

# APPLICATION OF PROMOTION TOOLS IN HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM INDUSTRY AND ITS ROLE IN DEVELOPING THE JAMMU AND KASHMIR AS A TOURIST DESTINATION

**Zoltán BUJDOSÓ**

*Károly Róbert University College, 3200, Hungary  
zbujdoso@karolyrobert.hu*

**Parikshat Shing MANHAS**

*The Business School and School of Hospitality and Tourism Management  
University of Jammu, 18006, India  
psmanhas@hotmail.com*

**RAMJIT**

*University of Jammu, 18006, India  
ramjit@hotmail.com*

**Lóránt DÁVID**

*Eszterházy Károly University College, 3300, Hungary  
davidlorant@ektf.hu*

**Alexandru NEDELEA**

*Stefan cel Mare University of Suceava, 720229, Romania  
alexandrun@seap.usv.ro*

## **Abstract**

*The proposed study will mainly attempt to study the promotional tools undertaken by different hotels and tour operators, and evaluate how they have been able to develop tourism and hospitality industry in the state. A survey questionnaire was used to collect primary data. Our study revealed that the main reason of not succeeding and overcoming the problem of rebuilding the state as a tourists destination after the period of militancy and others problems mainly lies within the negligence of tourism authorities not following appropriate marketing activities ; inappropriate measures and wrong allocation of promotional funds also contribute to the problem.*

**Key words:** *Promotion tools, Tourism industry, Hospitality industry, Tourism products and services, Brand image, Jammu and Kashmir.*

**JEL Classification:** *M41, M31, O21*

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Tourism industry plays a vital role both at global and individual levels. Many countries depend on tourism as a main source of foreign income. Tourism is a type of service to which marketing mix can be applied to. The marketing mix consist of so called “four Ps”: Product, Price, Promotion and Place. Out of the four components, “Promotion” is the most visible factor. The selection and use of the appropriate tools is crucial during the whole promotional process. (Kozma, 1995).

The main objectives of this study are to study and evaluate the promotional tools undertaken by different hotels and tour operators for the development of tourism and hospitality industry; to identify the problems and limitations of promotional activities undertaken by tourism companies; and finally, to provide suggestions and recommendations for the hospitality and tourism industry sectors.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Promotion cannot be fully effective unless it is coordinated together with the other three ‘P’s (Middleton, 1994). Travel and tourism are identified as the total market comprising three main sectors of international tourism, domestic tourism, and same-day visits (Middleton, 1994; Péntes 2014). Nowadays, promotion is considered to one of the most essential key elements of the modern marketing era, including all the activities and plans that aim to inform and persuade potential customers and trade intermediaries to make a specific purchase or act in a certain manner. Modern marketing calls for more than the sole development of a good product with attractive pricing, available to target customers (Kotler et al., 2006).

Within the field of tourism industry, promotion is one of the key ‘4’ Ps in the marketing mix, and therefore plays a key role in achieving market success. Promotion aims to ensure awareness of the products of the company that are available to target customers (Dibb et al., 1994; Rowley, 1998).

In order to meet the promotional objectives of any given promotion strategy, an appropriate promotional mix must be created, Rowley (1998). The promotional mix is the combination of different promotional channels that are used during the communication of a specific promotional message. This involves an appropriate selection of tools that are available for use as part of the promotional mix.

Tourism researchers and scholars have long been emphasizing the importance of planning and implementing effective marketing strategies in tourism destination sites throughout the world in order to promote the most sufficient tourism products and services to specific traveler groups (Ahmed and Krohn, 1992; Mill and Morrison, 1985 as cited in Law et. al, 2004; Morisson, 2013; Matlovicova, 2014). A good example of that are the official Destination Marketing Organization Web sites of Korea and Japan: the two most visited destinations of Hong Kong tourists have developed their web sites with special regards to Hong Kong travelers' interests: they promote activities such as foods, sightseeing and shopping in a manner that suits the target customers' demands.

