The purpose of any business is to create and maintain profitable customers. Customer satisfaction leading to profit is the central goal of hospitality and tourism marketing. Therefore, it is much more efficient to maintain customer relationships than to create new customers. The selling process never ends. In fact, your relationship with a sales prospect, who is now your customer, should continue to grow.

Research has shown that it is far less expensive to cultivate your existing customer base and sell more services to them than it is to seek new, single-transaction customers. Focusing on customer needs, through relationship marketing, is a proven method to keep the sales rolling in. You will need to continue to seek new customers, of course. Just do not overlook the untapped potential of your existing ones.

Relationship marketing also increases the return on your sales investment (even if all you had put into previous sales efforts was time that is valuable too). When you sell an additional product to an existing customer, you do not have to repeat preliminary steps such as prospecting, rapport-building and information gathering because you are working upon a foundation that is already laid. So, repeat sales are less expensive to obtain than new sales.

4P’s MARKETING MIX

The Marketing Mix model of 4P’s (see Table) is a tool to help organisations develop a package (mix) that will satisfy the needs of the customers within the target markets, and simultaneously maximise the performance of the organisation. Marketing managers use the Marketing Mix model as a tool to assist them in implementing their marketing strategy. The Marketing Mix principles are controllable variables. The Marketing Mix can be adjusted on a frequent basis to meet the changing needs of the target group and the other dynamics of the marketing environment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MARKETING MIX MODEL (4 P’s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Product:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the organisation create what its intended customers want?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much are the intended customers willing to pay?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available at the right place, at the right time, in the right quantities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are the chosen target groups informed or educated about the organisation and its products?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focusing on customer needs, through relationship marketing, is a proven method to keep the sales rolling in.

The function of the Marketing Mix is to help develop a package (mix) that will not only satisfy the needs of the customers within the target markets, but simultaneously maximise the performance of the organisation.

Many hospitality marketers feel that taking care of the physical evidence of the outlet is more important than scrutinising the most critical part in the service provision. While we are offered claims that we are dining in a cozy restaurant, which offers excellent dining ambience and modern décor and layout, our comfortable state is always disrupted by the problems due to low quality service offered by the service provider.

In today’s hospitality marketing environment, focusing merely on the 4Ps is no longer viable. There have been many attempts to introduce the fifth “P” in the Marketing Mix model, the most frequently mentioned one being “People”. Many successful hotel

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Hospitality organisations know that customers' judgements about the services offered by their employees are very subjective, yet these judgements can give multipler effect and influence other customers via word-of-mouth spread. In many situations, when customers mention that their room is superb or the food is delicious, others will pop up questions like "How's the service?" or "Do you get good service?" These marketers also know that they cannot separate the employees from the service they provide. They also know that the customers' relative perception of product quality is subjective to their evaluation of the services offered.

EMPOWERMENT
There are many successful hospitality operations that put great emphasis on developing, polishing, enhancing and strengthening their employees' capabilities and competencies via various means such as soft and hard-skill training, coaching, mentoring, motivation, incentives and rewards, and also empowerment. The companies that perceive training or development skill efforts as time-consuming, costly, an additional task to one's busy schedule or cost-centre would obviously lag behind. Training efforts have been noted to produce great results such as, among others, reducing customer complaints, improving morale and productivity, increasing career and personal opportunities for employees and producing less hectic working atmosphere.

Another interesting trend in utilising people or employees to attract customers is empowerment or, in a simple term, decentralised decision-making. Empowerment can only be carried out if the employees have great cognitive skills because inappropriate handling of a situation can create chaotic results. The impact of such chaotic incidents is undoubtedly tremendous to one hospitality operation. Therefore, to successfully implement empowerment, employees need to be trained or given enough education that enhances their thinking abilities and skills. This is the reason for a hospitality operation to include soft-skill training as part of its development skill efforts.

Take one example, the empowerment policy in the Ritz Carlton Hotel where the employees are allowed to do anything to solve the customer's problem and to solve it immediately so as to make the customer's stay or visit memorable. The hotel also allows its staff to spend some money without getting the approval from the immediate bosses in order to solve every customer's problem in the hotel. This indicates that the hotel puts trust highly in their employees and knows that customers' satisfaction relies heavily on the capabilities of the employees.

All employees are responsible and accountable to give excellent customer service, that is to make customers feel understood, welcome, comfortable, and important. They practise 'doing the small things right', i.e. it stresses on giving complimentary extras that would generate increased loyalty.

