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**MARKETING OF ACCOMMODATION SERVICES**  
**Case – Hotel Azam in Cameroon**

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**ABSTRACT**

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<p>Cameroon is Africa in miniature with a lot of tourist attractions owing to its geological and cultural diversity. Natural features include beaches, deserts, mountains, rainforests, and savannas. Accommodation services have been a grand phenomenon within the tourism industry in Cameroon. The accommodation sector has developed tremendously within the past decades.</p> <p>The objective of this research work was to find about out the marketing of accommodation services in Cameroon with Hotel Azam as an example, and also vividly find out how Hotel Azam has been carrying out a strategic marketing in its domain to make the hotel known to the world, Cameroon and Bamenda in particular.</p> <p>This thesis consists of three parts: the introduction, the theoretical framework, and the empirical study. The introduction describes the aim of the study, purpose and objectives, research problem and limitation. The theoretical framework consists of some marketing concepts. The empirical part of this research consists of the case study with the use of qualitative research method which entails the marketing manager and the manger’s interviews. The research revealed that the marketing department is plagued with numerous problems which are great hindrances to the success of Hotel Azam. Recommendations are dawned based on the facts realized from the research work</p>		

**Key words**

Accommodation, Azam, Cameroon, hotel, interview, marketing, marketing strategies, qualitative research

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

The concept of tourism today has been of great value and everyone is now seeing this concept to be an opportunity for people to go round the world without too many worries. This framework in particular is becoming more and more important in the twenty-first century when the world is experiencing rapid and unexpected changes caused by both human and natural agents. These big changes in the world today are making the way for more tourism activities and events. This thesis aims to find out about the marketing scheme of Azam hotel in Cameroon, and also to find out how the marketing processes are going a long way to help Azam hotel in Cameroon realize their profit in the business at any given period of time. This thesis will also be defining and explaining some basic concepts of marketing. Examples include: definition of product and services, the concept of marketing and the service marketing mix.

The main reason that motivated the writer to choose this subject is the fact that this hotel is a big hotel in the writer's area especially in her field of study which has very little or no marketing strategy put in place to market its services and facilities. The writer is also interested in improving the marketing strategies of this hotel with the knowledge acquired from school.

Accommodation or Lodging is, by far, the largest and most ubiquitous sub-sector within the tourism economy. With few exceptions, tourists require a location where they can rest and relax during their travels through staying at a tourism destination. Accommodation can therefore be seen as an important support facility in the destination region and with few exceptions, commercial accommodation facilities are found wherever tourists venture. Of course there is great diversity in the size, type of organization of this accommodation. (Cooper, Fletcher, Gilbert & Wanhill 2008, 22.)

### **1.1 Aim of the study**

The objective of this thesis is to find out about the marketing processes of the accommodation section with Hotel Azam as a case study and also how the accommodation sector is making an effort to improve their marketing quality and quantity with respect to the twenty- first century trend with modern technology. This is to say that with the improved level of technology, the quality of services is being improved upon continually resulting a great deal of marketing to create more awareness in the minds of visitors both within and outside the country. This thesis is aimed at exploring the media being used by hotel Azam in Cameroon in marketing their products to prospective customers in terms of products, prices, and promotion and how this marketing is being carried out.

This thesis intends to create a strategic marketing plan for Hotel Azam, first by appraising their current marketing plan, its strengths and weaknesses and possible ways of improvement and other relevant remarks as may be deemed necessary. With the information of the current situation at my disposal, a marketing plan can be proposed to Hotel Azam to apply and see how realistic it is in developing their new marketing.

### **1.2 Limitation and research problem**

It is known that most hotels in Cameroon are faced with the problem of marketing their services to potential customers who apparently have not heard or known the hotel. So this study will try to address this issue by giving them the ideology and possible ways to do so using Azam hotel in Cameroon as a case study.

There could be lots of challenges and limitations in the course of this work especially at the level of research methodology as qualitative surveys have been argued by most specialists to have findings that are always ambiguous although it is the most commonly used method in leisure and tourism research.

Another limitation could be that respondents may be either unwilling to proffer the right answers to questionnaires or may even give an exaggerated response.

## **2 ACCOMMODATION SERVICES**

Accommodation or lodging is the biggest and most renowned sub- sector within the tourism industry. With only few a exceptional cases, tourists demand a location where they can rest and relax during their travels or stay at a tourism destination. Accommodation can therefore be seen as an important support facility in destination region and with few exceptions commercial accommodation facilities are found wherever tourists venture. Of course there is great diversity in the size, type of organization of this accommodation. (Cooper 2008, 22.)

When people move from one country to another or from one city to the other, they usually have different demands and needs from the destination they are traveling to. Meeting up these needs and wants compromises one of the main preoccupations of the tourism industry. This tourism industry is partitioned into main sectors like hospitality, attractions and events, transport, travel organizers and intermediaries and destination organization sectors. All these sectors range from businesses and organization which are involved in delivering the tourism product and the travel experience. (Middleton, Fyall & Morgan & Rachhod 2009, 10-11.)

### **2.1 The distinctive nature of accommodation**

Accommodation can be differentiated from other sectors due to the fact that it has the tendency of being immediately perishable. This can be explained with the fact that accommodation cannot be stored and if not sold out to any customer for any given night, the advantage of the sale is lost forever not like in other sectors where it can be preserved for subsequent use for the same value. Furthermore, accommodation is different from other industries with the concept of inseparability of the production and consumption of goods and services in the hospitality and accommodation sector. The inseparability in the provision of goods and services in the hospitality and accommodation sector means that the guest has to be

present during the production and consumption of the goods and services in the accommodation.

Another point which makes accommodation distinct from other industries is the concept of inseparability of the production and consumption of goods and services in the hospitality and accommodation sector. The inseparability in the provision of goods and services in the hospitality and accommodation sector means that the guest has to be present during the production and consumption of the accommodation provision. (Cooper 2008, 352). In addition, there is also the concept of tangibility and intangibility as a factor which makes the accommodation sector distinguished from other sectors. The idea of tangibility in accommodation and hospitality can be seen with the physical surroundings, the equipment needed to provide hospitality and accommodation, décor, location and food and beverage that will be consumed by the customer. The intangibility of hospitality and accommodation on the other hand are very much more complicated than the tangible aspects which include the atmospheric conditions present in an establishment and, importantly, the service that the consumers of the product experience. (Cooper et al. 2008, 352.)

## **2.2 Types of accommodations**

Accommodation is a necessary component in the development of tourism within any destination that seeks to serve visitors other than day-trippers. The quality and range of accommodation available will both reflect and influence the range of visitors to a location. There are many types of accommodations which range from hotels, guest houses, bed and breakfasts to farm house accommodation, inns and campus accommodation.

Hotels are undoubtedly the most significant and visible sub-sector within accommodation or lodging. Most of these hotels are usually located in the capital city and spread to other major cities in a country. The five and four star hotels are usually very expensive due to their nature and facilities provided. Usually their facilities and services rendered are quite many and sophisticated compared to other smaller types of accommodation. Other accommodation types

which include B&B, time share, youth accommodation, camping and caravan sites, medical facility accommodation are also different categories with different facilities and services and with relatively cheaper prices compared to hotels.

### **2.3 Accommodation services in Cameroon**

There are many accommodation services in Cameroon which vary from place to place. These accommodation services range from booking services which involve the registering of arrivals and departures, to check bookings and allocating rooms, possibly associated with support services, such as baggage handling. Room services or self-catering units which are readily available to take care of customers if they are in need of anything. There are also food and beverage found in restaurants, bars and coffee shops. Other services include room services, shops, leisure entertainment and health facilities, secretariat and dry cleaning.

### **2.4 The present level of the accommodation sector in Cameroon**

Cameroon is presently undergoing a lot of development in the tourism industry especially within the accommodation sector. This is because the government of Cameroon is investing a lot of money in the economy for the improvement of the accommodation sector. These hotels are built in different grades and with a lot of price variations. This makes it possible for each and every one to be able to derive the satisfaction they want with their money. Also, private individuals are also doing a great job in the country by investing in hotels with quite good facilities and services which is a boost to the tourism industry as a whole and to the accommodation sector in particular. With this large investment from individuals, tourists coming to Cameroon have the possibility of choosing from different varieties in accommodation. There are also small accommodations like B&B being built up everywhere, even in the country side, to welcome tourists and to make their nights memorable in Cameroon.

## **2.5 Accommodation classification**

Accommodation classification is defined as a process whereby accommodations are divided into categories, classes or grades according to their common service characteristics. With this classification accommodations can be identified with the setting of standards and criterion for each type of lodging. There is, so far, no international classification which has been adopted. There have been attempts at unifying the classification system so that it would become internationally recognized but it still has not recorded any success. To some extent some countries have rated wing a single public standard e.g. Italy, Belgium, with the use of law. Germany, Austria and Switzerland define theirs by the respective hotel industry association, using a star. France used the rating system of “L” for Luxus and later changed to the 5- star systems. In South Africa and Namibia, the Tourism grading council has strict rules for hotel types granting up to 5 stars (Cooper et al 2008, 357.)