Based on practical examples, it is clear that an effective marketing strategy should target a specific market segment and product development and positioning should be implemented accordingly. The areas of Jammu and Kashmir are lagging far behind from this point of view. It has been noted that the National Tourism Organization (NTO) in any country is responsible for expanding the country's inbound tourism; the main task of NTOs is to promote the destination country in the global tourism market. During the promotion of tourism industry, marketers are expected to consider long term strategic goals instead of focusing on short-term sustainability, Rita and Moutinho (1992). It is also emphasized that promotional tools and ideas should be given enough time – even years, if necessary - to improve over time and achieve their full potential rather than forcing the underlying concepts to stop and start over shortly. In addition, to reach the best promotional results, NTOs should have elaborated plans for promotional activities in order to fulfill their marketing objectives - the implementation of such plans requires detailed allocation of priorities and goals before investing money and resources. (Rita and Moutinho, 1992; Lorenzo and Xhiang, 2013). The authors emphasized that tourism planning should be carried out in a manner so that both local residents and visitors can enjoy its benefits (Liu and Wall, 2006). To achieve an effective promotion of tourism industry, good relation and close cooperation is necessary between various governmental bodies, tourist organizations, travel agencies and tour operators, especially among the SAARC countries. Researchers also argue the use of non-personal promotion tools such as mass media can access a larger audience than individually targeted forms of communication (e.g. using a name and address); and that an identified sponsor implies that the

advertiser's name or brand is clearly evident during the communication process (Middleton and Clarke, 2001).

The use of mail, telephone or other non-personal contact tools are used to communicate with or solicit a response from specific customers and prospects. Mail shots and leaflets inserted in professional magazines are used to promote information products. Direct marketing communications may be used as a direct sales channel or distribution technique: selling products and services without face-to-face contact with intermediaries (for example mail order business). (Jobber and Fahy, 2004; Szép and Nagy, 2012).

Short-term incentives encourage trial or purchase of a product or service, such as discounts for access to a database over a limited time period. Sales promotion in tourism is described as a set of associated techniques which, when combined, offer customers or intermediaries' enhanced incentives to buy or remain loyal to a particular brand (Lumsdon, 1997). These techniques can be used collectively or independently in order to stimulate consumer demand. This involves two basic approaches: intermediary push or consumer pull. The techniques focus on offering impulse incentives to purchase, such as competitions, discount vouchers, or by other similar methods (Middleton and Clarke, 2001).

In tourism, public relations is about how target customers think about a tourism organization and how their perceptions, attitudes and behavior can be kept or made positive. Various programs are designed to promote and/or protect a company's image, or those of its products, including product literature, exhibitions and articles about the organization's products in professional or in-house newsletters. Such techniques are also known as "below the line" activities (Middleton and Clarke, 2001).

Face-to-face interactions target one or more prospective customers for the purpose of improving sales. This is a common technique during business-to-business marketing transactions in the information industry, where sales representatives are commonly work as mediators. According to Holloway and Plant (1989), personal selling functions can be summarized as a persuasive tool to purchase under four headings: persuasion to purchase additional goods and service during the service delivery process; business to business purchase; big value purchase; motivating purchases through distribution channels (Holloway and Plant, 1989).

Financial or external support of an event or person by an unrelated organization or donor is common in the field of arts, sports and charities. Large organizations such as major publishing groups like Reed Elsevier or software houses, such as Microsoft may engage in sponsorship activities, while public sector organizations (e.g. schools or libraries) are more likely to be the recipient of sponsorship. Sponsorship aims to help generating awareness about a product or company and promote a positive message about the product or company (Jobber and Fahy, 2004).

Exhibitions offer an opportunity to bring targeted buyers and sellers from both consumer and business-to-business sectors together in a competitive arena. The main advantage of exhibitions is that they provide a forum for sales leads, contact with influencers, gathering intelligence and image building (Middleton and Clarke, 2001; Holloway and Plant, 1988). Swarbrooke et al. (2001) explain that during exhibitions, tour operators can source out potential destinations to be developed, hotels can test different reservation systems, destinations can launch new tourism offers and most of all: participants can have a close look at what others do in order to attract tourists.

To sum it all up, we can state that promotional tools play a strong role in the development of tourism and hospitality industry.

Therefore, it is needed to design and undertake more promotional activities in Jammu and Kashmir, in order to develop tourism and hospitality industry in the area.

