

THE CONCEPT OF HOSPITALITY MARKETING AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE TO THE SIERRA LEONE TOURISM INDUSTRY

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Abstract:

The concept of hospitality marketing and its significance to the Sierra Leone tourism industry is a most needed education within the hospitality industry in Sierra Leone. The hospitality industry consists of businesses and

institutions involving food and beverage, tourism and all kinds of lodging establishments. The friendly reception

and treatment of guests is the responsibility of the people who work in the hospitality industry. The focus of this research is to enlighten the greater number of those who are in this industry. The study brings out the concept of hospitality and discusses the categories and demands of the market. How the industry should be managed is also factored in research. Guidelines on the macro and micro environment were brought out and discussed in detail. The findings and concepts would be used by industries to focus on ensuring employees and clients are aware of what hospitality management means and the other demands.

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INTRODUCTION

Every restaurant operation has systems -- whether formal or informal -- including those for food quality, menu structure, site selection, financial reporting, marketing, and developing the competence of kitchen staff, servers, managers and support personnel. Properly designed and implemented, these systems help assure the efficient delivery of products and services. While it is important that all these systems be functioning properly, none of them -- either individually or collectively -- generate hospitality.

Because they are rigidly systematized, many franchise operations can deliver their product with consistent efficiency but also without the experience of hospitality. Perhaps that is all their customers expect, but impersonal efficiency leaves patrons with a flat feeling. They have been fed but not nurtured. It is like a relationship without love and passion.

When coupled with effective support systems, all of these qualities create a compelling personal connection between your guests and your restaurant. The result is a stronger draw than either product or price. We have all patronized restaurants where the climate of the establishment draws us in. Every team member genuinely and warmly welcomes us and naturally treats us in a warm and friendly manner. It is obvious that their great pleasure is to be in service to us. We FEEL it ... and it feels good. These extraordinary establishments make it possible for us to have a memorable dining experience. We are drawn to return and tell others.

The difference is invisible and impossible to define, yet it is very tangible. You know when you have it and you know when you don't. That invisible "something," that spirit of hospitality, can be your compelling point of difference in an otherwise impersonal marketplace.

Hospitality is often defined as the quality or disposition of receiving and treating guests and strangers in a warm, friendly, generous manner. What's missing in the dictionary definition is the feeling.

People generally look for the source of their experience in outside circumstance ("she made me happy; this business is stressful.") We are much like the magician's audience. When we watch the distracting hand we experience the trick as magic. If we watch the other hand we understand the trick and appreciate the skill of the misdirection.

Hospitality begins with the leaders of the organization and the way they think. To evolve the climate of your operation, genuine hospitality must originate within your own thinking. From there it will eventually shift the thinking of your entire staff. Anyone who has experienced hospitality knows that it must be genuine or it won't have real impact ... and it won't last.

There is no one single and simple definition to explain the term of hospitality in this stage. Many people have tried to describe the hospitality industry in different ways. Some tried to summarize the scope of the industry and its characteristics of involving both tangible and intangible features in the service delivery process. Others attempted to describe the industry by exploring the stakeholders involved, mutual benefits generated and the industry's impacts to the society and economy.

Broadly speaking, Hospitality is the act of kindness in welcoming and looking after the basic needs of customers or strangers, mainly in relation to food, drink and accommodation. A contemporary explanation of Hospitality refers to the relationship process between a customer and a host. When we talk about the "Hospitality Industry", we are referring to the companies or organisations which provide food and/or drink and/or accommodation to people who are "away from home". However, this definition of the "Hospitality Industry" only satisfies most situations.

TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY IN SIERRA LEONE

The Tourism sector in Sierra Leone has become one of the top priority sectors due to the vast improvement demonstrated over the years, with the huge inflow of foreign direct investment and improvement in quality and standards by our domestic investors in this sector. Sierra Leone is definitely back on the map as a tourist destination, with the surge in the number of tourists visiting Sierra Leone annually, and we have slowly

gained back the momentum with the influx of International Brands with the likes of Hilton and Radisson Blu investing in our tourism sector.