## **2.6 Importance of accommodation**

Accommodation is a basic need of tourism activities. Tourism will be incomplete without the accommodation sector. This is because it will be difficult to develop tourism even in the most beautiful places of the world without accommodation. Imagine what would happen if all accommodation facilities were deleted from the touristic sites. A comfortable lodging and accommodation facility plays a vital role in advertising any tourist destination. This can be noticed in a situation where a person, quite far away from home, tends to enjoy the same facilities and comforts as he or she enjoys back home. He or she therefore tends to attach himself or herself to that place. On the contrary, if the satisfaction level derived is low, it is quite obvious that he might never return to that place. This is also the more reason why hotels and other accommodation facilities are being made available at different tourist spots. It is even important to provide comfortable lodging to people from diverse economic background. Though there are very expensive hotels to cater for the needs of the rich people, it is also important that there also be small and medium range hotels and lodging houses which are readily available to cater for the needs of travelers with a lower income. (Suman 2012.)

### **3 MARKETING**

This chapter is going to explain the theoretical part of this thesis in detail. It will begin with some definitions related to marketing, and then handles the 4 Ps of Marketing. The chapter will depend much on marketing books, articles and some internet pages and diagrams for its achievement.

#### **3.1 Definition of marketing**

Marketing refers to identifying and meeting human and social needs. Marketing has been defined as an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders (Kotler & Armstrong 2006, 45). There are also two different definitions of marketing that should be noted: the social and the managerial definitions. A social definition shows the role marketing plays in society, while managerial marketing has been described as the art of selling products.

Today's marketing is about building a cordial relationship between the company and its customers by understanding and managing customer satisfaction. As a matter of fact customer satisfaction usually adds a value to the company image in the area of sales. The mission and vision of marketing is to keep the present customers in order to achieve continuous growth while looking for new customers to purchase their product. (Kotler 2004, 4)

Marketing is usually seen to be only selling and advertising whereas it consists of many other functions that can be illustrated with other terms and concepts rather than just exchange of goods. (Kotler & Armstrong 2004: 5). Marketing has also been defined as "a societal process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating, offering and freely exchanging products and services of value with others. (Kotler 2004,5.) argues that the definition has a social basis and is built on the main concepts of wants, needs, demands,

satisfactions of marketing and marketers because they are central to the study of marketing. To Him marketing management is the art and science of choosing target markets and getting, keeping, and making customers through creating, delivering and communicating superior customer value. (Cooper et al. 2008, 514.)

Marketing is viewed by other scholars as a concept of matching a company's capabilities with customer wants. The process of matching takes place in what is called the marketing environment. Usually most businesses do not carry out the marketing activities alone. This is because they are open to so many threats from competitors, and changes in the political, economic, social, and technological environment. These factors have to be taken into consideration when the business tries to match its capabilities with the needs and wants of its target customers. In most cases organizations that adopt marketing concepts usually accept the needs of potential customers as the basis for its operations and its success is dependent on satisfying customer needs.

Marketing is defined by the American Marketing Association as follows: "Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, and partners and society at large" (Middleton et al. 2009, 21).

There is a universal marketing cycle, which consists of the various marketing processes – this is illustrated in graph 1. The processes are more needed in the everyday marketing process and show how human wants, needs and demands are satisfied based on their consumption.



GRAPH 1. The core marketing concept cycle (adapted from Kotler 2004, 5)

### 3.1.1 Needs and wants

Human needs are stated as depending on how important it is for consumption purposes. These needs are physical things that can be visible such as food, clothing, and warmth and safety. All these physical things have more to do with human day-to-day activities. Furthermore those things mentioned to be human physical needs are personal needs that are familiar to them. Also these things are not made by the marketers. They are an essential part of human decision making. (Kotler 2004, 5)

A need is a basic requirement that an individual wishes to satisfy. People have basic needs for food, shelter, affection, esteem and self-development. Many of these needs are created from human biology and the nature of social relationships. Customer needs are therefore very broad. An example of customer need is that customers need to eat when they are hungry. What they want to eat and in what kind of environment will vary enormously from one customer to the other. For some customers, eating the food at McDonalds satisfies the need to meet hunger. For others a micro wave ready-meal meets the need. Some customers are never

satisfied unless their food comes served with a bottle of fine Chardonnay. (Marketing concept and orientation 2012.)

Wants are made or created by people depending on their culture or recognition in society. However, these wants are determined by individual choice for selecting the combination that will be good and affordable for consumption.

### **3.1.2 Demand**

Demand is wants and needs that are profitable for human consumption and services. It can be affordable to the person paying for the products or services. For example, most people demand a mobile phone for the purpose of receiving calls and sending text messages not caring about other functions or features of the phone, they are interested only in the satisfaction the phone gives them.

Demand is the ability and willingness to purchase or pay for goods or services at a given time and at a particular price. The willingness to purchase means that the person likes the item enough and wants to buy it. This is usually what people think of when they encounter the concept of demand. In this sense the person who wants to make the purchase must be ready to pay the price for the commodity. (Investorwords.com.)

### **3.1.3 Product/service**

Product has a great role to play especially in marketing which depends on the ability of the product from which a lot of satisfaction can be derived after consumption. It is noted that consumers always want products that are able to solve the problem of satisfying a need (Chris Cooper et al. 2008, 579.)

Products and services is information that is presented to the market to satisfy needs and wants of human beings. Information is obtainable for human satisfactions. (Kotler & A

rmstrong.2004, 6). Products and services are a large collection of intangible goods that can be displayed in the market for customer satisfaction (Beggs 2012).

### **3.1.4 Value and satisfaction**

Consumers always have a problem choosing among the many products that are able to satisfy their need. There are many products which can satisfy the same needs and the consumer now has a problem in deciding which amongst the huge selection the best is. At this juncture, choice will set in to make a long matter short and the rest will be forgone. Value is a guiding concept for the consumer to choose the product by ranking them in either most need – satisfying to the least need-satisfying. With these two judgments the customer will finally choose the most valued and satisfying product. (Kotler & Keller 2006, 53.)

### **3.1.5 Exchange, transactions and relationship**

Exchange is seen as the process which involves two parties negotiating and moving forward towards an agreement. If an agreement is reached, then it is said that a transaction has taken place. Transactions consist of a trade of values between two parties. In transaction there are several dimensions in three things are of value; agreed-upon conditions, a time of agreement, and a place of agreement.

### **3.1.6 Market**

Economists consider market to be a collection of buyers and sellers who transact over a particular product or product class. Market is a relationship between a buyer and a product. Nevertheless markets always structure the major needs or wants that are suitable for the customer's satisfaction. Furthermore the market size determines the amount of people who

occupy the trade and are willing to purchase the products or services. (Kotler & Armstrong 2004, 11).

A market is any place where sellers of a particular good or service can meet with the buyers of those goods and services where there is a potential for a transaction to take place. The buyers must have something they can offer in exchange for them to be a potential transaction. (Glossary of Economics Terms 2012.)

### 3.2 Service marketing mix process

Services marketing mix process is an activity plan that involves sales for a particular target market. Furthermore, sales are components of the marketing mix process while the marketing plan long- term business (Pat 2007, 116). The services marketing mix process is a task monitor that evaluates the effect of marketing and sales effort. Moreover, the services marketing mix process can be used to identify increases in revenues for a target market. However, a valuable services marketing process mix always covers a three years period (Milton 2006, 37). Services marketing mix process is usually defined as each factor that controls the sales effort. The factors are marketing tools that increase the demand products or services. Those marketing tool diagrams can be seen below. (Graph 2)



GRAPH 2. The four P's of the Marketing Mix (adapted from Pat 2007, 116)

### **3.3 Definition of product/services**

A product is defined as anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use, or consumption that might satisfy a want or need. Examples of products include physical goods like automobiles, books. A service is defined as an intangible thing which we feel but cannot be touched with our hands. (Kotler 2009, 432.) Azam hotel in Cameroon is a provider of services and no concrete product, so I am going to discuss more about service marketing of Azam hotel.

