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Research Article

DMO and TTPs' Perspectives: Exploring Promotional Strategies and Challenges in Marketing Cape Coast as a Tourist Destination

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About Article

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this investigation is on the promotional strategies and obstacles encountered by Tourism Trade Practitioners (TTPs) and Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) in their efforts to promote Cape Coast as a tourism destination. Using qualitative research methods, it identifies critical promotional activities, including festival promotion, social media use, and digital platforms. It also emphasises problems such as low community engagement, insufficient resources, and bureaucratic constraints. To strengthen Cape Coast's competitive position, recommendations emphasise the adoption of digital marketing tools, the promotion of local participation, and the enhancement of stakeholder collaboration. For practitioners seeking to increase tourist arrivals in Ghana, this research provides actionable insights and contributes to the destination marketing literature.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is widely recognised as a significant and large contributor to commercial activity, revenue generation, job creation, international exchanges, and connectivity for several nations (Dogru *et al.*, 2020). As per the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) (2019), the tourism industry accounted for 10.4% of the worldwide Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2018 and provided employment to 319 million individuals. This number is projected to increase to 421 million by 2029. Furthermore, the expenditure of international visitors amounted to USD 1643.2 billion in 2018 and is projected to reach USD 2,483.9 billion by 2029. According to Odunga, *et al.*, (2019), this industry has produced substantial yearly profits for several nations.

According to Galal (2024), the travel and tourism industry accounted for 5.9 percent of Africa's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which is a rise from 4.4 percent in the previous year. During the time under examination, the year 2019 represented the highest share, including a total of seven percent. Furthermore, it was forecasted that the travel and tourism sector will contribute 6.5 percent to the gross domestic product (GDP) of the continent by 2023 (Galal, 2024). As per the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) (2023), travel and tourism play a significant role in Africa's economy. In 2019, this industry contributed over US\$ 186 billion to the region's economy and attracted 84 million foreign travelers. The industry is crucial for employment, supporting the livelihoods of 25 million individuals, which accounts for 5.6% of all occupations in the area. Given the abundance of tourist attractions and facilities in Africa, the tourism industry in the continent appears well-equipped to cater to the diverse demands of the numerous visitors who choose it as their favourite destination.

In addition, as reported by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), Africa had a 7% surge in foreign visitors, reaching a total of 67 million, which was the highest figure recorded in 2018. The continent has earned a total of \$38 billion in income. In Sub-Saharan Africa, a total of 44.9 million foreign visitor visits were documented, with Ghana and Gambia emerging as the top destinations according to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) in 2020. Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture (MoTAC) (2019), indicated that tourism plays a crucial role in generating foreign currency for Ghana. It contributes to tax revenue, promotes economic progress, and creates employment possibilities. As to the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture, the industry accounted for 4.9% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2018, positioning it as the fourth most significant contributor, behind cocoa, gold, and oil. In that year, tourism provided employment for a total of 602,425 individuals, both directly and indirectly. This represents a 10% growth compared to the previous year (MoTAC, 2019). Additionally, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) predicts that the number of individuals employed in Ghana's tourism industry would reach 746,400 by the year 2029 (WTTC, 2018).

The Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) anticipated substantial expansion in 2019 due to the "Year of Return" initiative, which marked the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the first enslaved Africans in Jamestown, Virginia (Graphic Online, 2019; Oxford

Business Group (OBG), 2021). The campaign served as a strategic marketing initiative aimed at highlighting Ghana as the ancestral homeland of the African diaspora (Dayour & Kimbu, 2019). As per the GTA, the number of African diaspora visitors to Ghana is projected to increase to 500,000 in 2019, compared to 350,000 in the previous year. Consequently, it was anticipated that revenues would reach \$925 million, representing a 50% increase compared to 2018 (OBG, 2021). Based on the literature, the current surge in visitor arrivals in the country, particularly in Cape Coast, may be attributed to the government's growing efforts to enhance tourist experiences and promote Ghana as a tourism hotspot.

The advantages of tourism in Ghana are evident, since it plays a crucial role in promoting and developing Ghana as a popular tourist spot. The "Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report 2019" by the World Economic Forum highlights Ghana's potential to enhance its competitiveness in the tourism industry. This is attributed to the country's rich history, vibrant culture, and numerous natural attractions, which contribute to its growing reputation as a desirable international tourism destination (World Economic Forum (WEF), 2019). Furthermore, the tourism sector possesses substantial capacity to bolster economic expansion and generate job opportunities, hence attracting growing attention from investors in Ghana (Zhe & Bawuah, 2019).

As per Gardiner & Scott (2018), a tourist destination is a complex system in the tourism industry that encompasses a range of products and services designed to provide unique experiences for tourists. Every element given by a tourist destination has a role in shaping the overall experience for visitors. According to Edwards (2024), a tourist destination refers to a location that draws a significant number of travellers or tourists due to its distinctive cultural landmarks, natural marvels, or recreational amenities.

In Ghana, there is a collaborative effort by the governmental and business sectors to actively market Ghana as a tourism destination. Destination marketing organisations (DMO), such as the Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA), serve as the main entities responsible for marketing and promoting tourism in a broad sense (Lukaz, 2021). In Ghana, the National Tourism Organisation (NTO) tends to interfere and dominate the Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) in their rivalry for resources and duplication of tasks, despite the fact that DMOs are intended to play a supportive role (Lukaz, 2021). Moreover, Cape Coast as tourist destination is promoted through various channels, including the internet, social media, online magazines, international fairs, and engagement with stakeholders. These stakeholders can advertise tourism products and destinations, enabling consumers to assess the appeal of the destination prior to their visit (Acheampong, 2020).

