Methodological Particularities of Positioning of Therapeutic Resort Complex of the Region

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Submitted: Oct 12, 2013; Accepted: Nov 14, 2013; Published: Nov 23, 2013

Abstract: The authors analyze theoretic and methodological aspects of positioning of therapeutic resort organizations and therapeutic resort complex. The differences in positioning of therapeutic resort organizations from economic entities in other industries are described. The approach to the development of marketing strategy of therapeutic resort organizations is proposed.

Key words: Positioning • Therapeutic resort organization • Therapeutic resort complex • Treatment tourism • Marketing

INTRODUCTION

Therapeutic resort complex (TRC) of Perm Territory is a complex nature-social-economic system, in which external (of nature) environment interacts in a sophisticated manner with technical, medical, recreational, social and economic components. Therapeutic resort systems are integral part of territorial social systems, which perform medical, recreational and social functions for population. By now it is necessary to develop regional program of positioning and promotion of therapeutic resort services in order to widen Russian and world market of treatment tourism.

Positioning of therapeutic resort organizations (TRO) is a process of defining a place of a therapeutic resort organization among other similar organizations in the region or country, defining of unique competitive advantages which are opened for the consumer of services. Real positioning of TRO can be felt in the consumer’s behaviour in regard to this organization.

As an example we shall give characteristic of therapeutic resort potential of TRO which is the oldest in the Urals - resort 'Klyuchi'.

Balneal and muds resort 'Klyuchi' is one of the famous TROs in Perm Territory.

Balneal and muds resort 'Klyuchi' is one of the oldest and famous resorts of Perm territory located in the village of Klyuchi of Suksun region. The resort is situated not very far from Gorodishche mountain in the picturesque valley of Irgina river. Resort's capacity is 500 people; such quantity can be received at once both for therapy and leisure.

Main natural and therapeutic factors of the resort are as follows:

- Native (intact) sulphide waters mineralized to a small extent;
- Unique sulphide silty muds of the Suksunsk pond which produce great therapeutic effect;
- Drinking mineral water of sulfate-magnesium-calcic contents with average mineralization 2500 - 5200 mg/cubic decimeter;

Lightly-mineralized sulphurous water of the 'Klyuchi' resort is taken from water horizon situated in the depth of 90-220 meters. Physical and chemical characteristics of the
water testify that this spring can be referred to unique sulphide lightly-mineralized sulphate-chloride-sodium-calcic-magnesium waters and includes boric acid. Saturation of the water with hydrogen sulphide is mainly a result of activity of sulfate-reducing bacteria, such as Microspira.

Special character of this water is combination of high concentration of hydrogen sulphide and extremely low mineralization (up to 4-5 g/cubic decimeter). This allows to use it effectively for treatment of deceases connected with blood-circulation, locomotor system, neurologic (excitatory) system, skin and urino-genital system. Therapeutic muds is taken from the bottom of the Suksunsk pond, which is connected with the rivers of Verkhny Suksunchic, Kisilevka and Sandushka. In flood plain of the river Kisilevka and along eastern bank of the pond there are outlets of sulphurous springs producing water which contains sulphates, hydrocarbonates, calcic and magnesium with mineralization of 2,4 g/cubic decimeter and hydrogen sulphide contents of 10-18 mg/cubic decimeter. By its key features the black silt of the Suksunsk pond can be regarded to lightly-mineralized silty sulphide muds of pond-spring type.

Main problem of positioning of Perm TROs is undeveloped system of promotion of therapeutic resort services offered by small treatment centers - but in the same time such big TROs as ‘Klyuchi’ resort are well-promoted and are full during the whole year.

In the beginning of 1980s J. Trout and A. Ries were the first who proposed positioning in marketing. Then their books were republished many times, were supplemented with theoretical foundations and became classics. Among them Repositioning: Marketing in an Era of Competition, Change and Crisis [12] and Positioning. The Battle for Minds [11] are of utter importance. In 21st century T. Williams [13] went on with development of theoretic and methodological base in the sphere of positioning and defined alternative ways for positioning. R.Czerniawski and M.Maloney [10] proposed recommendations on creation of consumers’ loyalty to brand through its positioning.

The issues of positioning and development of therapeutic resort industry and treatment tourism were studied by many scientists from other countries of the world. [14-18].

Russian scientists M. Gubarets and E. Mazilkina consider positioning in terms of analysis of the competitors by certain parameters, search for new consumers of goods and services, negotiations which must result in the improvement of the image of organization and increase in sales.

I. Popova [9] paid attention to regional positioning. She defined a number of factors which influence positioning of an object, such as geographic location, availability of labor resources, paying capacity of population, development of transport infrastructure, opportunity to develop tourism and recreation, influence of industries and their diversification in the region.

O. Borisova [1] introduced direct correlation between a city and a product and defined consumer's attributes of the city which are needed by a consumer.

Cluster approach to positioning of touristic organizations and analysis of the problems of sustainable socio-economic development of this industry are described in the works of O.Bunakov [2,3]. The advantages of touristic activity in regional economy are reflected in the works of Ya. Ganich and E. Klippenshtein [4], N. Martyshenko and A. Ilyina [8], K. Kozyreva and A. Novikova [7], I. Glebova [5].

Positioning of TRO and TRC are based on the following principles:

- Distinctive features of the services offered;
- Benefit for the customer after use of the services;
- Distinctive quality of the services rendered;
- Focus on the specific segment of consumers;
- Optimal correlation between services and the needs of consumers;
- Building of associate series between the problems of potential customers and their solutions by TRO and TRC only.

