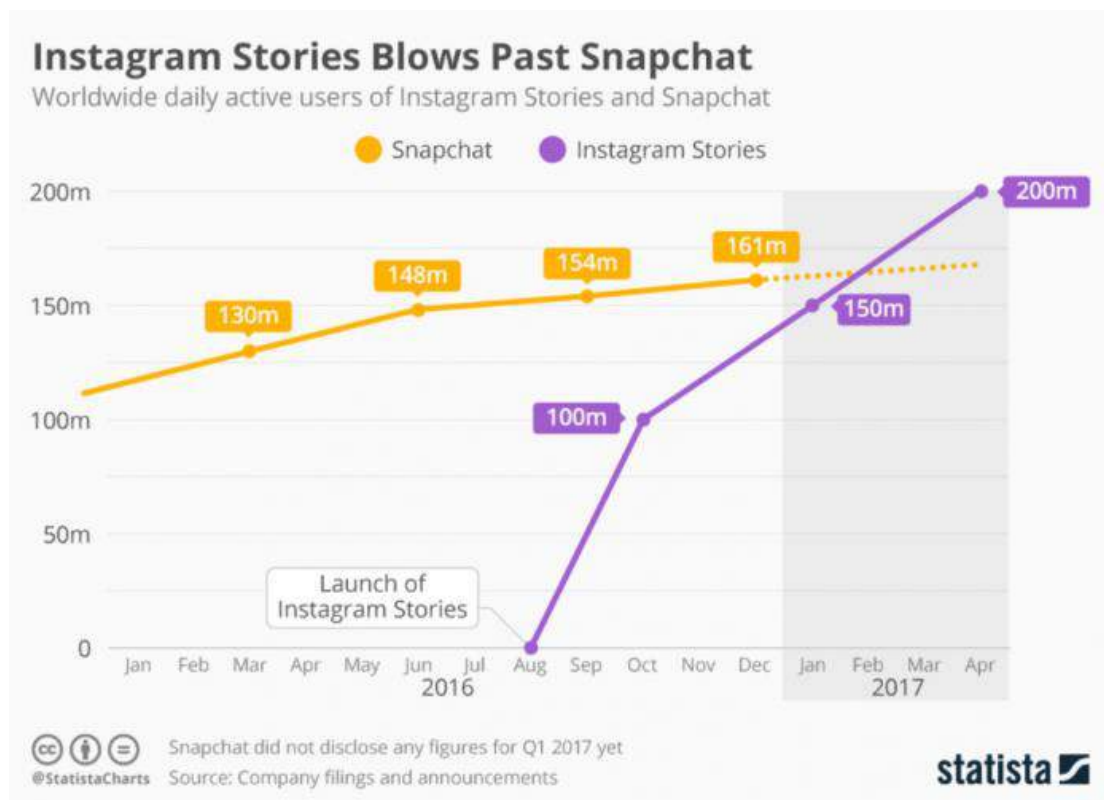

Instagram Stories Blows Past Snapchat
Worldwide daily active users of Instagram Stories and Snapchat

Figure 1

Ways hotels can use Instagram stories to get more bookings

Source: https://www.hotelspeak.com/2017/12/3-ways-hotels-can-use-instagram-stories-get-bookings/

19

As a matter of fact, Instagram only took less than six months to achieve 150 million daily users, whereas Snapchat took six years to reach that milestone! And those are not just people sharing images with each other; these are businesses account for one-third of the most popular stories. Moreover, discounts and sales are popular, especially if they are exclusive and restricted. Instagram stories are the ideal platform for promoting that discount. For starters, it is only available to the followers, making them feel special and privileged. Second, it is a limited-time offer that expires in 24 hours, forcing the user to act swiftly. Marketers can inform the viewers about the special offer and provide them with a secret code to use when booking or checking in. They can even persuade them to swipe up to go directly to the booking page, as Soho House Barcelona did, or include a special link that takes them to a discounted rate. They will need to take the code or link while it is still available because it is expiring after a while. The discount does not have to be significant; alternatively, it might be an added value offer – anything to make the consumers feel special and encourage them to choose this specific hotel over the competitors.

One of the best features of Instagram stories is that page's owners can see who has read their post and respond when necessary. If they notice someone who has seen their tale all the way through and has seen the code, for example, they can call out and ask whether they have any issues. They can even give them a bonus if they go the extra mile, customers will appreciate the personal touch. Having a secret code or link makes it simple to monitor the Instagram efforts and see how frequently people utilize the discount and how effective the tactic is. On top of that, people enjoy going behind the scenes and seeing things that others do not.

As a result, hotel marketers should use Instagram Stories to provide them that opportunity. The possibilities are infinite. Marketers can give their audience a brief tour of the hotel, or just a portion of it. Showing them the rooms, restaurant, lounge area, and surrounds, as well as anything else marketers think they would enjoy. They may provide them a glimpse into the lives of hotel staff, including what they go through on a regular basis and how they spend their time at work. They can also conduct interviews. Marketers should not miss out on a fantastic event or conference that is taking place at the hotel as they should give the viewers a sneak peek; they will be enthralled. Sharing the story with the visitors is a fantastic approach to make them feel special. Thus, whatever marketers do, they should show the "true side of the hotel" to the audience. They will feel as if they are familiar with the hotel and will be much more likely to stay with the hotel for the next time, they need a room. Instagram has just launched a new feature among the stories, which allows users to vote and pick between two possibilities. This is a terrific way to get viewers involved and engaged while also receiving useful feedback After all, the more devoted and involved someone is with the hotel brand, the more likely they are to select it over another. Solicit input from the audience and involve them in hotel decisions. Marketers are free to ask any inquiry, no matter how large or small. Everything from what color to brush the main hallway to what new breakfast dish to provide, to how they prefer their towels folded.