#### **3.3.1 Quality and safety**

Quality is the sum or the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs. The satisfaction one gets depends on the product quality. A company that satisfies most of its customers' need most of the time is called a quality company. Total quality is the main determinant to value creation and customer satisfaction. (Kotler & Armstrong 2006, 146)

Safety is a condition or situation of being protected against any harmful things or circumstances either socially, physically or environmentally. The idea of safety has been put under external or internal classification. With external safety, you are protected against climate, home invasion etc while internal safety is regarded as safety against harmful or dangerous things like home appliances, internet failures etc. (Mc-Graw 2006, 236)

### **3.4 Pricing**

Price is what we pay for the purchasing of a product and it can either be a product or a service. Price is the only element in the marketing mix that produces revenue, the other element produce costs. Price is also one of the most flexible elements of the marketing mix, which can be changed quickly, unlike product features and channel commitments. Usually, prices are set by buyers and sellers negotiating with each other. Sellers usually will ask for a higher price than they expected to receive, and buyers on the other hand are only willing to pay less than they expected to pay. Through bargaining they would arrive at an acceptable price. (Kotler & Armstrong 2004, 488)

#### **3.4.1 Seasonal and geographical pricing**

Seasonal pricing is concerned with price that can be paid for a product or service depending on the period and situation. Pricing often takes place sometimes when there are events or festivals in the environment or country. Usually some organizations, hotels, companies offer cheap prices during the seasonal period whereas some companies take advantage of the market situation to determine if the price needs to be reduced or increased for them to be able to make some added profit (Kotler & Armstrong 2004, 343).

Geographical pricing is concerned with the idea of how prices of a product or services can be different in different locations and countries at the same time of the year. This is explained by the fact that companies usually charge higher prices to customers from a far distance to cover the high shipping cost and risk involved in the business. (Kotler & Armstrong 2004, 507).

#### **3.4.2 Price discrimination**

Price discrimination usually occurs in a company when the company sells a product or a service at two or more prices that do not reflect a proportional difference in costs. In most

situations, price sellers usually sell the same product to each customer at different prices depending on the intensity of his or her demand and also the different markets. (Kotler & Armstrong 2006, 453)

Also price discrimination can be defined as yield management. Most businesses charge different prices to different groups of consumers for what is more or less or the same good or service. Different prices to different groups of consumers for an identical good or service for reasons not associated with costs. Usually there are mainly two conditions necessary for discriminating prices namely: differences in price elasticity of demand between markets and barriers to prevent consumers switching from one supplier to another. (Price Discrimination 2012.)

### **3.4.3 Psychological pricing**

Purchasers of particular goods and services usually use price as an indicator for quality, which is in most cases not really the point. An example includes higher-priced cars which were perceived to possess high quality and higher quality cars were likewise perceived to be higher priced than they actually were. In psychological pricing, companies have a strategic way of setting their prices which ends with an odd number. Thus a stereo amplifier is priced at 299€ instead of 300€ range. This is explained by the fact that the odd endings convey the notion of a discount or bargain. But if a company wants a high price image instead of a low price image, it should avoid the odd ending tactic. Also sellers usually manipulate their reference prices in pricing their goods. Buyers usually carry in their minds the idea of the reference price when looking at a particular product. Reference prices might have been formed with current prices. An example of such a situation is seen in the case when a seller can place its product among expensive products to make it look like it belongs in the same class like the expensive product but which truly is not the case. (Kotler & Armstrong 2004, 506)

### **3.5 Promotion**

Promotion is an approach used to balance international market or local market. The approach is used to help customers quickly recognize the product or service. Sometimes an organization offers benefits like discount, bonus and samples to customers during the promotion time (Kotler & Armstrong 2004, 555). Promotion goes a long way in marketing mix and has 5 components, they are: advertisement, sales promotion, publicity, public relations and personal selling. Promotion is now more accepted by top management as an effective sales tool and product managers are under greater pressure to increase current sales. In addition, the number of brands has increased, competitors used promotion frequently and nowadays brands are almost similar and consumers on the other hand are more prices oriented. (Kotler & Armstrong 2006, 586)

Promotion is the term used to describe the mix of communication activities that tourism organizations or tourist boards carry out in order to influence those publics on whom their sales depend. In this case the important group which needs to be influenced is not simply the target market group of current and potential customers. There is the need of contacting other agents such as retail agents and suppliers, as well as opinion formers such as journalists and travel writers. (Cooper et al. 2008, 593.)

#### **3.5.1 Sales promotion**

Sales promotion consists of different collection of incentive tools, especially short term designed to stimulate quicker and greater purchase of particular products or services by consumers. Sales promotion includes several communications activities that attempt to provide added value or incentives to customers, wholesalers, retailers, or other organizational customers to stimulate immediate sales. These efforts can attempt to stimulate product interest, trial, or purchase. Good examples of devices used in sales promotion include coupons, samples, and premiums, point of purchase display, contests and sweepstakes. (Dolak 2010.)

Sales promotion is the key ingredient in advertising a product which consists of a collection of incentive tools that are short term and designed to facilitate greater purchase of particular products or services by consumers or the trade. Advertising offers a reason to buy; sales promotion offers an incentive to buy. Sales promotion incorporates tools for consumer promotion, such as, cash, coupons, premium, and price off. Trade promotion incorporates trade shows and conventions. (Kotler & Armstrong 2006, 585)

Sales promotion is seen as the catchall term for promotion that does not fall under advertising, personal selling, or publicity. The use of sales promotion as alternatives and as support for advertising is increasing worldwide. Sales promotion directed at intermediaries, also known as trade promotion, includes activities that are directed at intermediaries, and includes activities such as trade shows and exhibits, trade discounts, and cooperative advertising. (Czinhota & Ronhainen 2004, 559.)

### **3.5.2 Promotion strategies**

Promotion strategies are major techniques used by a company or organization to increase their sales as fast as possible. There are three types of sales promotion strategies, namely the push, pull, or a combination of these two factors. The push factor convinces the trade intermediary channel members to “push” the product through the distribution channels to the consumer through promotion and personal selling efforts. Companies usually promote their products through a reseller who in turn promotes it to another reseller or to the final consumer. Trade promotion aims to persuade retailers or wholesalers to carry a brand, promote a brand in advertising, or push a brand to final consumers. The pull strategy attempts to get consumers to “pull” the product from the manufacturer through the marketing channel. Usually a company focuses its marketing communications efforts on consumers in the hope that it stimulates interest and demand for the product at the end. Such a strategy is usually employed if distributors are reluctant to carrying a product because it gets as many consumers as possible to go to retail outlets and request the product, thus pulling it through the channel. (Dolak 2010.)

A promotion strategy is a plan carried out by companies or organizations for promoting a product or service. Usually this strategy is for companies to increase their sales or close down its market. Marketers are the brain behind the promotion strategies. It is usually classified into two categories namely: push strategy and the pull strategy. The push strategy engages in pushing the product through personal selling, trade promotion. (Kotler & Armstrong 2004, 436.)

### **3.5.3 Advertising**

Advertising is any paid non-personal presentation or promotion of ideas, goods, or services by an identified sponsor. Also advertising is a cost-effective way to disseminate messages whether to build a brand preference or to educate people. Most often organizations handle advertisement in different scale. Small companies or organizations handle advertisement in a small way either by someone in the marketing department or a small unit in an organization who works with the advertising unit. On the other hand large companies will often set up its own department, whose manager reports to the vice president of marketing. Marketing managers must always start by identifying the target market and buyer motives. Then they can make the decision of “the five Ms”: Mission: what are the advertising objectives? Money: how much can be spent?, Message: what message should be sent? Media: what media should be used? Measurement: how should the result be evaluated? (Kotler & Armstrong 2006,568.)

Advertising is also defined as paid promotion involving either print or broadcast media to communicate the marketing message where the owner that paid for the advertisement is identified. Some media chosen to communicate the message will go a long way to determine what components the marketer needs to create for the advertisement. Considering media for advertising, the first choice considered by those responsible for creating the advertisement might be print media, such as newspapers and magazines or broadcast media such as television and radio.

Advertisement has a bigger role to play in a business with positive impact in creating awareness. Due to the advantages of advertising, most marketers first think of creating and advertising when deciding to promote. One of the major reasons for advertising is usually the low cost per contact, and therefore many will be exposed to the message. It is also cost-effective to produce because once the advertisement has been created the marketer can print or broadcast the same message repeatedly. On the other hand, advertising is also disadvantageous because it is a passive communication medium. If the people do not get the promotion or do not contain the needed information, the marketer will be unable to cover the objective of his or her advertisement. It can also be very expensive to produce especially the television commercials.

Advertising can also be disadvantageous, for examples, when the advertisement gets lost in the clutter of competing promotional messages. Consumers are not aware and are more exposed to other advertisement that they might not get the message and as a result the impact is really negative for the marketer and the company. (Kolb 2006, 237.)