As is most commonly described, Sierra Leone is the best kept secret destination for Tourism investment and is blessed with wonderful people with mixed culture and stronger acceptability for religious tolerance. The people are generally known for their reputation of friendliness, thoroughly cordial and hospitable towards visitors and are always genuinely happy to provide helpful assistance such as allowing strangers to lodge with them when needed.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The tourism industry in Sierra Leone is growing at a steady rate and those working in those industries have to be enlightened to meet with the present demands of the industry. Hospitality is not what you DO. It is the nature of your thinking when you and your staff interact with your patrons. The nature of your thinking always manifests as a feeling. Some components of the industry do not follow some of these principles which have the potential of reducing the income generation base of the industry.

It is realized that the source of the feeling of hospitality will not be found in what the manager or his staff are doing. The tone or climate of your business is generated from the way you and your staff are thinking. Just as you cannot fake love, you cannot pretend hospitality -- everyone recognizes a lack of genuine caring.

OBJECTIVES

The main aim of this research work is to bring to light the concept of hospitality marketing and its significance to Sierra Leone tourist industry.

The specific objectives are geared towards:

- a) Defining the concept of hospitality marketing
- b) Identifying the philosophy of marketing
- c) Discussing the categories of demands and
- d) Highlighting market operations
- e)

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

I can't emphasize enough the importance of hospitality as an element of simple life. If you have come from traditional Sierra Leone paradigms, you're used to thinking of "the gift of hospitality" as referring to those families who gives more credence to strangers than even their own children, or put together a meal after a funeral. That is not what I'm talking about! Hospitality is far more than what we usually think it is, and it's not just the gift of a few people. In fact, it has as much to do with demand of the market, the philosophy that goes with hospitality and many more.

This write up will bring to light the various concept of hospitality and its ramifications that surround it. It will bring out the real practice of hospitality and makes people feel they belong. It will make both the workers in these industries and clients feel special, important. It will be used by other researcher and managers as a reference point to future undertakings.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN SIERRA LEONE

The Government of Sierra Leone in the 1960s recognizing the importance of tourism development established the Hotels and Tourist Board in 1964. In these early years, the growth and development of the tourism industry in the country was relatively slow and lacked a specific direction. There was no Act or policy to guide tourism development in the country. Key industry actors were left wholly unregulated. This state of affairs continued for almost decade. In 1973, however, the government decided to establish the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs (MoTCA) in order to harness the immense tourism potential in

Sierra Leone, ensuring further socio-economic growth in a regulated International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications, Volume 5, Issue 12, December 2015 544 ISSN 2250-3153 www.ijrsp.org framework. The Hotels and Tourist Board became an integral part of the ministry in 1975. After the hosting of the Organisation of Africa Unity in 1980, the government saw the need for a concise Tourism Plan. A survey was carried out and it was recommended that the tourism industry was a heavy capital investment which at that time, government found difficult to provide. It was against this background that in 1985, government adopted a policy of privatisation, which saw the leasing out of hotels to private companies as a result of heavy operational losses incurred by government-owned hotels. The privatisation policy also had the aim of encouraging private sector participation and investment in the industry. The French responded positively to government's call for private sector support and by private arrangements with the indigenes and support received from government; they made substantial investment in the development of tourist facilities within the country. They also on their own financed promotional activities in the French market on behalf of the Sierra Leone government. The industry started booming and was short-lived when the rebel war broke out which saw all the facilities ravaged beyond human expectations and once a booming industry collapsed. Some investors both local and international were killed, fled for their lives and the industry development came to zero. After the 11 year rebel war was declared over, both foreign and local investors turned their attention to the tourism industry and its slow development began. The influx of mining companies, rapid response from the agricultural sector, political stability in terms of two successful democratic elections, mobile companies, experience gained by Sierra Leoneans who were refugees in neighbouring countries all contributed greatly to the development of the tourism industry. The table in the appendices shows the steady growth in number of these facilities over time indicates that there are currently more of these facilities present in the country compared to before the rebel war. It is agreeable that this industry has contributed greatly towards the economic development of the country in terms of foreign exchange earnings, employment, generation of revenue, contributing to GDP, stimulating infrastructural developments etc. Sierra Leone enjoys several advantages, which augur for the development of a leisure, adventure and cultural heritage tourism segments.