Marketers will get immediate feedback that can employ in the hotel, and the audience who follow the hotel will feel engaged and valued. Knowing that their comments aided in making hotel-related decisions will encourage them to explore the hotel and see how their feedback was put to use. People will feel important, and marketers will cherish their feedback, which will only enhance the relationship and increase bookings. Marketers may also invite individuals to leave criticism or ideas in the comments section. Followers may instantly connect with the hotel via Instagram stories. Instagram stories are evidence that expiring material is becoming increasingly popular. All what marketers need is honesty, not a convoluted approach, hours of work, or professional design abilities. Employing Instagram stories to bring visitors in and give them a behind-the-scenes look at the hotel (SHETH 2017).

2.3.9. Online costumer communication

Providing exceptional customer service is at the heart of any successful business. In the same way that a conversation widget on the hotel website may enhance confidence and conversion, salespeople tuning into the requirements and recommending the right goods greatly affect the purchasing behavior, rather like a typical retail experience. Marketers will be giving their website visitors real-time customer assistance before they become genuine customers, all while obtaining a competitive advantage. Chats have the potential to influence client purchase decisions based just on the psychology that there is someone to assist clients through the purchasing process and provide them the undivided attention they require. Indeed, 44% of customers purchased a product online as a result of their existing chat session, and 62% were willing to purchase from the same site again. Most firms, according to industry standards, offer chatting session that appears on their webpages. Its major purpose is to start a dialogue that may result to a conversion. These op-ups are 13 times more effective than ordinary internet advertising at generating clicks and opt-in subscribers. Having said that, a chat box that appears as soon as a guest browses the website should be avoided at all costs due to the risk of distracting them. Auto conversation window pop-ups can help visitors who do not have time to read the complete website's content start a conversation. The interactions with the site visitors are recorded in chat transcripts. When clients cannot find (or are puzzled by) information on the site, they frequently turn to chat with assistance. Although the chat employees are familiar with common client questions, the option for a website visitor to get a copy should be offered so they do not miss out on the important information they just learned.

Marketers can improve the sales responses and propose new approaches to deal with the site visitors demands in a better way because the transcript maintains conversation history. Furthermore, as the FAQ database grows larger, potential consumers will be able to obtain the information they need on the website's FAQ page, leaving other inquiries to be answered by chat operators. Furthermore, a disagreement among a customer an agent over a guaranteed discount might be aggravating. Rather than pointing fingers, marketers can use the chat transcript to filter over discussions and get to the bottom of it. If a hotel wants to use a chat box, marketers should make sure it can handle photographs, videos, and many

languages. The multilingual component would not only make it reachable in all languages, but it will also help you engage with clients more effectively. In general, hotel guests come from many walks of life, and just as management hire and educate front desk workers to speak multiple languages, the web chat should provide the same level of assistance. Chatbots answer to website users 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, without involving humans. Furthermore, they are designed on messaging applications, allowing to be accessible on any platform where the overwhelming amount of the potential clients may be. With a lighthearted tone and a personalized greeting, they communicate with customers more effectively. Furthermore, 53% of visitors are more inclined to make a purchase from a company that they may contact through a chat application (BHOWMIK 2017).

2.4. Hotels and new technological achievement

Hotels have a skeptical attitude about technology. When visitors begin to demand its adoption, the velocity and unpredictability of technology is frightening for an industry founded in an outdated way that makes practically every decision based on a cost-benefit analysis. While gadgets such as Amazon Echo and Google Home gain popularity with a select forward-thinking (and budgeted) firms, the industry as a whole is waiting; many people recall investing in IHome. Choosing when and how to invest in new technology can win a promotion or cost a job in the hotel industry, where executives are only as stable as their success. It is tough to justify investing in a technology that provides no measurable return other than the pleasure of the few visitors who utilize it at this point. Roxy, a newcomer to the speech-enabled market, takes advantage of this potential with a gadget tailored specifically for hotels. Roxy delivers end-to-end customization, linking the client directly to the brand, going beyond the conventional group suite of music streaming options and smart room control. This allows Roxy not only to collect, allocate, and document incoming guest requests, easing the burden on employees, but also opens up a new horizon of upsell and feedback options for the brand. As technology progresses, flexible, and focused, it may benefit hotel operations just as much as it can benefit guests. Successful adoption, on the other hand, is intended for those who welcome change before it is imposed upon them (STEPAN 2017).

Hotel marketers can provide an exceptional experience for the customers with the help of technology. Even though the Henn-na Hotel in Japan lately debuted a robot to meet visitors, other hotels have implemented iForms as a means of automating procedures and improving customer service. Dajon Data Management, a workflow expert, investigated how these workflows may increase customer responsiveness, resulting in higher customer satisfaction, repeat business, and more referrals, and came up with five main insights. First is the automated room booking. The first step in every hotel stay is to do some research and book a room. While most establishments now offer online booking, some have gone even farther by allowing customers to pre-choose which room they want to stay in during their vacation from a digital floor plan using automated web forms. The Hilton Honors program allows visitors to select any additional amenities that will be brought to their room prior to their arrival. Guests value this approach since it allows them to book their chosen

accommodation ahead of time, while saving the hotel time at the reception and allowing for better room distribution planning. The online forms' workflows generate assignments for specific personnel to deliver extra services to the space. Additional advantages enable for resource planning ahead of time by constructing a digital image of what typical visitors are likely to desire during their stay. Secondly, the fast check in and check out. Along with The Hilton, the Ritz-Carlton has created an app for its visitors that uses online platforms to check-in and check-out without having to visit the front desk. Guests can also use their smartphones to request amenities such as complimentary towels, with automation producing tasks for workers and updating hotel data. Third, automated room service. Customers can use online forms to pay for their room service in the same way they can request new services. A guest can view a menu online and pay for an order using their smartphone or computer, which will automatically create a job for the kitchen and remove the products from stock levels.