#### **3.5.4 Public relations**

Public relations commonly known as PR, usually influences the demand of a product in a positive way by means of indirect communication through the media to create the positive image for the company and brand. Public relations usually involve a variety of activities to continually maintain this positive image and also occasional activities to counter any negative news. Public relations messages are usually distinct from advertisement; this is because the tourism office does not pay to place the public relations information in the media. (Kolb 2006, 249)

Public relations Laura Lake include promotional activities which work strongly for the public image of the company. Public relations go a long way to create awareness in the mind of the people about the existence of a particular product from a particular company. Public relation if

managed or carried out well can reach a large audience without the expensive cost of traditional advertising and marketing. (Lake 2012.)

### **3.5.5 Personal selling**

Personal selling is a promotional efforts used to support advertising. Selling some goods and services especially at high prices requires strong personal selling efforts. Personal selling is mostly carried out by subsidiaries, with varying degrees of headquarters involvement. In circumstances in which personal selling constitutes the primary thrust of the corporate promotional effort and in which global customer groups can be identified, unified and coordinated sales practices may be called for. (Czinhotá & Ronhainen 2004, 558.)

Personal selling is oral communication with the potential buyers of a product with the intention of making a sale. The personal selling may focus initially on developing a relationship with the potential buyer, but will always ultimately end with an attempt to close the sale. Personal selling is one of the oldest forms of promotion to marketers which involves sales force to support a push strategy. (Promotion – Personal selling 2012.)

Personal selling is involved whenever anyone in a service industry communicates the characteristics or the features of a particular area or tourist destination to any potential customer. This goes a long way to increase sales rather than just relying on mailing promotional and publicity material to tour operators and meeting decision makers (Bonita M 2006, 285).

#### 4 CASE STUDY - HOTEL AZAM CAMEROON

Hotel Azam is situated in Bamenda in the North West province, one of the main cities of Cameroon. Hotel Azam has existed for over two to three years since its establishment. Hotel Azam is a privately owned hotel with a motto- “giving you the prestigious home feeling”. Hotel Azam is a three star hotel in Cameroon, according to the classification used. The hotel is located five kilometers from the city center towards Bali Park in Bamenda. Graph 3 shows a photo with a sign board indicating Azam with its logo and slogan.



GRAPH 3. The billboard of Hotel Azam

Hotel Azam is a good and well-structured building of a sophisticated nature and with a large number of rooms. In this hotel there are different room types ranging from a normal room to suites with different price ranges. Hotel Azam has two magnificent buildings. In this building you can find the reception, the bar, two conference rooms and also some of the rooms and suite rooms. Below is a graph of the front view of Hotel Azam with respect to one of its buildings (graph 4).



GRAPH 4. An outer view of Hotel Azam

Hotel Azam has two magnificent buildings. This is the outer view of the hotel. In this building there is a night club in the basement, cabaret, and many other entertainment departments to

always make their guests get the prestigious home feeling as suggested by the motto. Below is a graph showing the outer look of the second structure of Hotel Azam (graph 5)



GRAPH 5. Outer view of structure 2 of Hotel Azam

A panoramic view of Azam can be indicated with a picture below. (graph 6). Guests coming to this hotel have the right to choose in which building they would like to lounge. This is because some of the rooms existing in both buildings have the same prices and facilities. Usually most customers do not want to lounge in the same building where there is the night club because they do not want to get the up and down movements of other customers going in and out of the night club.



GRAPH 6. A panoramic view of Hotel Azam

Usually there are always waiting lounges in any hotel of this magnitude and Hotel Azam is not left out. Usually customers tend to either relax or wait either by reading some current newspaper or watching television out of the hotel rooms. Below is a graph showing an example of one of those relaxing lounges at Hotel Azam (graph 7).



GRAPH 7. Relaxing lounge

Accommodation is a good concept to think of when it comes to spending a night out of home. Usually, customers are always preoccupied with how comfortable it can be when they get there. But it is always fortunate that many customers usually like what they see and feel with respect to accommodation. Graph 8 below indicates one of the lodging rooms at Hotel Azam with a normal price that even people with a low income can afford.



GRAPH 8. Hotel room

## **5 RESEARCH METHOD AND ANALYSIS**

The research method deals with the collection of data for the research. This research is a form of interview with two persons including marketing manager and the general manager of the hotel Azam. This interview is about their marketing activities in Cameroon and abroad. Some written sources are references to rely on such as marketing books. Furthermore, internet sources, up-to-date articles are applicable sources of data used in carrying out the research. Interviewees were representatives of sales and marketing departments. These interviews were carried out through a qualitative research method. The questions can be found in the appendices.

### **5.1 Research method**

Data for this research work will be collected via the qualitative research method which is a qualitative approach to research that involves qualitative analysis, personal research among qualitative research method which is applicable to interviews, observations and relevant information gathered from other experts within the same domain. This relies on numerical evidence to draw conclusions or to test hypotheses. To be sure of the reliability of the result it is often necessary to study relatively large numbers of people and to use computers to analyze the data. This data may be derived from interviews, from observation involving counts, or from secondary sources (Veal 2006, 40.) Qualitative research generally points the belief that people personally participate in activities that best to explain their experiences in their own words, and that they can be left to speak without the intervention of a researcher and without being constrained by the framework imposed by the researcher.

In this study, the researcher intends to interview a certain group of respondents and the theme of these questions would be based on the research topic. The derived results were then analyzed and based on this analysis after which the researcher would be able to draw a

conclusion and give a valid recommendation. The conclusions drawn and the recommendations will be presented in chapter six.

### **5.1.1 Qualitative research method**

Qualitative research method, when applied, gives rise to qualitative rather than quantitative information. This qualitative approach tends to collect a sufficient amount of important information concerning few cases. However, it can also deal with large number of cases. This research method can be used for reasons in cases where formal, quantified research is not necessary. The research method is based on the assumption that people can personally involve in a particular marketing strategy and are then in a better situation to describe and explain their experience or feelings in their own words, by allowing them to speak without an intermediary or any form of constraints. (Veal 2006, 193.)

The fact that this form of research method allows the researcher to get to the very base of the study, makes it the best option for this research. Not only will it enable the researcher together a comprehensive report about the intention of the study but it will also make it easily understandable to any reader.

In this type of research method the collection of information and analysis of qualitative information rather than numerical data is involved. Qualitative research brings out the role and the range of the research with specific methods available, including in-depth interviews, group interview, participant observation and ethnographic approaches. The qualitative method of research goes a long way to give rise to qualitative rather than quantitative information. The qualitative method helps in the collection of enough amount of relevant information with regards to the examples concerned. In addition, a qualitative research method also deals with large number of cases. An example is a research project on marketing of groups of hotels within a region, involving observation and participation in activities involved in marketing. (Veal 2006, 193.)

Interviews are classified in to three types namely semi structured interview, structured interview and unstructured interview. This research used the semi-structured interview in order to get to the core of the marketing structure put in place by the company. It is good to know that this qualitative research is one of the best for this marketing research work. This is because this method will make it easier for the researcher to get to the root of this study and find out even the least source of marketing used by this company.

## **5.2 Presenting the results of the research**

This research interview was conducted with two participants, the long existing marketing manager and the newly recruited manager of Azam. The interviewees are estimated to range between the ages of 35-40 years. It was not any big problem for them to reveal their ages. Even though three interviews are not enough to draw a general conclusion, observation plays a vital role in revealing the very useful information in this research work. Proper observation was therefore carried out and conclusions are being drawn based on the two qualitative methods applied. The information received from these interviewees and from observation went a long way to tell the major difficulties and the little effort put in place to improve the marketing domain of this hotel within and outside the country.

### **5.2.1 The marketing manager's interview**

Theme 1 was based on what Hotel Azam has been doing so far with respect to marketing of this hotel domestically and internationally. This question was meant to know the degree of marketing and how aware the people of Cameroon and abroad are cautious of the existence of this place.

Interviewee B said he has worked for close to three years in the hotel. He came three months late after the hotel was operational. Interviewee B said that Hotel Azam marketing strategy from his point of view is not effective and not easy because the decisions are not taken by the

manager or the marketer, so the marketer is like “a figure head” and it is difficult to take good decisions in Hotel Azam. He went further to say he does not really see any good marketing strategies with regards to the hotel. Hotel Azam is supposed to be on the Internet which it is not, but in Bamenda .Interviewee B thought it was only one hotel that had a web page and as a whole marketing did not exist.

Theme 2 was based on how interviewee B really informs people about Hotel Azam. The interviewee was asked this question because it was necessary to know how customers get to lounge in the hotel so that they can make some profits. B explained that, mostly, information about Hotel Azam goes from word of mouth.

As you are here you have seen Hotel Azam. That is how its image sells to other people. There are some sign boards in Bamenda city about Azam but there is just nothing in other towns like the sign boards to create that awareness in people’s minds about this place

Theme 3 was based on the question to know if advertising is being done on television or in some radio stations to create awareness in people’s minds. In the response interviewee B mentioned that they only go on air when they have an event and since Hotel Azam has a night club and when they are bringing an artist to perform in the night club. On the contrary, if they are not bringing any artist to perform then they do not go on air because it is quite costly to go on air.