### III. MATERIAL AND METHODS

Our study aims to examine the promotional tools undertaken by different hotels and other tour operators; we also try to evaluate the role of their promotional activities carried out for the development of the tourism industry; we will also discuss the problems and limitations the industry has to face. Our research was carried out using both primary and secondary data. It was mentioned earlier that the existing literature on the promotional aspects of Jammu and Kashmir tourism (and even on the overall marketing aspects) is not adequate; therefore, our study works with the primary data collected through questionnaires and surveys by Jammu and Kashmir tourism industry actors.

A survey questionnaire was used to collect the primary data from the selected sample for this study. In India, many important participants of promotion act at macro level. These actors are: the central government, the tourism department of JKTDC (Jammu and Kashmir Development Corporation) and other actors field. The top 8 executives of JKTDC, and 30 hotels and tour operators and agents were selected for the purpose of data collection. The hotels were selected randomly, but with taking some factors (number of the guest nights, total income, etc.) into consideration. Secondary data used in this study were collected from the annual reports of JKTDC and from related journals, periodicals, newspapers, web pages etc. Descriptive statistics like percentage method and averages was used whilst data analyzing. The validity of the questionnaire was also determined, resulting in a value of Cronbach's alpha at .82. The alpha of a scale should be greater than .70 for items to be used together as a scale (Nunnally 1978).

### IV. THE BACKGROUND OF THE CASE STUDY

The state of Jammu and Kashmir – the largest Himalayan state in India – consists of three distinct regions: the mostly Hindu region of Jammu is situated in the foothills in the south; Srinagar and the Vale of Kashmir, a dominantly Muslim region is located in the central areas; while the region of Leh and Ladakh, with a dominant religion of Buddhism, lies from the eastern highlands across the great Himalayan axis. The region has two dominant cities: Srinagar, a city of beautiful lakes, Mughal gardens and shopping opportunities is considered as the summer capital of state; while Jammu is the “winter capital” of Jammu and Kashmir. The state of Jammu and Kashmir has three distinct entities with different climate, flora, fauna and cultures. The people in the three parts not only have different lifestyles but also speak different languages, worship different gods and have different ethical and moral codes. The main tourism attractions of Jammu and Kashmir are:

- Beautiful lakes like Dal, Nagin, Mansabal in Srinagar, Mansar in Jammu and Wular fresh water lake, which is one of the largest in the Asia;
- More than 15 important temples like Amaranth Temple, Raghunath Temple, Kalika Temple, Kheer, Bhawani, Shankaracharya Temple, Shankaragaurishvara Temple, Khrew, etc.;
- Old shrines and caves like Holy Mata Vaishno Devi Katra, and monasteries of Jains and Buddhists, especially in Ladhak region of the State;
- Accommodation in luxurious houseboats (Shikara's) and hotels;
- Delicious cuisine;
- Monuments, palaces and forts (Amar Singh, Bahu Fort, Bhingarh Hari Parbhat, etc.);
- National parks like Decigram National Park, Ishtar National Park, Qazinag National Park and Salim Ali National Park;
- Scenic lush green gardens and meadows in the valley of Kashmir;
- Winter sports and fairs;
- Shopping markets (especially for carpets, shawls and dried fruits, pearls, stones and jewelries from the Ladakh region).

Jammu and Kashmir is no exception as far as the use of the promotional techniques is concerned. The destination is famous for its various attractions like lakes, pilgrimage places (i.e. Baba amaranth, Mata Vaishno Devi) and other heritage sites, temples and shrines. The Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Corporation, together with tour operators and other actors of the hospitality industry invest great effort into different promotional activities to attract visitors to the area.

The objectives of this study are to examine and evaluate the promotional activities carried out by

different hotels and tour operators for the development of tourism and hospitality industry; we also wish to identify the problems and limitations of promotional activities in the area; and finally, we aim to provide suggestions and recommendations for actors of the hospitality and tourism industry.