This workflow automation helps visitors to have their orders filled faster and with fewer errors, resulting in improved customer satisfaction and time savings throughout the hotel. Lastly, a higher level of customer service and quicker replies. Customer service is one of the most common uses of iForms. When a customer submits an online support request, workflows might generate an assignment for an employee to call the customer or send them a message. Data fields will be pre-populated when responding to a task, allowing employees to rapidly access information about a guest's hotel stay and contact information. Workflows can be developed to cover a cycle of more sophisticated procedures involving many persons, organizations, or departments, or they can be built to cover a specific position or a single person. Workflow automation could be a good fit for your needs, no matter how big or little they are (CHARMAN 2017).

3. Material and methods

3.1. Material

The research has collected data from primary and secondary sources. The secondary data was collected from marketing books, website and articles specialized in hotel marketing. The primary source was carried out through a questionnaire that was distributed to people who visited Palmyra and its hotels. The research is quantitative research which is based on survey numbers. Data were analyzed statistically through Google forms. I chose the quantitative research because it produces objective data that can be clearly communicated through statistics and numbers.

I also prepared a SWOT analysis as part of the primary research. It is beneficial to use the SWOT analysis to anticipate possibilities and plan ahead of time how to deal with obstacles. I applied the SWOT analysis to examine the marketing situation of hotels of Palmyra.

3.2 Hotels in Palmyra

Palmyra is located in the Syrian desert, north-east of Damascus, it contains the monumental ruins of a great city that was one of the most important cultural centers of the ancient world. From the 1st to the 2nd century, the art and architecture of Palmyra, standing at the crossroads of several civilizations, married Graeco-Roman techniques with local traditions and Persian influences.

First mentioned in the archives of Mari in the 2nd millennium BC, Palmyra was an established caravan oasis when it came under Roman control in the mid-first century AD as part of the Roman province of Syria. It grew steadily in importance as a city on the trade route linking Persia, India and China with the Roman Empire, marking the crossroads of several civilizations in the ancient world.

According to the Syria Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), the city had a population of 51,323 and the subdistrict a population of 55,062 in the 2004 census.

There are many tourists' attractions in Palmyra. One of the most popular of them is the Roman theatre of Palmyra. It dates back to the second-century CE Severan period and the theatre's remains have since been restored.

Secondly, there is the tetrapylon which was a type of monument common in the Classical architecture. The defining quality of this form is the concept of four gates, with four pillars or other supporting structures placed at the corners marking the divisions between them. A tetrapylon could take the form of a single building or multiple, separate structures. They were built as landmarks at significant crossroads or geographical "focal points", as a sub-type of the Roman triumphal arch, or simply as decorative and aesthetically pleasing ornamental architecture.

Palmyra Castle, also known as Fakhr-al-Din al-Ma'ani Castle (Arabic: قلعة فخر الدين المعني) or Tadmur Castle, is a castle overlooking Palmyra in the province of Homs, Syria. The castle is thought to have been built by the Mamluks in the 13th century on a high hill overlooking the historic site of Palmyra, and is named for the Druze emir Fakhr-al-Din II, who extended the Druze domains to the region of Palmyra during the 16th century. The site of the castle and Palmyra in 1980 became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in recognition of the monumental ruins of a great city, which was one of the most important cultural centers of the ancient world. The site was designated a national monument in Syria and a buffer zone was established in 2007. The castle lying on raised bedrock was a well defended position for a fortification with thick and high walls, which was also surrounded by a moat that had only one access available through a drawbridge.

The Lion of Al-lāt, a statue of a lion holding a crouching gazelle, was made from limestone ashlars in the early first century AD and measured 3.5 m (11 ft) in height, weighing 15 tons. The statue was discovered in 1977 by a group of Polish archeologists from the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology of the University of Warsaw. The statue was found in pieces, having been reused in antiquity for the temple's foundation. Subsequently, it was decided to reassemble the pieces in front of the entrance to the Palmyra Museum.

Temple of Bel-Shamin, the temple's earliest phase dates to the late 2nd century BC; its altar was built in 115 AD, and the temple was substantially rebuilt in 131 AD. The temple was originally a part of an extensive precinct of three courtyards and represented a fusion of ancient Syrian and Roman architectural styles. The temple's proportions and the capitals of its columns were Roman in inspiration, while the elements above the architrave and the side windows followed the Syrian tradition. In 1980, UNESCO designated the temple as a World Heritage Site.

Temple of Nabu, it dated to the second century CE and dedicated to Nabû or Nebo, the Babylonian god of knowledge, arts and writing.

As a local tourist myself in Palmyra, after seeing the marvelous city I would like to mention that Palmyra is one of the best tourists' destinations in Syria. The magnificent ruins are manifested everywhere in the city. Walking through the area, tourists feel as if they are in an open museum because of the beauty all around.

In Palmyra, there are furnished apartments to rent for tourists. Besides, there are fourteen hotels. These hotels range from one star to a five stars hotel. The one and only five-star hotel is Tadamora Palace Hotel & Spa. It has 63 rooms and can accommodate up to 126 guests.

3.2.1. SWOT Analysis

A hotel SWOT analysis is a management tool that hotels use to assess their   internal environment such as strengths and weaknesses, as well as, the external environment which are opportunities and threats.

It is beneficial to use the SWOT analysis to anticipate possibilities and plan ahead of time how to deal with obstacles.

I applied the SWOT analysis to examine the marketing situation of hotels of Palmyra:

Strengths:

-The hotels of Palmyra are located in one of the most touristic places in Syria. Tourists come from different parts of the world and Syria to visit this city. Therefore, the location of these hotels is the biggest advantage.

-Some of the hotels are imitating the external and internal details of Palmyra in their hotel which makes guests have a better enjoyable experience inside the hotel.

Weaknesses:

-Not implementing enough marketing tools.

-Limitation in budget due to the few numbers of revenues from guests because of the current situation in Syria.

-Lack in rooms technology as the internet service is not fully operating due to the crisis in the country.

Opportunities:

-Dynamic prices as they are not high compared to other hotels which means they can attract more tourists who are on a budget.