Theme 4 was based on the issues of brochures for the internal population of Cameroon as a whole and Bamenda in particular, which is far cheaper to run than other means of marketing. The reason for this question was to find out if they sent out brochures to some strategic places which are really tourist sites that can create that awareness in the minds of those national and international tourists, not leaving out some nationals who want to have some quiet moments of their lives and fun maybe with family and friends. Interviewee B, in response, replied that they have brochures that they give to guests, especially when they are checking out of the rooms. They also sent out brochures to tourist site last year but this year they are still waiting to see how the budget will be allocated in order to make it available.

Theme 5 was based on marketing abroad. This question was asked to find out from interviewee B who has been in the company for the past two years to know what he has put in place to boost the marketing sector of Hotel Azam and bring up the profit margin of the company. Interviewee B responded that a website has been conceived which is still to go on the internet, but B is still waiting for the final decision that will come from above, if they will want the website or not. B said again that decisions are not taken by the marketer or the manager; it is done only when it has been confirmed and approved by the highest boss. The interviewer proceeded with some questions about marketing abroad. If not approved by the boss, then how do customers abroad and out of Bamenda make their bookings before coming, to be very sure they have a place to spend the nights and money? Interviewee B replied that they have professional cards, and on those cards their contacts are there and in this way they sell. Most people come in with the help of friends and the professional cards they take along with them, and in this way they spread out the contact numbers and customers contact them with those numbers.

Interviewer proceeded by asking if it is enough for her to go back to Finland meeting a friend who is coming to Cameroon and Bamenda for that matter and just tell the person about Hotel Azam without any web page to browse and see the structure, facilities and prices, and not forgetting the services rendered, and its comfort without any web page? Interviewee B replied that interviewer has seen Azam for real, and that it is now left for the interviewer to convince whoever to come, even though there is no physical evidence. Interviewee said it is true to have a webpage with pictures of the hotel Hotel Azam. Furthermore, B explained that a friend who lived in Maryland visited Hotel Azam from the US and had heard of Hotel Azam back there in the US. There was nothing to show that Hotel Azam existed and what brought her there was not to meet him (B) but to see for herself if it was and it was, without anything to prove it.

Theme 6 was based on the level of investment compared to the level of marketing. How is it profitable to the company? This question was basically formed to develop the view of the marketing ideas with respect to the amount of investment put in place for the development of the profit level of this company and customers' satisfaction. Interviewee B responded by saying that the investment is not equal to the marketing. It is quite risky to have an investment of this magnitude with little or no marketing to boost the profit margin, which in a long run is going to be a failure. The interviewer proceeded to find out if B thinks that something or nothing can be done to remedy the situation at hand. Interviewee B emphasized the fact that

much still have to be done in order to improve the situation. B also thinks that the power should be handed entirely to the manager so that he can open up to new ideals rather than appointing someone and still keeping the powers. In this light much can be done and it will be perfectly well.

Theme 7 was based on the idea of a target group. This question was formed to develop interviewee is concept of target group based on the idea of marketing. Interviewee B explained that there is no target group intended for the business, that the business is open to all who can afford to pay for the room irrespective of time and sex. The rooms range from 25 000 FRS CFA-75 000 FRS CFA. In addition, the interviewer asked about the facilities offered with the different price ranges. In response interviewee B said rooms for 25 000 FRS CFA have free breakfast, internet services, access to the night club and cabaret for free, while rooms for 75 000 FRS CFA are senior suites with enough space. In the suite you have a guest room with breakfast free, night club, and wireless internet services.

Theme 8 was based on the idea of facilities for women. The reason for this question was to develop the concept of women to be taken into consideration especially when it comes to little things that can call the attention of a woman to lodge in such accommodation. Interviewee B responded that there are actually no facilities as such especially for women. In addition B said he has never heard of such ideals and he thinks that will be a good proposal to them and Hotel Azam can work on that to see how some of those facilities can be put in place to bring forth those women.

Theme 9 was based on any sort of discount being offered to customers. The reason for this question was to develop the idea on how Hotel Azam operates with respect to discount to their customers. Interviewee B responded that discounting is being done especially to clients that we deal with, that is, clients that are from well recognized institutions that have a contract with us in Azam like MTN Cameroon, the American embassy, Israeli embassy and British embassy. Interviewer asked about the percentage of discount given to their customers and B responded that MTN Cameroon enjoys 15% discount e.g. a room of 25 000frs is given to them for 18 000frs with breakfast inclusive plus other facilities. B thinks that 15% discount is not too

much to give to clients who often use the place because B is sure that within a week they are very sure of getting three or more clients from them. The Interviewer asked a question of the situation during Christmas period when it is the peak period for the accommodations sector because many Cameroonians come back home to celebrate Christmas with family and friends. Interviewee B responded that Hotel Azam does not have any strategy for that. During Christmas period the prices are constant without any increase. Interviewer asked about what happened to the business during the low periods or seasons, when it is really difficult to get more customers. Interviewee B responded that

As I earlier told you, nothing is being done as far as discount is concerned. Interviewer asked how Azam tries to manage this situation or tries to balance this situation in business in order to keep the business intact, B responded by saying it is a good idea but based on the fact that management is in the hands of hierarchy B cannot surpass the hierarchy by bringing down the prices then it is going to be a big problem for him.

Theme 10 was based on the trend of the business in the near future with the situation of marketing. This question was asked in order to develop the marketing trend in the future for the sustainability of the business. Interviewee B answered that from the initial stage, the trend was very good and business was flowing but now other hotels are emerging in Bamenda and many people are going out to discover the new hotels. B mentioned that, they in Hotel Azam are at risk since decisions are made far away, then the business will be moving from a “frying pan to the fire”. The trend of the business can improve in the long run only if decisions are left in the hands of the marketer and the manager, otherwise B does not think it is going to move forward. Interviewer proceeded by asking B what is the strength of Hotel Azam that other competitors cannot use to challenge them. In response B said location is one of their strengths since they are located away from the city center, Azam has enough space and facilities that other hotels do not have, parking lots for close to five hundred cars can park without any inconveniences. The rooms are the best, with stand-by generators and with transformers. In addition, he said services at Hotel Azam are good, e.g. in the kitchen both African and Western dishes are prepared, with the best quality ever and also qualified staffs.

### 5.2.2 The Manager's interview

Theme 1 was based on what the new manager has done with respect to marketing in his own domain. This was intended to develop and compare the new ideas put in place by the newly recruited manager. Interviewee A started by presenting the exact situation. Two months ago when he came B was also faced with the same situation about decision making. Nevertheless A (general manager) said marketing can still be done especially with the type or class of people who need to know about the existence of Hotel Azam and which strategies he is going to use to achieve the goal. Actually Hotel Azam is has facilities that are rare to get in other regions and even in other hotels. Hotel Azam has three conference halls with a capacity of 750-800 people which is very difficult to get in this region. The major problem however is how to get the outside world to get to know about these facilities.

When interviewee A came in, he tried to come up with a marketing strategy by first going through the hotel database and realized that customers have never been mailed and most of those customers left their contact information and he felt so bad about it. The first thing he did was to start mailing those customers and trying to create those contacts with those customers after a long period of time.

Interviewee A is presently building a website which is almost done, but he needs money to complete it before it can go on air, but there is the administrative bottle neck and the money is not coming as expected. A hotel of this magnitude has no website, he designed a website where people everywhere can do their reservations and confirmation but unfortunately it is not yet operational. He also thought of what is called direct contacts with tourism organizations internationally and locally. Hotel Azam does not even have bill boards along the streets; if one drives from Bamenda to Douala and vice versa one will not see any bill board with Hotel Azam on it. So it is only known to some friends and family members who communicate with some friends abroad about Azam by informing them that he/she is working or lodging in Azam, then friends can come there to either see or lodge in Hotel Azam.

If we had done an aggressive marketing and to get those multi class to come in there will also be a problem because most of our personnel are not professionally trained but are trained in other fields but the key point is that they are not rich in the hospitality field and there is a need for change.

Interviewee A usually carries out advertisements only on radios, that is, local radio stations when he is bringing an artist for the weekend, then he makes posters, flyers, and uses a car to take the artist around the town so that the population can see the artist and therefore calling more people. As far as the hotel is concerned he has not done anything yet to market the hotel. Actually when A came in there were lots of employees that had nothing to do during work hours,

I retrained most of the workers and gave them some orientation about hotel management. We also do not have those kinds of services like, when our customers are moving out of the hotel usually they are given some encouraging tips or incentives like key holders carrying Azam Hotel or Azam night club. These are some of the challenges we are facing here. We have the knowledge to link many sectors for e.g. I went to the communication with the director of mobile and communication network Orange and they sponsored a lot of events and activities and I went into negotiations with Orange to be one of our marketer within Bamenda and other parts of the country to help advertise us. If we could come in a partnership, maybe with the restaurant, night club or cabaret, then orange can be our official partner in advertisement. Azam remains in Bamenda just with word of mouth.