CONCEPT OF MARKET

Originally a market was a meeting place where people could buy and sell produce, and of course this type of market still exists today. In modern societies a 'market' is much more complex, but retains the core principles of bringing together buyers and sellers with common interests. This modern concept of the market is based on groups of people who have similar needs and wants (actual and potential buyers or consumers), and companies that aim to satisfy the consumers' needs and wants better than their competitors (an industry). *Needs* can range from the basic requirements for survival – food, shelter, safety – to much more complex social needs, such as belonging and recognition. *Wants* are how different people choose to satisfy their needs, and are shaped by culture and personality. Hence people with similar needs, for example the need to travel for a family event and stay overnight, can have different wants – some may stay with relatives while others book their own hotel accommodation. Obviously, a major limitation on how people can satisfy their wants is the amount they can afford to pay.

Consumers have to make buying choices based on their own resources or buying power. Consumers will often buy the best bundle of benefits provided by a product, for the price that can be afforded.

CATEGORIES OF DEMAND

One way to think about marketing is to view it as the art and science of managing customer demand. Because demand states vary, so does the task of marketing.

Table 1.1 Demand Management (source: taken from Philip Kotler, Marketing Management, 11th edn, 2003, p. 6)

CATEGORY OF DEMAND MARKET TASK

CATEGORY OF DEMAND	MARKET TASK
1 Negative demand	Encourage demand
2 No demand	Create demand
3 Latent demand	Develop demand
4 Falling demand	Revitalize demand
5 Irregular demand	Synchronize demand
6 Full demand	Maintain demand
7 Overfull demand	Reduce demand
8 Unwholesome demand	Destroy demand

Table 1.1 provides a list of eight categories of demand and the marketing response. Where demand states 1–4 occur, actual demand is lower than the desired and stimulating more consumption. Negative demand exists where consumers positively dislike a product – e.g. an unpopular food or drink product. The marketing response is to encourage demand by educating consumers about the positive features of, or benefits from, the product. You can often witness free tastings of food and drink products in supermarkets and wine shops, which enable potential customers to see, taste and buy the product.

Where there is no demand, the marketing task is to create demand. Raising awareness by advertising and public relations activity to demonstrate a product's positive attributes will help to educate consumers, and encourage them to sample the product.

Latent demand means that demand would exist if there were a product/service available to meet consumer needs. The development of domestic short breaks as a hotel product was originally based on consumers' increasing affluence and available leisure time.

Where demand is falling, the task is to revitalize demand. This situation can occur when a product/service is beginning to lose its appeal. Marketers need to research the reasons why the product no longer meets consumers' needs, reformulate the offer and re-launch the product to stimulate consumer interests and revitalize demand.

Irregular demand can be described in hospitality markets as the seasonality of demand. In these situations, companies strive to develop marketing strategies to synchronize demand over the high and low seasons, often using price-led promotions. Full demand occurs when actual demand matches the desired demand, and the marketing task is to maintain current demand. In hospitality markets full demand rarely occurs, since competitors are likely to enter attractive markets and disturb the equilibrium.

If there is too much (or overfull) demand, the service operation will not be able to cope and there is likely to be considerable customer dissatisfaction. The hospitality marketer will aim to reduce demand either by increasing prices or by managing the booking/queuing process to prevent overfull demand. A long-term solution to overfull demand is to increase capacity by building more bedrooms or extending the seating area in a restaurant, but managers need to be confident that overfull demand will be sustained.

Unwholesome demand can occur when illegal activities such as drug taking, gambling or prostitution are taking place on the hospitality premises. Management clearly has a legal and ethical duty to try and inhibit or destroy unwholesome demand; however, this can be a difficult situation when customers are willingly involved.