-Local and international tourists due to the fact that Palmyra is a unique area in Syria so even locals would go to these hotels to see the beauty of it which will create an attractive atmosphere for international tourists to meet the locals who come from different cities as well as enjoying their stay.

Threats:

-Covid pandemic has caused many lockdowns in almost every part in the world and it affected the hospitality industry the most as people stopped traveling.

-The unstable situation of the country as it has been through a severe conflict.

3.3. Marketing tools for hotels

After researching online, I found that the local government of the city is making noticeable efforts for marketing the city. The main focus for them was on Facebook because this platform is the most popular among people in Syria. In these pages, they are posting information about the history of the city, as well as, the attraction and sightseeing there. The information is directed to local and international people, so they are posted in both Arabic and English. However, when people ask questions or leave a comment in a different language than these two, admins of the page try to answer in the same language of the asked question. It is worth mentioning that the inhabitants of Palmyra are used to dealing with tourists long time ago. Therefore, most of them consider learning languages as very important and try to learn as many as they can.

Here are some of the pages concerning Palmyra on social media:

1-A Facebook page under the name "The Archaeological Museum of Palmyra" (Figure 2)

2-A Facebook page under the name "Everyday Life in Palmyra" (Figure 3)

Figure 2   Figure 3

https://www.facebook.com/PalmyraMuseum,
https://www.facebook.com/EverydaylifeinPalmyra
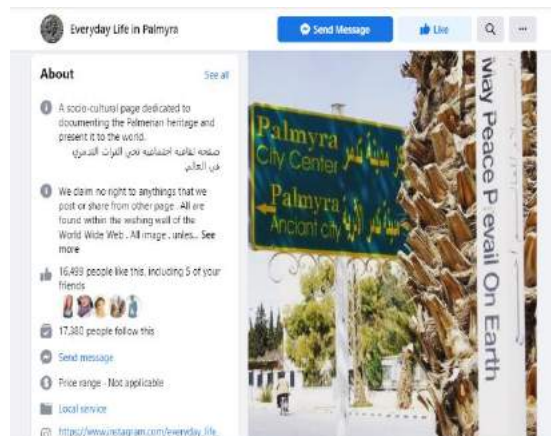
Beside social media platforms, Palmyra's hotels were mentioned on international, national and regional booking websites.

Here are some of the booking websites concerning Palmyra's hotels:

1-The popular international booking website "Trip Advisor" (Figure 4)

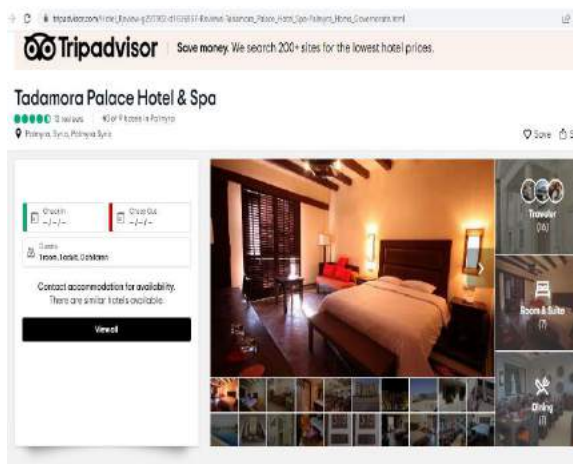2-The regional booking website which is famous in the Arab world "We go" (Figure 5)
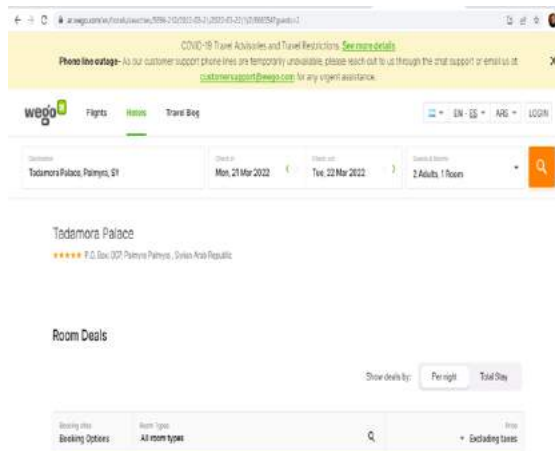
Figure 4: "Trip Advisor" Figure 5: "We go"

https://www.tripadvisor.com/Hotel_Review-g297902-d1636857-Reviews-
Tadamora_Palace_Hotel_Spa-Palmyra_Homs_Governorate.html

https://ar.wego.com/en/hotels/searches/5896-212/2022-03-21/2022-03-
22/1/2/806354?guests=2

3-The national booking website "Come to Syria"(Figure 6)

Figure 6: "Come to Syria"

Source: https://www.cometosyria.com/en/hotels-in-
syria/Hotels+in+Palmyra/details/106/Tadamora+Palace++hotel

3.4 Tadamora Palace Hotel & Spa

As a Syrian citizen, I believe that what makes Palmyra special is the local style that is reflected on its buildings and furnishings as I have never seen that style in any other Syrian city. From my perspective, I notice that the architecture of a destination plays an important role in making it exceptional and therefore it can be used for marketing as the tourists will feel the uniqueness of a destination because they will not see the same style in other places. Fortunately, this is recognizable in Palmyra's hotels as they follow the local style in both the building and furnishings.

Tadamora Palace Hotel & Spa features room service, to help make the guest stay more enjoyable. The property also boasts a pool and an on-site restaurant. Also, free parking is available. One of the most important features about this hotel is following the local style in its design and furniture.