What we fail to understand is that it is very easy to market New York because everybody knows New York but it is very difficult to market Bamenda because of Azam, this is because the trend is going down and we are almost at the peak of our stretch. We do not have guests, even if we sell a room of 25 000 FRS for 15 000 FRS we will still not have guests for the 15 000 FRS. This is because there is absolutely no marketing. Bamenda is so highly populated like Douala that even if you do not market you will still get customers but that is not the case with Bamenda which needs a lot of Marketing.

Theme 2 was based on finance for the marketing. The question was asked in order to improve the marketing strategy with respect to finance allocated for the purpose. Interviewee A responded that there is enough finance that can be put in place for the marketing but the management is not ready and willing to channel it to the right persons.

We are still struggling to see how we can channel the marketing by producing a sticker about Azam and about all what we offer, go into town and place them behind taxis and give the drivers some money and anyone who enters the taxis will know that Azam exists even if that can only market our night clubs well because guest coming to make this hotel profitable are not people living in Bamenda. What I intend to do if given the means, not much, I will do a newsletter to attract a lot of conferences because if I can succeed to get a conference then every month with just 50 guests then I am making a profit and after the conference most of the guest will normally like to go to the night club which will still be great. We don't even have brochures to even put at the tourists sites where tourists can see and read them and be enlightened about us.

### **5.3 Analysis of the research interviews**

The research interview that was carried out will be analyzed theme-by-theme and in the same chronological order as presented by the interviewees above.

#### **5.3.1 Analysis of the marketing manager's interview**

Theme 1 was based on finding out what Hotel Azam has done so far concerning marketing domestically and internationally. This question was meant to access the marketing strategies put together by Hotel Azam for all these years that the Hotel has been existing.

It is clear that Hotel Azam has not been finding it easy with respect to marketing as interviewee B presented. The marketing strategies of Hotel Azam are not effective and the reason behind it is the fact that decisions in Hotel Azam are not taken by the marketer or the manager. In this case it is difficult to bring in new ideals since marketer is just a figure head. All the decisions are being given to the marketer by the owner of the hotel and he is there to mostly implement all final decisions given. Interviewee B in his own mind and thought also feels that there is eventually no marketing in Hotel Azam which is a big problem to the hotel which might affect the future trend of hotel Azam negatively.

Theme 2 was about how interviewee B really informs people about the existence of Hotel Azam. This question was asked to find out how the population got to know about Hotel Azam when there is actually no official webpage about the whole business.

Interviewee B responded that actually the population out there gets to know about Azam through word- of- mouth from friends to friends, families and well-wishers. He explained that many people especially around Bamenda who have been in Azam at least once have seen the structure and facilities put in place, and these people do nothing but the best to inform their brothers, sisters and friends who come to lounge in Hotel Azam. Interviewee B feels that though that is helping the situation to an extent it is not solving the problem they have because they do not get as many customers as it is expected considering the huge amount of investment put in the business.

Theme 3 was to find out interviewee B's opinion about marketing through some radio stations within Bamenda and Cameroon respectively. This question was asked to know if Hotel Azam has been carrying out some marketing over national and local radio stations to create awareness among possible customers.

Interview B responded that, they usually do not go on the radios to market the Hotel as a whole. They only do it in situations where they deem it necessary or when they want to bring in an artist to play in the cabaret or the night club, otherwise they do not use the radio that much for any form of advertisement. Interviewee B said that even though that was not enough just to advertise on radio only when an artist is coming, it should be done constantly to always reach out the entire population.

Theme 4 was about the general marketing strategies with brochures. This question was asked to find out the extent to which Hotel Azam used brochures to market their Hotel. This is because most people who do not have the opportunity to listen to the radio sometimes can be fortunate to read some brochures which would be a good idea to have so as to boost their marketing department.

Interviewee B responded that they usually have brochures especially in the hotel which they give out to customers when they are checking out of the hotel. Also for the past years they usually keep brochures in some tourist sites within the city to boost their marketing. Interviewee B mentioned that, though their brochures are usually not enough for everyone to grab a copy at any time, much will be done to make sure there is enough for everyone anytime. B also made mention of the fact that more brochures will be placed at new prospective tourist site in Bamenda.

Theme 5 was about marketing abroad. This question was asked in order to know how Hotel Azam's marketing has been carried out abroad especially to Cameroonians and international tourists coming into the country for leisure and business purposes. This question was also asked to know how people coming from abroad make their bookings to be very sure they will have a place to sleep when they get to Hotel Azam. The fact that marketing abroad is a big booster to the company is enough for Hotel Azam to manage marketing abroad.

Interviewee B answered that a webpage is still to be conceived and must be approved by the overall owner of Hotel Azam. B answered that, most of their customers carry along Hotel Azam business cards with contact numbers and email addresses which they can always use to make bookings and reservations without any problem. Furthermore, B explained that it is not enough; much is still going to be done in order to reinforce the marketing abroad because in future tourists from abroad will be their targeted customers.

Theme 6 was about knowing how the level of marketing is compatible with the level of investment put in place in Hotel Azam. This question was basically formed to develop the view of the marketer's ideas with respect to the amount of investment put in place for the development of the profit level of this company and customers satisfaction.

In response, B explained that it was a huge risk to have an investment of this magnitude with a relatively small marketing strategy. This is because a business of this magnitude and investment of such is supposed to have a huge marketing department with a separate budget of its own. But in this case where there is so little allocation of resources of marketing the

business is not booming and B thinks that it is not going to stand on its own in the long run because the profit is not worth the investment. B was also emphasizing the fact that much could still be done if the budget for marketing could be liberated to the right channel and to the right persons in charge of marketing.

Theme 7 was based on the idea of target group. This question was asked to find out if Hotel Azam is running its hotel based on a certain or particular type of people as customers. This is because some hotels are usually making target groups for their customers. They can have only some business class men, politicians or government top officials as customers.

Interviewee B answered that there is no target group set for this business, which means that anyone who is capable of paying for his or her room is very much welcome irrespective of which class of person he or she is. Furthermore, B explained that the price ranges for the hotel has been set with the corresponding facilities which leaves any customer with a big option to choose what he or she wants and make himself or herself more comfortable and as such promoting Hotel Azam.

Theme 8 was based on facilities for women In Azam. This question was asked to find out if Hotel Azam has some basic facilities for women that can be used as a good strategic marketing for attracting women if they want to lounge in for the night especially in Bamenda and that place should be Hotel Azam.

Interviewee B responded that there are actually no facilities as such for women especially. In addition B said he had never heard of such ideals and he thinks that will be much more of a good proposal to them and Hotel Azam can work on that to see how some of those facilities could be put in place to bring forth those women.

Theme 9 was based on discounting. This question was asked to find out how Hotel Azam used discounting as a marketing strategy especially during peak and low reasons. This was because

usually during most peak period it is highly accepted that hotels increase their prices per room, so Azam should also be doing that.

Interviewee B mentioned that discounting is usually not done whether it is peak or low period. They have never tried to put in place such discounting system to see how it is going to work or not. Furthermore, he explained that discounting is being done only at a very small scale and only to clients that are from well- recognized institutions that have a contract with Hotel Azam, such as MTN Cameroon which is a mobile telephone networking company, the American embassy, Israeli embassy and British embassy. Interviewee B also made mention about the percentage of discount given to these cooperate customers which for MTN Cameroon is approximated to 15% e.g. a room of 25 000 FRS is given to them for 18 000 FRS with breakfast inclusive plus other facilities. And B thinks that 15% discount is not too much to give to clients who are often using the place. B is sure that within a week they are very sure of getting three or more clients from them. B also expressed the fact that no discount is made during Christmas; all prices are constant no matter what time of the year.

Theme 10 of this interview was based on the trend of the business in the future. The purpose of this question was to find out the trend of the business in the future with respect to the degree of marketing put in place.

In response, B answered that the trend of the business was good at the beginning. This was as a result of the fact that many other hotels were not in existence but today with the springing up of many new and competitive hotels in the city, the trend is becoming slow and hence there is a strong need for efficient marketing to be put in place. The trend of the business can improve in the long run only if decisions are left in the hands of the marketer and the manager, otherwise B does not think it is going to move forward.

### **5.3.2 Analysis of the manager's interview**

Theme 1 was based on what the new marketer has done so far to improve the situation of the present marketing situation. This question was asked in order to find out, since the new

marketer has been employed for few months now, what are the efforts he is making to remedy the situation in order for the business to be more profitable to him and to the all crew members.