**V. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Results of our study showed that almost all marketing tools and activities - local newspapers, magazines, television and radio - were used by tour and hotel operators in Jammu and Kashmir. Brochures, souvenirs, booklets, guides and posters are also used with dissemination purposes among potential tourists in order to draw their attention and increase their interest in the destination. Both private tour and hotel operators and JKTDC (Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Development Corporation) use sales promotion tools, too. These include quantity discount, children discount, off-season price reduction and improved service packages for “package tours”, etc. The purpose of such discounts is to motivate domestic and international tourists to visit Jammu and Kashmir. In addition, both JKTDC and private tour and hotel operators participate at various national and international tourism exhibitions/fairs. To further increase the attractiveness of the area, different cultural shows, food festivals, seminars, symposiums, audio-visual presentations, local plays etc. are regularly organized by Jammu And Kashmir Tourism Development Corporation. JKTDC also has a website that provides information about Jammu and Kashmir; however, the page is not very well designed and should be updated more often.

Our study revealed that out of the 38 organizations surveyed, 16 organizations/respondents (42.2%) preferred affordable promotional methods. 12 organizations (31.5%) used a fixed percentage of their revenue for promotion; and 2 (5.26%) respondents based their promotional budget on the expenses of the previous years. It was also revealed that 5 (13.15%) respondents used objectives and task method in determination of promotional budget, followed by 3 respondents (7.89%) who used fixed amount method, while only one respondents used the method based on previous year’s expense.

Results show that 5 respondents (13.15%, Table 1) felt that they were spending a highly sufficient amount for promotion; 3 respondents (7.89%) agreed that sufficient funds are spent for service and product promotion at the destination. It was also revealed that 3 respondent (7.89%) agreed that fairly sufficient amount was spent for promotion; 18 respondents (47.30%) answered that neutral (i.e. neither sufficient and nor insufficient) funds were allocated for promotion. 3 respondents (7.89%) told that the amount spent on promotion was insufficient, and 6 respondents (15.7%) thought that highly insufficient amount was spent on promotion.

Respondents were asked about their thoughts about “the role of promotional activities in the development of tourism and hospitality industry” (Table 2). 26 respondents (68.42%) strongly agreed on that promotional activities can really play a vital role in the development of any tourism destination. This was followed by 6respondents (15.78%) who agreed and 5 respondents (13.15%) who only agreed fairly. 1 respondent (2.63%) expressed a neutral opinion (neither agree nor disagree).

**Table 1. Opinion on the amount spent on promotion**

Scale Respondents	Highly sufficient (7)	Sufficient (6)	Fairly sufficient (5)	Neither sufficient nor insufficient (4)	Fairly insufficient (3)	Insufficient (2)	Highly insufficient (1)	Total
No. of respondents	05	03	03	18	00	03	06	38
Percentage of respondents	13.15	7.89	7.89	47.3	00	7.89	15.7	100

Respondents were also asked about the effectiveness of promotional activities undertaken by them in order to promote their products and services in Jammu and Kashmir. It was revealed that 16 respondents (42.10%) were in neutral position (Table 3.): according to them, promotional activities were neither effective nor ineffective in attracting

prospective tourists. 8 respondents (21.05%) thought that promotional activities were fairly effective and 4 respondents (10.5%) said that they were effective. 3 respondents (7.89%) felt that promotional activities were strongly effective; 3 respondents (7.89%) felt that they were strongly ineffective and 1 respondent (2.63%) answered that they were strongly ineffective.

**Table 2. The role of promotional activities in tourism and hospitality industry, according to the respondents**

Scale Respondents	Strongly agreed (7)	Agreed (6)	Fairly agreed (5)	Neither agreed nor disagreed (4)	Fairly disagreed (3)	Disagreed (2)	Strongly disagreed (1)	Total
No. of respondents	26	06	05	01	00	00	00	38
Percentage of respondents	68.42	15.78	13.15	2.63	00	00	00	100

Respondents were also asked whether more activities were required to develop the tourism and hospitality industry in Jammu and Kashmir (Table 4). 27 respondents(71.05%) strongly agreed, 3 respondents (7.89%) agreed and 1 respondent(2.63%)

agreed fairly that more promotional activities were needed in the region. 3 respondents(7.89%) neither agreed nor disagreed, 1(2.63%) respondent fairly disagreed, 1 respondent (2.63%) disagreed and 2 respondents(5.26%) disagreed strongly.