The hotel building is an imitation of the ruins of Palmyra and designed with the same look and the lobby's furniture is also a local design of the city (Figure 7-8)

Figure 7: Tadamora Palace Hotel & Spa   Figure 8: Tadamora Palace Hotel & Spa

Source: https://www.tripadvisor.com/Hotel_Review-g297902-d1636857-Reviews-Tadamora_Palace_Hotel_Spa-Palmyra_Homs_Governorate.html#/media/1636857/26032094:p/?albumid=101&type=0&category=101

The restaurant of the hotel has ancient local decoration hanged on the wall. Also, they have a significant statue resembling Zenobia; the queen of Palmyra. In addition, it has a beautiful terrace with an overview on the pool. The columns used are exactly the same design as Palmyra ruins which makes the hotel even more attractive for tourists (Figure 9-10)

Figure 9: Hotel interior   Figure 10: Hotel teracce

Source: https://www.tripadvisor.com/Hotel_Review-g297902-d1636857-Reviews-Tadamora_Palace_Hotel_Spa-Palmyra_Homs_Governorate.html#/media/1636857/26032094:p/?albumid=101&type=0&category=101

The hotel uses a very special indication of sleep for guests who do not want to be disturbed. Also, the room toiletries are unique as they are all handmade by the local people(Figure 11-12)

Figure 11: Hotelroom-door   Figure 12: Bathroom articles

Source: https://www.tripadvisor.com/Hotel_Review-g297902-d1636857-Reviews-Tadamora_Palace_Hotel_Spa-Palmyra_Homs_Governorate.html#/media/1636857/26032094:p/?albumid=101&type=0&category=101

Tadamora Palace Hotel & Spa is an excellent choice for travelers visiting Palmyra, offering a luxury environment alongside many helpful amenities designed to enhance a traveler's stay. Guest rooms offer amenities such as air conditioning, and guests can go online with free Wi-Fi offered by the hotel.

I believe that the marketing strategy that this hotel has followed is efficient as it makes tourists live the full experience of Palmyra not only outside the hotel but also inside; ranging from the external design, decoration to the local handmade toiletries.

3.5 Quantitative research - data sampling and collection

The method that was followed to collect data for this research is a survey which was distributed to people who had visited hotels of Palmyra. The people who answered were both males and females and they were from different age groups ranging from 18 to over 60. The respondents were from Syria and other countries. The Syrian people who answered were not from one specific city. However, they were from different cities such as Damascus (the capital), Aleppo, Homs and many other cities.

The total number of answers received is 60 and it was done by Google form. The survey was published in February 2022 and was open to receive answers until March 2022. The respondents were 50% male and 50% females.

The vast majority of respondents were from Syria by 90%. Within Syria, most of the answers were from people who are from the capital of Syria Damascus with a percentage of 25%. This was followed by 22.5% of the answers from Aleppo which is the city with the largest number of population in Syria. Similarly, 22.5% of the answers came from people from different parts of Syria, this includes cities such as (Lattakia, Tartous and Hama). In addition, 20% of the answers were from Homs, the third largest city in Syria. Finally, only 10% of the respondents were from other countries.

The respondents were from different age group as shown in the table (Table1).

Table 1: AGE

26-35	31,7%
36-50	28,3%
18-25	26,7%
51-65	13,3%
+60	0%

Source: my own research

The next question was asking people whether they go to Palmyra regularly. The dominant answer was that people visit Palmyra only once a year with a proportion of 58,3%. However, 26,7% answered that they do not visit it and only 15% of answers stated that they visit it many times a year (Figure 13).

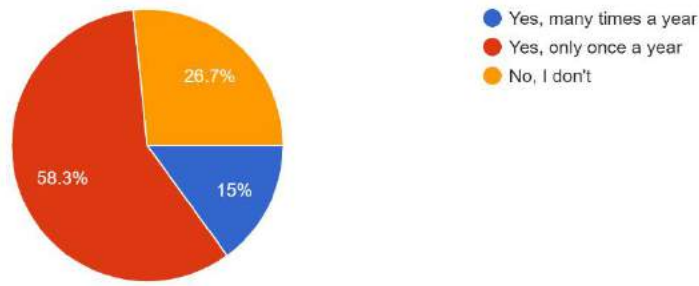3- Do you visit Palmyra regularly?
60 responses

- Yes, many times a year
- Yes, only once a year
- No, I don't

26.7%
58.3%
15%

Figure 13

Source: My own research

The other question was about the place where the people stay when they visit Palmyra. The biggest number of people stay in a hotel by 85%. Other people rent a flat by 11,7% and only 3,3% of the people own a flat in Palmyra (Figure 14).

4- When you visit it, where do you stay?
60 responses

- I own a flat
- I rent a flat
- I stay in a hotel

85%
11.7%
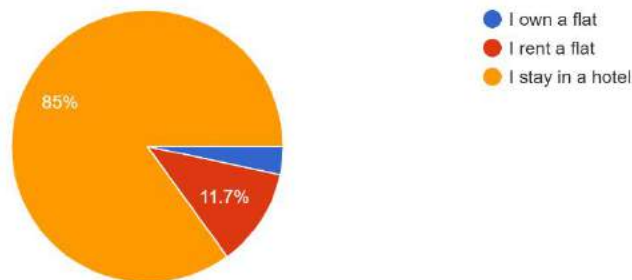
Figure 14

Source: My own research

Obviously, hotels were the dominant choice for the people so I wanted to know how they booked their accommodation. 33,3% of the people booked their accommodation by doing a phone call with the hotel. Also, the second largest percentage are people who book their accommodation within the hotel when arriving. Whereas, only 11,7% booked it in the hotel reservation system. meaning that, the hypothesis stated is true as most of the people depend on the offline reservation either because they do not have a good internet service or because bank cards are no longer working in Syria. However, it should be taken into consideration that because of the current situation in Syria, internet access is not available all the time as it goes on and off many times a day. As well as, because of the unstable situation, banks have stopped issuing and working with bank cards. Therefore, people are unable to book anything online and they tend to paying in person.

 The answer varied as shown in the pie chart (Figure 15).