MARKET DEMAND IN HOSPITALITY

THE PHILOSOPHY OF MARKETING

One set of marketing definitions suggests that marketing is primarily a business philosophy that puts the customer first. From this perspective, the primary goal of hospitality businesses should be to create and retain satisfied customers. This concept proposes that satisfying customers' needs and wants should be at the center of an organization's decision-making process. Professional marketers believe that this customer focus is the responsibility of everybody in the organization. Adopting this philosophy requires a total management commitment to the customer, and companies that pursue this approach can be described as having a customer orientation.

2.3.1.1 DEFINITIONS OF MARKETING

Early definitions of marketing centered on the exchange/transaction process. Kotler (2000) proposes that in order to satisfy people's needs and wants, products and services are exchanged in mutually rewarding transactions generally, but not exclusively, using the monetary system. Kotler originally suggested that this exchange process, now known as transaction marketing, is a core concept in marketing, and is a 'value-creating process which leaves both parties better off than before the exchange took place'. Another set of definitions suggests that marketing is a management process aimed at delivering customer satisfaction. Examples of this approach include the definitions offered by the Chartered Institute of Marketing, and the American Marketing Association. These definitions introduce a crucial aspect of marketing management – planning, which is discussed in greater detail later but is implicit in all of an organization's marketing activities.

These earlier definitions of marketing have been criticized on the grounds that the transactional focus is on generating first-time sales only. Relationship marketing evolved as a response to that criticism, and has become more fashionable as academics and practitioners recognize that the lifetime value of a customer can be high, even if the value of each transaction is relatively low. In hospitality markets, a 'relationship marketing' approach has seen the major hotel groups focus their marketing activities upon frequent travelers in an attempt at encouraging repeat and recommended business.

MARKET DEMAND IN HOSPITALITY

Market demand in hospitality can be broadly described under four key headings:

- 1 Business travel demand includes all those journeys business people make to meet customers and suppliers, and attend conferences, exhibitions and seminars. Business travel does not include the daily journeys people make when commuting to work.
- 2 Leisure travel demand includes journeys where people travel away from home for amusement, entertainment or relaxation – for example, holidays, weekend breaks, or same-day visits.
- 3 Domestic travel demand includes all the travel generated within a country by people living in that country – so, for example, the domestic demand for business travel in Australia is all business journeys taken in Australia by people living in Australia.
- 4 International travel demands include all the journeys generated to a country from people living in other countries. France is one of the most popular tourist destinations, and attracts international visitors from all over the world.

Some types of travel do not fit easily into these broad categories. People often combine business and holidays in the same trip. However, these are convenient descriptions which tourist and hospitality organizations use. Table 1.2 summarizes these descriptors of market demand in hospitality.

2.3.2 MANAGING DEMAND

All these different definitions must seem quite confusing, particularly when many people who work in

marketing are actually involved with increasing sales via promotional activity. Most hospitality marketers are employees in sales, sales promotion, print and publicity, direct mail, advertising, public relations, customer relations and marketing research jobs. So how can we bridge the gap between the various philosophies and definitions of marketing with the jobs which marketers do?

The key concept that underpins marketing theory and practice is the management of demand. After a lifetime devoted to developing marketing theory and promoting the benefits of marketing, Philip Kotler (1999) stated that 'marketing's central purpose is demand management' and marketers need 'to manage the level, timing and the composition of demand'. This definition of marketing seems to explain most accurately what marketers do, and why they do it.

MANAGEMENT ORIENTATIONS

Five different competing management philosophies have been identified in free market economies called 'orientations', some of these generic philosophies have been linked to specific economic conditions, and to certain periods in economic history. It should be noted that a hospitality organization could adopt any one of the following orientations, regardless of the economic circumstances.

OPERATIONS OR PRODUCTION ORIENTATION (MASS MARKETING)

Originally developed by Henry Ford, the production concept is appropriate when there is a rising demand for strong, innovative products. If demand exceeds supply, management concentrates on generating volume to satisfy the growing demand. Improved technologies generate economies of scale, which allows management to reduce prices further and grow the market. The production orientation is based on conditions of mass production and limited consumer choice. This leads to an inward-looking focus as management strives to control costs, improve quality and efficiency, and increase volume. Critically, from a marketing concept perspective, the needs and wants of customers can be forgotten in the interests of organizational efficiency. Providing customers are satisfied with the low-cost, mass-produced product, and then a production orientation is appropriate.