PERSONALISED SERVICE
Another aspect of differentiating one's service is by giving personalised service to the customers. Personalised services start with detecting, knowing and understanding the customers, by getting their profiles and understanding their needs and preferences. Many ways are employed in making sure that the employees know how to read the customers. Some of the ways are by...
training the staff on how to conduct effective selling and to deploy effective communication techniques. Some hospitality operations also ensure that the employees are not technologically challenged in utilising computers because this technology has tremendous advantages in storing customers' databases.

Marketers who feel their employees are their intellectual property or the human capital are more willing to put in their investment and spending in making sure that their employees can deliver excellent services to the customers. They know that the success or the failure of their business depends on the performance of their front-liners. Hence, they would give great attention to front-liners' training. They will ensure that no employee be allowed to interact with any customer until the employees understand the requirement of quality customer service.

It is also noted that the practice of giving customers excellence service is not a mere sermon of those in the higher level. All that will not work if the hospitality operation does not have solid, efficient and effective systems. While this is more of the invincible components in the marketing strategy planning, it gives great impact to any policy and planning implementation. The success of any planning requires great support from the top management. This is also another issue why certain hospitality operations fail in maintaining their customer base, of why their employees choose to work elsewhere and of why they continue to get a shrinking bottom-line.

People in business today have two choices; they can compete on other 4Ps components and hope to strike a good bottom-line, or they can stand out in their “people” strategy and implementation to provide memorable moments that create value, satisfaction and loyalty to customers and to capture and secure top placing in the industry’s ranking. We believe many agree would agree that all employees can deliver the service. It is whether one can deliver excellent customer service that becomes the critical issue.

WEEKEND ESCAPE IN
ROYAL PARADISE

For women who enjoy the finer things in life and are looking for a weekend holiday break with a difference, the Hilton Hua Hin Resort & Spa has launched a brand new package, designed to help guests discover Thailand – with plenty of glamour and relaxation thrown in.

Available from 1 April to 30 September, 2004, the three day, two night “Luxurious Weekend Escape in Royal Paradise” package, priced at US$1,599 (US$1 = RM3.80), is a unique blend of sightseeing and luxurious pampering, whilst allowing plenty of time to enjoy Hilton Hua Hin’s deluxe resort and spa facilities.

It has been carefully structured to provide guests with new experiences to discover, whilst also building in quality relaxation time, said a statement from the resort.

The weekend escape begins with limousine transfer from Bangkok airport to the resort, champagne welcome and time to unpack and relax. In the afternoon, guests can enjoy a Thai cooking class to discover the secrets of Tom Yum Goong, followed by a Thai and seafood dinner at The Market restaurant. The restaurant features a “show kitchen”, and offers a three-in-one restaurant concept with international favourites ranging from Japanese, Italian and Thai.

After dinner, guests can get familiar with the local lifestyle and explore Hua Hin’s Night Market by traditional Hua Hin rickshaw. Then they can return to their Pacific Suite – an 80 square metre suite featuring a huge living room – and prepare themselves for some serious indulgence. They can spend some quiet time on the private balcony soaking up the spectacular views overlooking the Gulf of Thailand, then luxuriate in an in-room floral bath, followed by a personal in-room spa. Therapists will then pamper them with an anti-stress massage that will induce a sound night’s sleep.

Sunrise is the best part of the day, and day two begins with a morning beachside walk and some gentle exercises with a private wellbeing instructor. Back at the room, they will find a specially prepared Hilton Breakfast, including champagne and strawberries, pastries and a selection of freshly-squeezed fruit juices.

After breakfast they can prepare for a full-day cruise with lunch on board to Samed Roi Yot National Park. Along the way, they can enjoy getting close up and personal with the dolphins in the Gulf of Thailand. They can visit Sing Tich Island and also explore the Phraya Nakorn Cave.

Guests can end the day with the resort’s brand new Nutritious Cuisine, prepared by its world-class chef, Lorenzo, specially tailored to be easily digestible to complement their healthy lifestyle, and a two-hour indulgent spa “Touch of Heaven” spa package, comprising one massage of their choice and one facial treatment.

The Hilton Spa & Resort is located in Hua Hin’s Royal Paradise - so named due to its popularity with Thailand’s royal family - and the quaint beachside resort is blessed with many natural attractions.
PERAK SEEKS INVESTORS

Economy:
How Much Brighter?

LCL Corp:
Interior Fit-out Specialists

EMC Corp:
Reducing ICT Cost

Tax Self-assessment:
Are You Ready?