Specific features of positioning of therapeutic resort complex or TROs are as follows:

- Focus must be not on visualization of exterior or interior elements (including design of advertising products), but on the availability of treatment natural resources;
- The aim is to provide high indicators of health improvement of tourists;
- Constant supervision by the doctor;
- Multi-dimensional positioning, which is oriented both to premium-segment of the market for higher payment and to cheaper social programs supported by the state.
Treatment tourism, because of its current expensiveness, is associated by now with luxurious element not intended for average statistical citizen of Russia, but for the last 5-7 years this situation has been changing: incomes of population are constantly growing. Positioning is revealed in several dimensions - range of services, level of prices and quality etc. Benchmarking is one of the main methods of analysis of the range of services offered by TRO and their price/quality in the framework of development or correction of marketing strategy.

The diagram (Figure 1) shows how marketing strategy of an organization is developed. In order to compare the services offered by the investigated object with services offered by competitors it is necessary to use the ‘4P-complex’. It is worth mentioning that the cell 'pricing' shows not only final price but the factors influencing it as well. To compare target segment of the object of investigation and the one of the competitor's the sex and age of customers must be taken into consideration, as well as their geographic location - where they live (region, city, village etc.) and the place of work (in the same way as the place of living), income, professional activity and capacity of the market. Capacity of the market will allow to define future of the industry.

Let us define stages of positioning of therapeutic resort organizations.

**The First Stage:** It is necessary to define the range of services rendered by TRO-competitors, basing on the analysis of other TROs, make a hypothesis on the level of competitivity of the organization. Analysis of demand dynamics will enable to forecast and define market capacity and to define indirect competitors in the market. The methods of research at the first stage are analysis of statistical data for several years. The sources of information can be Permstat and internal documents of therapeutic resort organizations. As effective tools for collection of data you can use Yandex-service and Google-service - wordstat.yandex.ru and google analytics and program package Keycollector. Using service Subscribe.ru you can perform social interviews (polls) among potential customers - target audience. The aim of social interviews is to understand influence factors when choosing a facility by target audience and defining ideal variant of correlation of parameters of TRO (the example is given in the Figure 2). After definition of factors it is necessary to range them and manage them effectively - to satisfy demands of the target audience all the time.
Table 1: Comparison of target audiences of therapeutic resort industry and other industries by different parameters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targeted audience</th>
<th>Other industries</th>
<th>TRC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In regard to services offered by organization</td>
<td>Uniform</td>
<td>Diversified because of the specification of services for the CVD-patients - one kind of services; for the patients with deceases of gastrointestinal tract - the other etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>level of income</td>
<td>Uniform</td>
<td>Diversified (depends on the class of services for premium segment and ordinary services provided in the framework of social programs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional activity</td>
<td>Uniform/diversified (depends on the industry)</td>
<td>Diversified (social groups - state support programs; businessmen - services of premium segment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of living</td>
<td>Uniform/diversified (depends on the industry)</td>
<td>Diversified: Russia and the World</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second stage: analysis of services offered by the competing TROs. The advantages of their service must be found - what is valuable in the opinion of general target audience. General target audience means the identity both for the object of research - chosen by the authors hypothetically and for TRO-competitor. The best variant for research is finding the reasons of attractiveness of competing organizations - influence factors and factors which affect the formation of their competitiveness.

**Third Stage:** Analysis of the position of TRO. This allows to define direct and indirect competitors. To define current positioning we need the positioning diagram (Figure 2).

Y, X - are the axis of levels of parameters. X, Y can be the following parameters: ‘economic’ price of the voucher, ecological means for treatment, effectiveness of treatment, universality of tour, geographic location of a resort, popularity of the resort, service, price, quality etc. These parameters of TRO can be compared with each other. Using positioning diagram you can compare investigated object with competitors, but not comparing general view of TROs - only separate parameters of 2 and more organizations.

**Fourth Stage:** Forming of values with target audience. These are: economic character, ecological means of treatment, effectiveness, universality of treatment - with one-off costs to satisfy several needs, geographic situation of the resort, popularity as social factor, service. The most difficult phase of this stage is to define real value for the customer. Which value is more important for bigger target audience - economic character, availability of ecological drugs, universality or other value? Real value is hard to define because it can be of various character.

It is understood from the Table 1 that positioning of TRC and its services is problematic. Bipolarity of target audience does not allow to make proper choice of the elements of positioning.

**Fifth Stage of Positioning:** Taking all said above into consideration we can admit that the best optimal variant is to develop positioning not only of TRO but of every service separately. Such ‘isolative’ approach is necessary to put distinct boundary between services for target audiences. This aspect is important because TRO orientates not only to premium segment, but to the cheapest social programs. In other words, every segment of TRO and the whole TRO will have different associations.

Analysis of target segment will allow to update marketing strategy of TRO. Natural decrease of the audience of the market because of increased activity of the competitors must be taken into consideration. It
means that the competitors must be monitored all the time and the correspondence with socio-economic trends must be checked constantly. Marketing managers must monitor influence factors which affect the consumers of services and use this information for making forecasts, then use the forecasts for making marketing plans. As a result of continuous activity perspective needs will be seen and TRO will eliminate the uncertainty. While doing positioning of new services of TRO marketing managers should orientate to average indicators of positioning among all similar services. New services will be associated by the consumer with similar ones or alternative services of this TRO or other organizations. While re-positioning managers should be aware of risks when old loyal customers can change one TRO for another, or when it is difficult to make a choice they can turn to indirect competitors of TROs.

REFERENCES