There are also examples of hospitality organizations using a production orientation ineffectively. Holiday Inn used to provide managers with mega-size standard operational manuals detailing the rules and procedures for every aspect of the hotel operation, but such a bureaucratic approach can end up stifling innovation, making hospitality managers focus on the systems and paperwork instead of on customer focus. Simplifying the production process for operational convenience can lead to limited customer choice – for example, small sandwich shops can easily fall into the trap of limiting the choice of fillings to reduce waste, and thereby losing customers.

PRODUCT OR SERVICE ORIENTATION

The product or service orientation is not linked to any specific economic era or to specific market conditions. Companies adopting a product orientation believe that their customers can only be satisfied with a particular type of product. Management concentrates on developing better versions of the existing product, but fails to recognize that customers could be satisfied better by different types of products. For example, hospitality companies with a product orientation include the famous restaurants with celebrity chefs, who serve what they think customers should eat the question of whether customers actually want to buy the product; they become overly focused on the product.

SELLING ORIENTATION

The selling orientation was developed in the 1920s, when American companies developed efficient production systems and needed to generate more sales to maintain profitability. Companies adopt the selling orientation when their products are competing in markets where supply exceeds demand, and growth is low

or declining. A critical issue for management is surplus capacity combined with a high fixed capital investment in the building and plant. This combination can force management to focus on high sales volume and aggressive sales generation to strive to make a profitable return on investment. Despite this external focus on sales generation the management is still inward looking, since it is concentrating on selling the product to potential customers and is not focusing on satisfying customer needs and wants.

Companies with the selling orientation tend to accept every possible sale or booking, regardless of its suitability for the business or other customers. By mixing incompatible customer segments hospitality companies can fail to deliver customer with existing customers can be damaged in the pursuit of short-term sales generation.

Whilst selling is a vital element of hospitality marketing, sales strategies should be integrated into the marketing plan and be consistent with a marketing orientation.

MARKETING ORIENTATION

The marketing orientation is considered by some authors to be the same as with other similar economic conditions (i.e. surplus capacity leading to a fiercely competitive environment). Companies adopting the marketing orientation recognize that customers have considerable choice in the marketplace. Companies aiming to maintain long-term profitability need to understand and serve customers better than their competitors. To achieve superior business performance companies therefore need to identify what customer needs and wants are, and to satisfy them better than competitors.

This means that companies need to carry out marketing research and to develop an integrated approach to marketing, to ensure that all marketing activities are coordinated and help to deliver customer satisfaction. A marketing orientation is an outward-looking management philosophy, which responds to changes in the environment and considers the business from a customer perspective. As customers' needs and wants change, so the business adapts accordingly.

This one-to-one style of marketing is predicted to become more important in the future.

SOCIETAL MARKETING ORIENTATION

In the 1980s, the marketing orientation was criticized for its narrow focus and lack of concern for environmental and social issues. The original marketing orientation ignored the potential conflict between consumers' wants, and societies' needs. The societal marketing orientation was a response to these criticisms, and recognizes that commercial organizations have a wider responsibility than simply looking after customers and staff. A societal marketing orientation suggests that companies should become proactive in the community, adopting a 'good neighbor' policy in their company's best interest.

A number of hospitality organizations have genuinely adopted a societal marketing approach. Other organizations claim to adopt a societal marketing approach, but are really only carrying out public relations activity to gain positive publicity. The distinction between a genuine societal marketing approach and a superficial approach lies in the core values of the organization.

If the entire organizational culture is clearly committed to an environmental and social awareness in its philosophy, and demonstrates this in all its activities, then it has adopted a societal marketing approach.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Improving the tourist industry in Sierra Leone does not depend on the government but to every stakeholder that has or controls a sector of this industry. The research believes that much has to be done to develop the industry, which is why the methodology used is more of empirical. Author's notes, publications and book were used to complete the research work. Getting the final concept for the research was as a result of the qualitative method used.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Since marketing is an outward-looking business philosophy, marketers in hospitality the Sierra Leone tourist industries need to understand and adapt to changes in the business environment. Both macro- and micro-environmental factors influence the marketing of a hospitality business. These factors are discussed below based on the finding.