5- How did you book your accommodation?
60 responses

- At the hotel
- By phone with the hotel
- In the hotel reservation online system
- By email
- At a travel agency
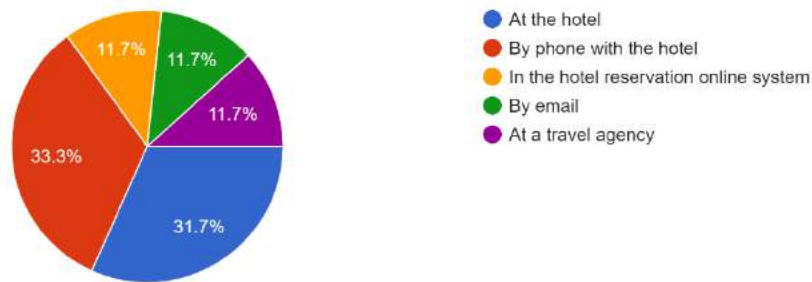
Figure 15

Source: My own research

The following question was about asking respondents whether they stay in a specific hotel when they visit Palmyra or they would like to try a new hotel each time. 88,3% of the respondents prefer to visit a new hotel every time they visit Palmyra and only above 10% have a tendency to stay in a specific hotel. The purpose of this question was to determine whether the people who visit Palmyra hotels have a loyalty towards one hotel or not. Clearly, people do not have a loyalty for one hotel. Therefore, the hypothesis stated is not true (Figure 16).

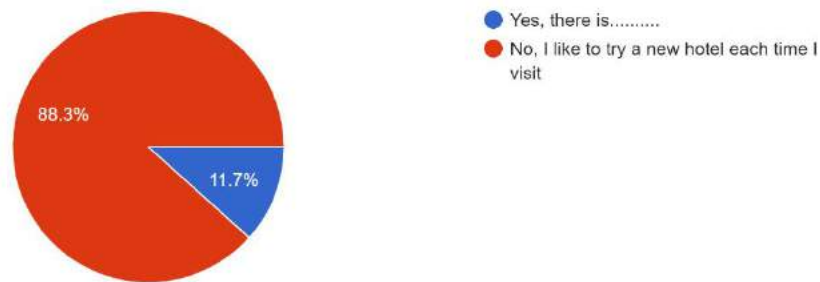6- Is there a specific hotel you like to stay in?
60 responses

Figure 16

Source: My own research

The question after was about the way these people discover about the hotel. As per the figure, the majority of people knew about the hotel because it was recommended by a friend. While only half of this percentage knew about it because of a Facebook ad. Abnormally, only 18,3% found about a hotel because of its website. As a result, hotels of Palmyra are weak in terms of using marketing tools which means that the hypothesis regarding hotels of Palmyra not using enough marketing tools is true.

The answers varied as revealed (Figure 17):

7- How did you find out about the hotel?
60 responses
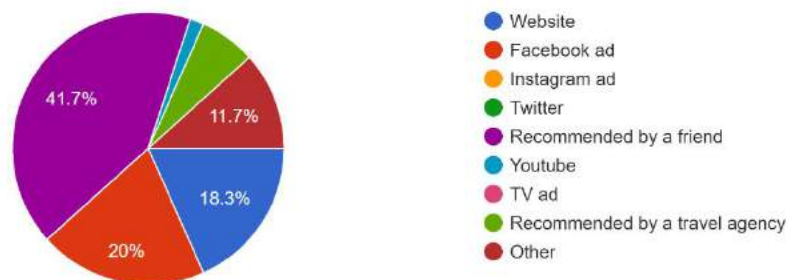
Figure 17

Source: My own research

The upcoming question was about the marketing tool the hotels used. As elucidated, the marketing tool that was used by hotels the most is Facebook with a percentage of 66,7%. This was followed by website by 31,7%. Other tools such as Instagram, YouTube, Twitter and tv ads were used but with too little percentage. This confirms the previous hypothesis that hotels of Palmyra do not use enough marketing tools as just using two tools is not enough for hotel marketing nowadays.

The later question was asked to know the people's opinion of Palmyra's hotels. Basically, 58,3% of the people believe that Palmyra's hotels are good. 23,3% of them think they are fair (just okay) and only 18,3% of them think that these hotels are excellent.

Answers are elucidated in (Figure 18):

8- What marketing tools did the hotel where you stayed use? (You can tick more than one)
60 responses

Figure 18

Source: My own research

The later question was asked to know the people's opinion of Palmyra's hotels. Basically, 58,3% of the people believe that Palmyra's hotels are good. 23,3% of them think they are fair (just okay) and only 18,3% of them think that these hotels are excellent (Figure 19):

9- How would you rate Palmyra's hotels overall?
60 responses
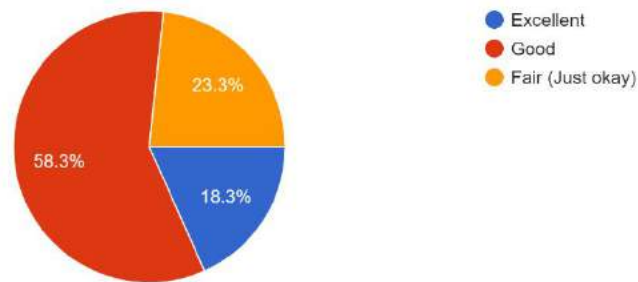

Excellent
Good
Fair (Just okay)

Figure 19

Source: My own research

The afterward question aimed to know whether these hotel guests had any negative experience during their stay in the hotel. Pleasingly, the vast majority of guests did not have any negative experience at all by 85%. Only above 10% of guests had a negative experience once and just 3,3% of them had negative experiences (Figure 20):

10- Have you ever had a negative experience in any of the hotels there?
60 responses