Interviewee B answered that the situation at hand is quite an uncomfortable one because he cannot see any efficient marketing strategies put in place. A realized that it is not because there are inadequate resources but the greatest problem was the misallocation of the resources. A proceeded by saying much can still be done with marketing to ascertain even more than the equilibrium profit margin of the business. A analyzed that marketing can be done to specific classes of people thereby acknowledging the idea of setting target groups for Hotel Azam within the country. Hotel Azam has gotten a lot of facilities that has made it very distinct from other competitive hotels in Bamenda such as the three conference halls with carrying capacity of 750-800 people, which is very difficult to get in this region. A put in a lot of effort to market these conference rooms to some targeted organizations within the country. Interviewee B further explained that he found out from the Hotel database that all the customers who left their contacts and emails have never been mailed, even a word of appreciation has never been sent to those customer which A felt bad and took the initiative of writing to all the customers trying to create a relationship of goodwill.

Presently A is building a website which is almost done but he needs money to complete it before it can go on air but since there is the administrative bottle neck the money is not coming. A hotel of this magnitude is not having any website, so he designed a website where people everywhere can do their reservations and confirmation but unfortunately it is not yet operational. He also thought of what is called direct contacts with tourism organizations internationally and locally, they do not even have bill boards along the streets, if you move from Bamenda to Douala and vice versa you will not see any bill board with Hotel Azam on it.

A usually advertises only on radios, i.e. local radios stations when he is bringing an artist for the weekend, then he makes posters, flyers, and uses a car to take the artist around the town so that the population can see the artist and therefore calling more people. As far as the hotel is concerned he has not done anything yet to market the hotel. Actually when A came in there

were lots of employees that had nothing to do during work hours, “I retrained most of the workers and gave them some orientation about hotel management. We also don’t have those kinds of services like, when our customers are moving out of the hotel usually they are given some encouraging tips or incentives like key holders carrying Azam hotel or Azam night club. These are some of the challenges we are facing here.

Theme 2 was based on finance for the marketing. The question was base to improve the marketing strategy with respect to finance allocated for the purpose. Interviewee A responded that there is enough finance that can be put in place for the marketing but the management is not ready and willing to channel it to the right personnel.

We are still struggling to see how we can channel the marketing by producing a sticker about Azam and about all what we offer go into town and place them behind taxis and give the drivers some incentives, and anyone who enters the taxis will know that Azam exists even if that can only market our night clubs well. This is because guests coming to make this hotel profitable are not people living in Bamenda and what I intend to do if given the means, not much, is to do a newsletter to attract a lot of conferences because if I can succeed to get a conference every month with just 50 guests then I am making a profit as after the conference most of the guests will normally like to go to the night club which, will still be great. We don’t even have brochures to even put at the tourists sites where tourists can see and read and be enlightened about us.

#### **5.4 Reliability and validity**

Reliability of the research refers to how reliable the results of the research are, how efficient the method of research and techniques were. Reliability is usually linked to whether the results of the research are repeatable. This is to say that if the research was carried out again for the second time the results should be the same in order for the research to be defined as reliable, it should not matter when and where the research was done but varying social and physical environment can complicate matters. (Bryman & Bell 2007, 40-41.)

It is always vital to check the magnitude to which research findings would be familiar if the research were to be repeated at a later date with the same questions. This means that if the

research model is been carried out several times the result of this research is still going to be the same regardless of what time of the year the research is been carried out. Reliability with the case in the social sciences is the same, this is because they deal with human beings in differing and ever-changing social situations, but while and from an individual persons behaviors can be accurate when aggregated with information from other people. (Veal 2006, 41.)

This research has been a qualitative study of the marketing of accommodation services in Cameroon with Hotel Azam as its case study. The number of persons that were interviewed was so versed with the whole idea of the interview that was carried out. The reliability of the information given by the interviewees succeeds in boosting the research. Two marketing experts were interviewed to get the different marketing strategies they used.

The reliability of this research did not suffer anything because the researcher herself went to Hotel Azam and without knowing anybody or worker there the information was released without any fear of the unknown. In this case it means that the information is very reliable and can be given to anyone who cares to find out about the marketing situation at Hotel Azam irrespective of time.

Validity refers to the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from the research. Do set indicators for the concept really measure that concept? Are the results in line with what the researcher intended to measure from the beginning? (Bryman & Bell 2007: 164). Validity is the degree to which the information gathered by the researcher truly reflects the subject being researched. Researching some tourism sectors can be difficult in these parts, because they may be concerned with attitudes, people's behavior, and they may never be sure as that of researches in natural sciences. (Veal 2006, 41.) The validity of this research can be relied upon as the conducted interviews have made the entire study valid.

## 5.5 Findings

This study examined the marketing of accommodation services in Cameroon, with Hotel Azam as case study. The purpose of this research was to find out if the marketing strategies of Hotel Azam are affecting the business either positively or negatively. However, it is noted that there are always a series of problems facing the marketing department even though sometimes the little put in place for marketing is recording a positive impression to the business but it is not enough to boost the trend of the business in the coming years.

The research carried out revealed that, the marketing department is plagued with numerous problems which are great hindrances to the success of Hotel Azam. Firstly, this is because decision-taking is not left in the hands of the marketer to improvise on what he has been trained for. Usually decisions for the running of this sector are being taken by another person who is not into marketing, thereby making it more difficult for the manager to come up with good and efficient ideas.

The research carried out showed that, the entire population of Cameroon is not so aware of the existence of this great investment for their comfort and leisure. Only a lesser extent of the population of Cameroon knows about the existence of Hotel Azam. Even those who have heard about the name are still very ignorant about the location of Hotel Azam and what services and facilities can be enjoyed there.

The research indicated that Hotel Azam is gradually losing its customers as compared to the number of customers they have had during the past years of existence. This is because new hotels are emerging up in the city with lots of competitive ideas to make the entire population know what is happening in their hotels. These newly created hotels are coming up with a lot of divergent means of communicating with people rather than just rely solely on word of mouth. Faced with these situations, Hotel Azam is left with no other choice than losing its great deal of customers.

The research further revealed that, even if there was effective marketing in Hotel Azam which is going to bring in some top ranking officials in the hotel, it will still be a great problem because most of the personnel in Azam are not well trained in the hospitality sector, even though are highly competent in other fields of study thereby making it more difficult for everyone when quality services cannot be rendered as expected.

The research also indicated that many of the facilities are really wasting out. This is because most of the rooms are not being occupied for over long periods of time; the conference rooms are usually empty or usually not fully booked no matter what period of the year and therefore it is faced with a lot of cost such as depreciation cost because people are also paid to clean the rooms without any good returns from it.

The research revealed that, most of the marketing strategies put in black and white by the marketer are never implemented due to financial reasons. There is a huge misallocation of resources at Hotel Azam, this can be explained by the fact that money meant for marketing is diverted to other channels which in effect is dragging the hotel to the ground because it is not going to meet up with its targeted customer and hence face failure.

## **6 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

After carrying an intensive interview, presenting the interview, analyzing the interview and presenting the findings of the analysis, it is very vital to suggest and recommend some possible ways in which Hotel Azam can organize and improve the marketing strategies in order to meet up the modern trend and challenges in the near future. The research intends to draw its conclusion and recommendation based on the facts realized from the research work. The researcher tends to give valid recommendations that if utilized will improve marketing and hence accommodation services.

### **6.1 Recommendations**

It is highly recommended that Hotel Azam should take into consideration a better pricing policy at the hotel. This pricing policy should be related to the fact that during low seasons, prices per rooms should be reduced so that more people who were afraid to take a trip maybe because of high expenditure can now see a reason to take one. On the contrary, prices should be increased during the peak period since there is usually a high demand for accommodation services especially in Hotel Azam. The daily prices of the rooms could, for example be changed based on the demand of the hotel. This policy is really recommended because it is a strong medium to give a balance between high and low seasons.

Hotel Azam should take into consideration care of customers who come there on a regular basis by making them feel more that their customer ship is valued. Hotel Azam should create a marketing relationship with its customers. It is highly beneficial for the customer and the hotel to value a long-term relationship between them. Hotel Azam is in a better position to create a customer-program by taking the customer more into account. In this case the customers who are really regular have to fill the registration form with their address information every time

the check into the hotel. Information about customers should be taken so that the Hotel will be updating them about their hotel reservation system. In this case customers and records will be kept thereby building the customer relationship with the hotel.

Furthermore, another point of building customer relationship marketing is to put together information from the customer with regards to their stay and how they felt, if there have any complaints or suggestions to be improved upon. Hotel Azam should also take into consideration what customers dropped behind as feedback and try as much as possible to work on it and improve the situation. This should be done especially with regular customers with printed forms placed in their hotel rooms so that they can fill before their departure time. Hotel Azam should react to this feedback more maturely by contacting the customer by email and appreciating and thanking them for their feedback and making them feel more in touch with the hotel.