THE MACRO-ENVIRONMENT

The macro-environment includes political, economic, socio-cultural, technological and environmental forces, and is therefore known as the PESTE environment. Hospitality companies in Sierra Leone have limited, if any, control over PESTE influences; but major changes in any one PESTE factor can significantly impact on the business. PESTE factors are constantly changing. These changes affect consumers, drive market demand, and influence the competitive environment.

POLITICAL

The political direction of a country determines how consumers and commercial organizations can act. The political philosophy of government can either stimulate or stifle economic, social and technological development. While the Sierra Leone system fosters an open economy, encouraging tourism and creating a positive climate for hospitality businesses, country like Burma restricts international access and inhibits the development of tourism and hospitality businesses. Political and governmental decisions are constantly changing the environment in which we live and work and the impact on hospitality marketing activity in a variety of ways.

The political environment includes the legal/regulatory environment, and covers any legislation that influences the marketplace. Examples include:

- Planning regulations (permission for building hotel, restaurant and leisure extensions or developing new properties), which alter the industry capacity
- Licensing laws, which regulate the opening times of licensed premises
- Local, regional or national government taxes, which impact on prices (Value Added Tax and General Sales Tax rates, and excise duty on alcoholic drinks) and therefore influence the demand for hospitality products.

ECONOMIC

The economic environment includes all those activities that influence the wealth and income of the population. Examples of economic influences are:

- The state of the economy
- The structure of employment and the level of unemployment
- The rate of inflation
- The exchange rate.

These factors combine to influence business confidence, consumers' disposable income and consumer confidence, which play a significant role in changing demand for hospitality markets. When business and consumer confidence is high, hospitality markets thrive; when business and consumer confidence is low, hospitality markets decline and firms are prone to failure.

A key economic factor is the business cycle, which influences demand. Hospitality firms need to respond to the stages in the business cycle. Whilst hospitality businesses all trade at the same stage of the business cycle, firms will respond differently according to their financial and marketing strengths, and their leadership.

During resurgent and growth periods marketing activity increases as companies respond to the growth in hospitality demand. Whilst nobody can accurately predict the precise timing of a stage in the business cycle, it is vital for hospitality managers and owners to understand the implications of each stage.

SOCIO-CULTURAL

The socio-cultural environment influences consumers' purchase and consumption behavior. A country's socio-cultural environment is a complex mix of its geography, climate, history, religion, and ethnic make-up. We are all influenced by the values of our own culture, even though we are not aware of this all the time. Indeed, cultural differences between countries provide hospitality marketers with some of the greatest challenges when developing global brands.

One of the key aspects of a country's hospitality industry, which is heavily influenced by national culture, is eating and drinking habits. Each country and region has developed its own cooking based on factors like the climate, which dictates the produce available. The growth of international travel for business and leisure purposes has widened people's cultural knowledge and encouraged the development of new food and beverage concepts. Therefore Sierra Leone should go back to its original cultural practices that are unique to our country. Our cultural dresses, songs, food must be reintroduced again.

TECHNOLOGICAL

The technological environment in hospitality is closely associated with innovation and developments in information communications technology (ICT). The rapid development of ICT in the late 1990s and during the current decade has had a major influence in the industry. Improvements in the technological environment include:

- The growing sophistication of computerized reservation services
- The development of global distribution networks
- Increasing consumer and commercial use of the Internet
- Improvements in kitchen equipment, which has changed food production techniques
- The development of in-hotel computerized systems, which has improved In room comfort and security for guests.

The current rate of technological change is fast, and new developments are constantly altering the technological environment.

ENVIRONMENTAL

Environmental factors have become more important in all parts of the world as people recognize the impact tourists have on the planet. In particular, mass tourism has become much more controversial. Tourism:

- Encourages new hotel and leisure developments
- Impinges on natural habitats
- Uses up scarce resources
- Generates air and noise pollution
- Creates waste disposal problems.