Yes
Only once
Never
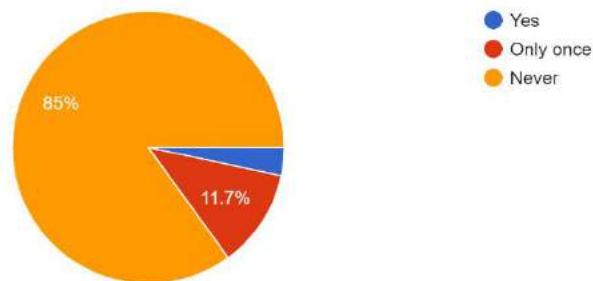
Figure 20

Source: My own research

The next question was for those who had a negative experience to see what action they took for it. Surprisingly, 76,2% of the guests did not take any action. Only over 14% stopped staying at that hotel and just under 10% reported it to the hotel management (Figure 21)

11- If yes, did you take any action for that?
21 responses

- ● Yes, I reported to the hotel management
- ● Yes, I stopped staying in that hotel
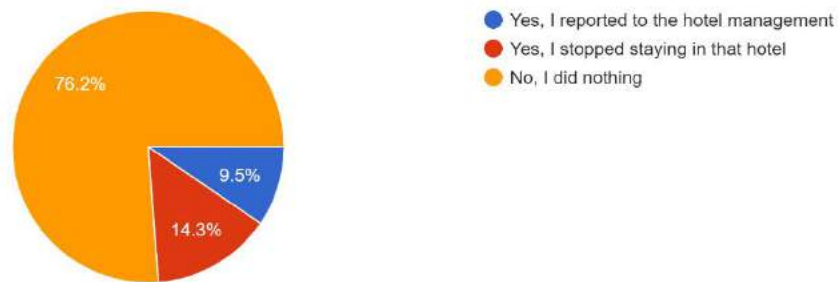- ● No, I did nothing

Figure 21

Source: My own research

After that the question was to inspect whether people would still be interested in visiting Palmyra's hotels again. 60% of the respondents answered positively that they would still be interested to visit it again and the other 40% of them were unsure about it and answered with maybe. Remarkably, no one of the respondents answered negatively (Figure 22),

12- Would you still be interested in visiting Palmyra's hotels again?
60 responses

- ● Yes
- ● No
- ● Maybe
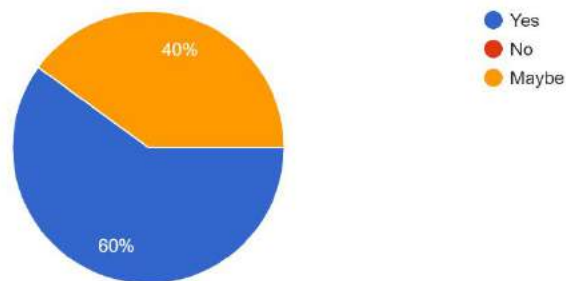
Figure 22

Source: My own research

Later, the question was asked to know whether the hotels of Palmyra need more marketing strategies. Unfortunately, 93,3% of the respondent claimed that these hotels need more marketing strategies and only 6,7% of them answered the opposite (Figure 23):

13- Do you think the hotels of Palmyra need marketing strategies?
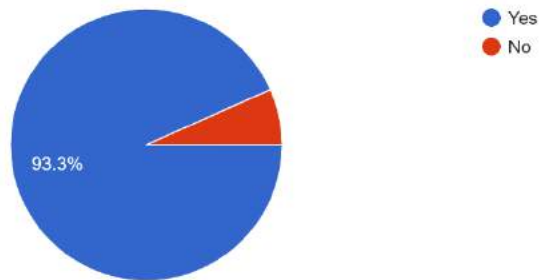60 responses

Figure 23

Source: My own research

Finally, the last question was an open discussion as I aimed to know the respondents' opinion about the marketing tools that hotels of palmyra could use to attract more visitors. Unluckily, only 15 responses were received for this question. Overall, exactly 50% of the answers went for digital marketing from Facebook, Booking to Instagram and YouTube, half of people agreed on the digital marketing as the best marketing tools to attract more visitors. Other answers mixed between TV advertising and attracting visitors by offering discounts and special offers. Therefore, hotels should start realizing the importance of marketing and especially the digital platforms to interest more guests.

They vary as clarified in the table (Table 2).

Table 2: MARKETING TOOLS

1-	Facebook
2-	Listing on Booking.com
3-	Offers and activities
4-	Improve social media accounts and keep up new hotel marketing trends
5-	TV ads
6-	Ads
7-	Social media
8-	Internet
9-	Facebook ads, banners

10-	The stay in the hotel includes entertainment programs in Palmyra with discounted prices for customers
11-	Cleaning the hotel more often and a better customer service
12-	Instagram ad & YouTube
13-	TV advertising
14-	Publicity and announcement of what the place includes in addition to providing the infrastructure to receive visitors to give a good impression for the tourist to re-visit again

Table 2

Source: My own research

Proving hypothesis

Based on secondary and primary research, I make the following observations about my hypothesis:

1- **Hotels of Palmyra do not use enough marketing tools**: *TRUE*

2- **Hotels of Palmyra are mostly dependent on the offline reservations because the people do not have the option of online booking**: *TRUE*

3- **Hotels of Palmyra do not use enough online booking because people do not have good internet**: *MAYBE +-*

4- **Nowadays, tourists have a loyalty towards one hotel**: *NOT TRUE*

4. Conclusions and recommendations

4.1. Conclusions

To conclude, Palmyra is clearly one of the most important tourist destinations in Syria and it is clear that marketing plays an enormous role in increasing the popularity of a destination. The reason that hotels of Palmyra lack guests is because of the lack of the marketing tools they use. Referring to the questionnaire as the respondents declared that they knew about a hotel mostly from a friend not advertisements, meaning that these hotels need to focus more on the marketing strategies and tools. Therefore, there should be more marketing tools that are suitable for different age groups as the survey showed that the people who were interested in Palmyra were from early twenties to middle sixty, taking into account that both males and females are interested in this destination.