A webpage is recommended for Hotel Azam to ease the flow of information to potential customers. In this way different campaigns and offers could be up dated to the sites more easily. All the latest developments and happenings should be up dated on the hotel web page to keep customers up to date with current happenings. The web page should be created to serve Hotel Azam and show the true picture of the hotel rather giving false information or image about it.

Another recommendation to Hotel Azam in trying to keep reaching the marketing objectives is that staff should be used to their full capacity or potential, staffs should be given orientation on how to organize their duties in a way that they can use their time at work efficiently to serve the customers without customers finding any reasons to complain.

Market segmentation is another point to be looked at for Hotel Azam. This is because there are usually some potential different customer groups are those who could be reached in different ways. Examples of such different customer group that can come to stay in Bamenda from other cities in Cameroon may need accommodation. These types of groups could be contacted and informed about the existence of Hotel Azam with the various facilities and services they

offer. Schools could also be contacted and some personal relationship created with them, and not forgetting their restaurant facilities.

Internal marketing is also recommended to all staffs to keep employees updated on the hotel's marketing objectives and clear instructions about upcoming marketing actions are given to employees so that they are aware of their duties and what they are allowed to do in different customer-related situations. Another point of recommendation is to develop a loyal customer-program. It does not necessarily require a membership card, but only a well made system to follow the customers and how many times they have stayed at the hotel. It is also good to give some bonuses and benefits to their loyal customers. Organizing and maintaining a list of items or some other bonuses that the loyal customers can receive such as discount of room rate, better room types, beverages, snacks to be delivered in the room before arrival, is also recommended.

Another point recommended to Hotel Azam is the fact that brochures with great explanations explaining some basic happenings at Hotel Azam and a map to trace the location of the hotel within the city should be kept in strategic places mostly visited by national and especially international tourists. Example of such places includes the Handicraft center.

Furthermore, a lot of advertisement should be placed on newspapers usually daily or monthly newspapers. Also the use of radios and television media is quite essential since most people pay a lot of attention when watching television and listening to radios, this is a faster way of creating awareness in the minds of people rather than just relying on word-of-mouth which is far too little to boost the marketing strategies of Azam.

In addition, in order for Hotel Azam to improve on its marketing strategies it should try to sponsor some either major or minor games within its sphere of influence. Examples of such groups can be veteran clubs, some kids programs either on radio or television which will also sound as reminder in minds of people about the existence of this hotel and hence lounging. Hotel Azam should conduct research, create some contacts with some great companies whose workers usually travel from one province to the other and try to find out the kind of need they

could possibly have with regard to accommodation services. Then contact them and start offering the hotel services and negotiating pricing and other relevant issues

Another form of recommended marketing is to develop divergent marketing campaigns and offers. These marketing campaigns can be derived with examples from different seasons or holidays. They can be channeled to specific customer groups, such as the loyal customer during their long vacation periods. These marketing campaigns should be placed on the hotel's web page to always update customers browsing the page.

Internet marketing is also recommended to Hotel Azam, this is to help enable the strategies and techniques than can be used on internet which will be able support the business's overall objectives. It is also necessary to conduct banner, promotions, generate targeted online, positioning the content, and overall brand awareness.

There is a great need for improvement in advertising. Whenever the hotel is organizing a sales promotion they should try as much as possible to inform the entire public and not just potential customers who will benefit from the sales promotion. Hotel Azam can gain more customers which will make the hotel realize its profit. Hotel Azam should always provide some take away gift by giving a promotional star price to anyone who uses their services (their sales promotion.) This will go a long way to improve Hotel Azam's profile

Hotel Azam should increase their manner of advertising and make it more frequent than before. Advertising should be carried out in newspapers and not only on local radio stations with all the hotel services been displayed and mentioned both within the national and international advertisement.

## **6.2 Conclusion**

In a nutshell, this research studied the marketing strategies of Hotel Azam. The aim was to study the present marketing strategy of Hotel Azam, also seeing how efficient the marketing

strategy has been working and to create new strategic marketing plans for the hotel. Having observed how important having a good and strategic marketing is, it was noticed that Hotel Azam is lacking very much in its marketing strategy and thereby making it difficult for this hotel to last in the long run. This was noticed from the semi-structured interview carried out by the interviewer, interviewing the marketing manager and the general manager of the hotel with some themes at heart. With some marketing frame work and recommendations put in place this will go a long way to improve the marketing plans with a direct guideline to the improvement of Hotel Azam marketing and henceforth maximizing profit rather than just breaking even.

The theoretical part of this study contained some main heading such as accommodation services, which explains how large and ubiquitous the subsector is within the tourism industry. Accommodation services which can be seen as an important support facility in the destination region have gone a long way to improve the movement of people from place to place. When people move from one country to another they tend to have different needs for the destination where they are moving to.

Presently, the accommodation sector in Cameroon is also going through a large development. This is explained by the fact that the government of Cameroon is faced with a big task of improving this sector due to the high influx rate of tourists into the country. This is because the government is building some good hotels, such, as Mont Febe Hotel in Yaoundé, to cater for the accommodation problems of tourists coming into Cameroon. Private individuals in Cameroon are also not left behind with the development of accommodation in Cameroon. Many private Cameroonians with a large budget have also taken the challenge in building up some good hotels amongst which is hotel Azam. Also, these private hotels are also employing thousands of Cameroonians thereby reducing the unemployment rate and hence improving their standard of living. Due to this development, the government and private individuals are also improving the roads and railways to facilitate the movement of people especially the tourists from one destination to the other.

Marketing concepts as a whole such as wants, demand, value and satisfaction and market were discussed. Demand, was explained as the ability and willingness of a customer to pay a particular price for a given quantity or quality of goods or services. These concepts are very useful for the case of Hotel Azam in that customers know what they are willing and able to pay for at any given time. This is because Hotel Azam is selling at a reasonable price that customers are willing to pay for it. Service marketing mix was also discussed as an important part of marketing of a tourism product. This was explained with the fact that for efficient marketing to take place, the most famous 4P's have to be taken into great consideration; they refer to: Product, Price, Promotion and Place. Promotion is the approach used by companies to improve their sales in order to make profit. This approach makes the customers quickly recognize the product or services. Sometimes sales promotions are even more preferable because sales promotion includes several communications activities that attempt to provide added value or incentives to customers.

Different pricing strategies were also discussed in the research and how they can work out perfectly with Hotel Azam. These were also useful in the later research since these provided ideals for marketing in terms of pricing. Examples of such pricing policies are the psychological pricing, where particular goods and services usually use price as an indicator for quality. This is because most customers usually feel that the higher the price, the more beautiful and durable it is, and quality services being rendered. Discounted pricing should also be used especially during the seasonal pricing. This is explained by the fact that Hotel Azam has a huge number of customers coming in during their peak period in December; as a result prices can be increased and also be reduced when it is not a peak period. This is a method which can help in balancing the situation in the running of the hotel.

The discussion on this topic included five main topics, which were introduction, accommodation services, marketing, case study and the research method and analysis. In the research, these were useful in that the marketing concept will help Hotel Azam to improve their marketing skill. The findings and analyses of the interviews were sufficient enough to boost the marketing of Hotel Azam. The outcome of the research is good, for it is going to

offer hotel Azam a good framework on how to proceed with their marketing. It will offer some new ideas and point out some areas that need to be improved upon.

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## APPENDIX 1

### **Interview themes for marketing manager at hotel Azam**

Research: Marketing of accommodation services in Cameroon. Case study Hotel Azam

Type of interview: semi-structured interview

- Theme 1 was based on what Azam has been doing so far with respect to marketing of this hotel internally and externally.
- Theme 2 is based on how does interviewee B really informs people about Azam.
- Theme 3 was based on the question to know if advertisement is been done on television or in some radio stations to create awareness in people's mind.
- Theme 4 was based on the issues of brochures for the internal population of Cameroon as a whole and Bamenda in particular, which is far cheaper to run than other means of marketing.
- Theme 5 was based on marketing abroad.
- Theme 6 was based on the level of investment compared to the level of marketing.
- Theme 7 was based on the idea of a target group.
- Theme 8 was based on the idea of facilities for women.
- Theme 9 was based on any sort of discount being offered to customers.
- Theme 10 was based on the trend of the business in the nearer future with the situation of marketing.

## APPENDIX 2

### **Interview themes for the newly recruited manager**

**Research:** Marketing of accommodation services in Cameroon. Case study Hotel Azam

#### **Type of interview: semi-structured interview**

- Theme 1 was based on what the new manager has done with respect to marketing in his own domain.
- Theme 2 was based on finance for the marketing.