**Table 3. Effectiveness of promotional activities undertaken**

Scale	Strongly effective (7)	Effective (6)	Fairly effective (5)	Neither effective nor ineffective (4)	Fairly ineffective (3)	Ineffective (2)	Strongly ineffective (1)	Total
<b>Respondents</b>								
<b>No. of respondents</b>	03	04	08	16	03	01	03	38
<b>Percentage of respondents</b>	7.89	10.5	21.05	42.10	7.89	2.63	7.89	100

Table 5 shows that the mean score of “Promotion can play strong role in tourism and hospitality” is 6.50, which indicates that most of the respondents (35 out of 38) strongly feel that the query “PROMOTION CAN PLAY” plays a vital role in

promotion of tourism products and services at the destination; therefore our hypothesis (H1) that states that promotional tools play a vital role in promoting and developing tourism and hospitality in Jammu and Kashmir, is accepted.

**Table 4. More promotional activities are needed to develop the tourism industry in Jammu and Kashmir**

Scale	Strongly Agree (7)	Agree (6)	Fairly agree (5)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Fairly disagree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)	Total
<b>Respondents</b>								
<b>No. of respondents</b>	27	03	01	03	01	01	02	38
<b>Percentage of Respondents</b>	71.05	7.89	2.63	7.89	2.63	2.63	5.26	100

The mean score of “need of more promotional activities in order to promote the destination and development of Jammu and Kashmir” is 6.07 (Table 5), which indicates that most of respondents (33 out of 38) strongly feel that there is dire need for promotional activities in Jammu and Kashmir in order to develop the area as a tourism destination. Hence, our second hypothesis (H2) is also accepted. However, this is a subjective parameter, since promotional results cannot be measured by host satisfaction only.

The mean score (4.28) of Table 5 indicates that their promotional measures are not effective enough. On the other hand, the mean score of respondents’ answers regarding the sufficiency of promotional expenditure is on the scale of neutral, and at the same time, they argued that more promotional efforts are needed for the tourism development in Jammu and Kashmir; its mean score is 4. This result may seem contradictory at first, but there is a logical explanation: when the expenditure on promotional activities is close to sufficient, there may not be any need for more promotional measures; otherwise the budget is probably not sufficient. Therefore, by taking into consideration the mean values, hypotheses 3 (H3) and 4 (H4) are not accepted in this study.

Finally, at the end of the questionnaire, respondents could come up with their suggestions and recommendations to promote Jammu and Kashmir as a tourism destination brand not only in India, but at international markets as well. Some of the suggestions included that measures should be undertaken in order to attract domestic and international tourists to the region. Participation of stakeholders at various

international and domestic tourism fairs and festivals; distribution of brochures and tourist handbooks at railway stations, airports and other destination places in order to disseminate information about the destination; advertisements in daily local and national newspapers, magazines and journals; television appearances at Indian television channels all could be effective tools of promotion.

Actors of the tourism industry should sign contracts with various international tour operators/consultants, and more effort should be put into the design and maintenance of the various interactive tourism websites.

Suggestions of the Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Development Organisation Executives are:

- New attractions, products and services need to be developed at various destinations;
- Heritage sites need to be maintained and conserved properly;
- Systematic promotional activities should be implemented;
- An attractive web site should be designed, implemented and maintained to provide up-to-date information for potential visitors;
- Sufficient funds should be allocated by the government towards tourism;
- The government should handle the whole tourism industry with priority;
- Security plays a crucial role in building the destination brand – hence, tourists should be ensured that they will be safe whilst visiting the area;

- Close co-operation is required between the public and private sectors in order to successfully promote the destination.
- Suggestions given by tour operators are:
- Proper and sufficient infrastructure development is necessary at the destinations;
  - Tourism websites should provide exact and up-to-date information about the attractions and destinations;
  - Safety and security of tourists must be ensured;
  - DMOs (Destination Management Organisations) and NTOs (National and Tourist Organisations) should participate jointly and actively in promotional activities;
  - Training programmes should be organised for actors of the tourism sector (hotel staff, travel agencies, etc.) to keep their knowledge up-to date;
  - Financial support in forms of subsidies or tax allowances could contribute to the development of tourism industry.