The survey also revealed some negative results from the respondents as most of them agreed on that the marketing tools of hotels of Palmyra are not enough and they need to develop them and come up with more ideas and actions. However, the positive side that was seen among the respondents is, they were pleased in their staying in hotels of Palmyra and they would not mind visiting it again. It adds to the value of Palmyra that this destination is full of historical tourists' attractions which attract tourists from different parts of the world.

Clearly, hotels of Palmyra need to work more on their online reservation system so they avoid the travel agency fee and it will make it easier for guests. Also, it can be on their advantage as the survey show that respondents did not have a loyalty towards specific hotel, meaning that they would go to the easier and better they find. So by this, they would ensure that they have a room to stay in advance as well as booking in an easy way.

Hotels of Palmyra also need to vary their advertisement and not only advertise on Facebook so they should work more on their TV ads and other social media applications. Finally, it is important that most of the respondents rated hotels of Palmyra positively meaning that the only thing these hotels lack is good and more marketing strategies.

4.2 Recommendations

1- Some considerations need to be taken into account as hotels of Palmyra should come up with new ideas for marketing strategies and tools since they are currently not enough.

2- Hotels of Palmyra should work more on their online reservation system and make it easy and simple for people to book considering that different age group are interested in that destination.

3- In order for hotels of Palmyra to attract more guests, they should not only depend on online advertisements but also consider TV ads and some influencers as well.

5. Summary

To sum up, a World Heritage Site, Palmyra is heralded by experts as having some of the finest Roman-era ruins in existence. The ancient city, which flourished in the 1st and 2nd centuries, has numerous historic structures. Among them: a 3,600-foot-long colonnade, an agora (or marketplace), an amphitheater, an urban quarter, a series of tombs, a hilltop castle and the Temple of Bel (also spelled Ba'al), an important, cross-cultural religious site pagan site.

Though the city is often associated with the Roman Empire, under which it attained prominence, its history extends well beyond that. In fact, the city is mentioned in tablets that date as far back as the 19th century BCE. It grew in importance as a caravan stop in the third century BCE, an important desert pit-stop between the Mediterranean and the Euphrates River in Iraq.

Visually and architecturally, there are very few sites in the Roman world that have this much architecture intact. Palmyra has been out there in the middle of the desert and hasn't been subjected to intense urbanization.

In addition, Syria has always been a multicultural, multifaith, multiethnic place and people have found a way to live together. Over its history, it has had Christians, Muslims, Jews and so many others that have co-existed over so many millennia.

For all the mentioned facts, hotels of Palmyra are privileged to be located in one of the most ancient cities in the world. A destination where tourists come from different parts of the world to explore it. Therefore, it is worth investing more in marketing plans and strategies to attract as many tourists as possible to these hotels.

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List of figures:

List of tables:

Appendix 1:

Questionnaire:

Dear Mme/Mr!

I hope you are doing well. My name is Ranem, I am a master's student in MATE University in Gyongyos, Hungary, studying Tourism Management. I am currently doing my final year research, an important part of my education.

Please help me complete my thesis by filling in the questionnaire! it takes 5 minutes to complete.

The questionnaire is addressed to tourists who usually stay in hotels in Palmyra.

1- What is your gender?
   Male
   Female

2- Where are you from?
   Syria, Damascus
   Syria, Aleppo
   Syria, Homs
   Syria, another city
   Other country

3- What is your age group?
   18-25
   26-35
   36-50
   51-65
   +60

4- Do you visit Palmyra regularly?
   Yes, many times a year
   Yes, only once a year
   No, I don't

5- When you visit it, where do you stay?
   I own a flat
   I rent a flat
   I stay in a hotel

6- How did you book your accommodation?

At the hotel
By phone with the hotel
In the hotel reservation online system
By email
At a travel agency

7- Is there a specific hotel you like to stay in?
Yes, there is…
No, I like to try a new hotel each time I visit

8- How did you find out about the hotel?
Website
Facebook ad
Instagram ad
Twitter
Recommended by a friend
YouTube
TV ad
Recommended by a travel agency
Other

9- What marketing tools did the hotel where you stayed use? (You can tick more than one):
Website
Facebook ad
Instagram ad
Twitter
YouTube
TV ad
Other

10- How would you rate Palmyra's hotels overall?
Excellent
Good
Fair (Just okay)

11- Have you ever had a negative experience in any of the hotels there?
Yes
Only once
Never

12- If yes, did you take any action for that?
Yes, I reported to the hotel management

Yes, I stopped staying at the hotel
No, I did nothing

13- Would you still be interested in visiting Palmyra's hotels again?
Yes
No
Maybe

14- Do you think the hotels of Palmyra need marketing strategies?
Yes
No

15- What marketing tools do you think could be used to attract more tourists to Palmyra's hotels?

APPENDEX 2:

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, .Ranem...AlKhalel............ hereby declare under penalty of perjury that the thesis I submitted under the title Marketing...Strategies...and...their...effect...on........... .....tourism... is entirely the result of my own work. When I used other authors' works, either printed or electronic, I accurately cited the sources.

I understand that the electronic copy of the thesis / diploma thesis will be placed in the library of the Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences after the defense where the readers of the library will have access to it.

Signed in Gyöngyös on .13. (day) ..04......... (month), 2022(year)

Signature of thesis writer:
..Ranem..AlKhalel........

48

Appendix 3:

Declaration of consultation with supervisor:

Appendix 2: Declaration of Consultations with Supervisor

Declaration of Consultations with Supervisor

Name of Student: Alkhalel Ranem

Programme and specialization: Tourism Management

Name of Thesis Supervisor: Dr: Pallás Edit Ilona

First personal consultation
Date and time: 2021. 09. 15.
Topic discussed: Thesis structure, topic

Signature of Supervisor:

Second personal consultation
Date and time: 2021. 11. 15.
Topic discussed: Hypothesis, Literature synthesis

Signature of Supervisor:

Third personal consultation
Date and time: 20.22. 03. 08.
Topic discussed: Primary research

Signature of Supervisor:

This has to be attached to the Thesis /Diploma thesis