Although the concept of sustainable tourism is much publicized, and 'green' pressure groups lobby government and hospitality companies to improve the industry's environmental policies, the hotel and restaurant industry does not have a good reputation in this area.

THE MICRO-ENVIRONMENT

The micro-environment includes internal company factors (customers, employees, suppliers and intermediaries) and external factors (the direct competitors operating in the same locations, and the various 'publics' with which a company interacts). Unlike the PESTE framework for the macro-environment, there is no recognized formula or mnemonic to describe the micro- environment. Hospitality.

CUSTOMERS

Hospitality companies typically target a broad mix of customers, including business and leisure hotel residents, non-resident diners and drinkers. Managing the customer mix to ensure that all the different types of customers are satisfied or delighted is one of the major roles for marketing. Over time customers can change their needs and wants, so companies have to monitor and respond to these changes.

EMPLOYEES

For most hospitality organizations, the local labor market is a key resource. The availability and quality of skilled employees who have been educated and can be easily trained is an important factor in delivering a quality service. Because employees interact with customers, they can have a major influence on the level of customer satisfaction.

SUPPLIERS

The hospitality company's performance is dependent upon its suppliers. Although marketers are not directly involved in operational purchase decisions, marketing marketer will certainly be responsible for handling relationships with external marketing communication and marketing research agencies.

INTERMEDIARIES

Intermediaries are those companies who advise, influence and make bookings for customers. They include travel agents, tour operators, conference placement agencies and incentive agencies. Intermediaries are important links in the distribution channel from the customer to the hospitality outlets. Marketing managers needed to cultivate good relationships with actual and potential intermediaries.

COMPETITORS

The competitive environment includes different kinds of competitors:

- Direct competitors – these are businesses offering a similar product or service, which is aimed at the same customer group. Direct competitors operate in the same geographic location and in the same (or adjacent) product category. For hotels, a three-star provincial business hotel could have a local competitor set including all three-star hotels, and possibly some two- and four-star hotels, within a 10-mile radius or 15 minutes' travel time. Watching, knowing and anticipating what your competitors are doing is a vital part of knowing your market.
- Indirect competition – this includes all those companies and non-profit organizations that are competing for consumers' disposable income (e.g. choosing between buying a new car or going on an exotic holiday).

PUBLICS

The location of a hospitality premises and the size/scale of the company will determine the character of the organizations (also called publics) with which the organization interacts. These publics will include:

- Local government authorities (who enforce health and safety, hygiene and planning regulations)
- Other businesses and people who live in the neighborhood (some of whom may also be customers)
- Community, educational, religious, social and voluntary institutions
- Leisure, sporting and tourism attractions
- The local media.

Local publics can exert considerable influence on a hospitality business. Developing effective public relations activities and fostering good relationships with local publics is part of the marketing task.

CONCLUSION

Hospitality industry is an industry which involves serving guests and customers who are strangers most of

the time. This is meant by diversity in hospitality industry. Each day, employees of the hospitality industry face people who come from different part of the world; this proves the diversity of the hospitality industry. Other than that, people who are interested and have acquired skills such as interpersonal communication skills, they might achieve personal satisfaction working in this industry.

The hospitality industry is full of opportunities for great advancement provided one puts in a great deal of hard work. Hospitality industry can be divided into so many fields and branches. As stated earlier, hospitality industry is referred to as one of the fastest growing economic sector around the world.

Hospitality industry is a fast growing sector and is economically important to the world. Tourism which is one of the fields in the hospitality industry shrinks the world by providing a more in- depth look at the enormity and complexity of international travel. Working in the hospitality industry has both advantages and disadvantages and is subjected to people's point of view. It also depends on one's interest. As said earlier, people who have good interpersonal communication skills will find working in the hospitality industry an easy feat but to those who does not possess of good interpersonal communication skills, they would not like it in the hospitality industry.

SUMMARY

The development of the tourist sector in Sierra Leone rests on the pillars of the macro and micro environments. The macro environment focus on politics, economic, socio-cultural, technology and environment while the macro focuses on customers, employers, suppliers, intermediaries, competitors and the public which is the environment were the industry is located.

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