**Table 5. Respondents' opinion on promotional activities of Jammu and Kashmir tourism**

Factors	Number of frequency							Mean score
	Strongly Agree (%) (7)	Agree (%) (6)	Fairly agree (%) (5)	Neither agreed nor disagreed (%) (4)	Fairly disagree (%) (3)	Disagree (%) (2)	Strongly disagree (%) (1)	
Promotional expenditure is sufficient	05	03	03	18	00	03	06	4.0
	13.15	7.89	7.89	47.3	00	7.89	15.7	
Promotion can play strong role in tourism	26	06	05	01	00	00	00	6.50
	68.42	15.78	13.15	2.63	00	00	00	
Effectiveness of promotion undertaken	03	04	08	16	03	01	03	4.28
	7.89	10.5	21.05	42.10	7.89	2.63	7.89	
Need more promotional activities	27	03	01	03	01	01	02	6.07
	71.05	7.89	2.63	7.89	2.63	2.63	5.26	

## VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Tourism is the fastest growing “smokeless” industry which contributes to the improvement of its various supporting sectors and plays an important role in the development of all counties. Destinations try to attract visitors by applying various promotional tools. Promotion of tourism related products and services target visitors through varied tools and measures in order to motivate and attract them to the destination. The state of Jammu and Kashmir has incredibly attractive sights and is famous for its religious sites (temples and shrines), heritage assets and culture, sports opportunities and climate etc. However, the state fails to attract tourist, for several reasons like security and safety issues, military attacks and other problems, especially in Kashmir Valley. Our study revealed that the main reason of not succeeding and overcoming the problem of rebuilding the state as a tourists destination after the period of militancy and others problems mainly lies within the negligence of tourism authorities not following appropriate marketing activities ; inappropriate measures and wrong allocation of promotional funds also contribute to the problem. Tourism operators also depend on printed materials like brochures, souvenirs, post cards, tourist maps, folders etc., but these materials unfortunately fail to attract international tourists because of their low quality and lack of attractiveness. It is necessary to improve the quality of these printed materials in order to increase the positive impact on prospective tourists; effective

promotional measures also need to be implemented – for example, the effective use of mass media could raise the interest of international tourists and motivate them to choose Jammu and Kashmir as a travel destination. In addition, promotional activities should be carried out around the year and not only during the tourism season.

The state of Jammu and Kashmir unfortunately has a negative image in the minds of tourists, due to militancy and other disturbances; therefore, it is necessary that tourism actors and the government ensure prospective visitors about the safety and security of the location by applying appropriate promotional tools, both in India and at international markets. (Nurunnabi, 1995).

Information technology also plays an important role in the promotion of tourism. Internet could be one of the most effective promotional tools when advertising the destination sites of Jammu and Kashmir. The rapid growth of internet has a great impact on travel services, too, and has increased speculation about the possibility of the disintermediation of travel agents (Bennett and Lai, 2005). Tourism organisations and operators in Jammu and Kashmir need to develop their active websites; although such a site already exists, the lack of regular updates and out-of date content make it ineffective as a marketing tool. Actors of the tourism industry (governmental bodies, travel agencies, tourism operators, etc.) should maintain the homepage in an attractive manner all year round in order to attract visitors, first to the website and then to the actual destination.

Actors of the private and public sectors should join forces and combine their efforts, especially in infrastructure development like the improvement of hotels, restrooms, restaurants, etc. Tourism authorities need to take steps towards the for diversification of products and services. For example, introducing new parks, wildlife sanctuaries, rivers, lakes, museums, sports sights, etc., Jammu and Kashmir could have a bonanza in the tourism industry. It is important to note that before starting with international campaigns, the local facilities should be developed first. The

government should consider promoting domestic and international private sector investments in order to develop and promote the tourism industry in Jammu and Kashmir. To encourage private investment, the government should declare some incentives to private investors. The incentives like tax holiday for a certain period on their return, tax free import of vehicles to be used in tourism, loans with a lower rate of interest, etc. could be effective tools that encourage investment willingness.

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