The Ghana Tourism Authority promotes Cape Coast through various channels, including the internet, social media, online magazines, international fairs, and engagement with stakeholders. This agency can advertise tourism products and destinations, enabling consumers to assess the appeal of the destination prior to their visit (Acheampong, 2020). In addition, GTA and various tourism trade practitioners (TTPs) have participated in several programmes, such as the Vakantiebeurs



International Tourism Fair in Utrecht (The Netherlands), The 37th Edition of the Feria Internacional de Turismo (FITUR) in Madrid (Spain), the 51st Internationale Tourismus-Bourse (ITB) Tourism Fair in Berlin (Germany), China's Outbound Travel and Tourism Market (COTTM) in Beijing (China), the 104th Session of the UNWTO General Assembly in Chengdu (China), and the Akwaaba Tourism and Travel Fair in Calabar (Nigeria) (MoTAC, 2019). The objective of participation might be to actively promote Ghana as a tourism destination on a global scale.

Also, the Ministry partners with Tourist Clubs and the Tourism Society of Ghana (TOSOGHA) to support students at all educational levels in terms of domestic tourism promotion (MoTAC, 2019). As workers are encouraged to explore tourism destinations and engage in various activities, including Chocolate Day on February 14th, the Paragliding Festival, Emancipation Day Celebration, and PANAFEST in Assin Manso and Cape Coast.

Academic literature suggests that research on tourist destination marketing has advanced and achieved a level of maturity in the past thirty years (Sotiriadis, 2020; vila-Robinson & Wakabayashi, 2018). Consequently, a thorough and resilient knowledge foundation has been built. In addition, Sotiriadis (2020) examined 227 scholarly articles that were published from 1990 to 2020. The extensive range of concepts and concerns covered in the field of tourist destination marketing indicates that it has evolved into a distinct study discipline with its own body of knowledge. This transformation has been acknowledged by several scholarly publications that publish studies on the subject of tourist marketing (Sotiriadis, 2020).

The scope of research topics and concerns in destination marketing primarily revolves around marketing research, analysis of the marketing environment, marketing information systems, destination marketing systems (Marais *et al.*, 2017; Sotiriadis, 2020), as well as analysis of market segmentation, targeting and positioning, destination image, and destination branding (Sotiriadis, 2020). Destination marketing research has mostly concentrated on several aspects such as the marketing mix, employing technology to interact with specific audiences, digital marketing, and social and media marketing (Byun & Jang, 2018; Jiang *et al.*, 2020; Sotiriadis, 2020). In addition, several studies in destination marketing have analysed consumer feedback, performance assessment, benchmarking, and the efficacy of marketing strategies (Zavattaro & Fay, 2019; Sotiriadis, 2020).

Nevertheless, in the existing literature, there is a scarcity of research on destination marketing, particularly in relation to the analysis of visitor experiences about promotional activities in the Cape Coast area. The use of pre-existing information at the destination is hindered by many constraints arising from the distinct context and attributes of the destination, such as market dynamics (consumer behaviour), discrepancies in infrastructure (technology and facilities), and economic variances.

Furthermore, several destinations in Ghana, including Cape Coast, lack sufficient recognition of their potential to attract both international and local tourists (MoTAC, 2019). This may be attributed to a lack of comprehensive information or

recommendations provided to tourists upon their arrival in Cape Coast, resulting in a limited opportunity for them to have an authentic experience or grasp the true essence of the location. Alternatively, it could be a consequence of inadequate promotional efforts by destination promoters to disseminate more information about the area. As Ghana's limited understanding in this area has hindered its ability to effectively sell itself as an appealing tourist destination and an attractive investment opportunity (MoTAC, 2019).

Therefore, this study explores the promotional strategies executed by the destination marketing organisation (DMO) and Tourism trade organizations to market Cape Coast as a tourist destination. It aims to achieve specific objectives by discovering the promotional efforts made by the DMO and tourism trade practitioners (TTPs), analysing the challenges encountered by the DMOs and TTPs.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Destination promotional efforts undertaken by DMOs and tourism trade practitioners

Destination promotion encompasses the strategic initiatives implemented at a specific location to enhance its overall market performance. A destination promotional effort encompasses the comprehensive endeavour of determining the offerings of a destination (the product), identifying the specific groups of individuals who possess the necessary resources and inclination to travel to and appreciate the destination (the target markets), and devising the most effective means to reach and persuade these individuals to visit the destination (promotion) (Pinto & Kastenholz, 2011).

Promotional activities play a crucial role in determining the performance of enterprises. They not only choose the location, timing, and execution methods of these events, but also assess their ability to generate increased demand for a particular destination (Bobier *et al.*, 2019). Strategically designed promotional activities play a crucial role in a destination's marketing strategy. These activities should be carefully planned and determined according to the destination's specific aims and priorities. since stated by Saif & Aimin (2016), marketing strategy plays a crucial role in company operations since it directly influences the impact and results of the organization's performance. Furthermore, it is anticipated that attractive destinations would be capable of increasing tourist demand in their particular locations through appropriate promotional endeavours (Addison, 2019). Promotional activities carried out by Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) or tourism trade associations can enhance destination performance by augmenting visitor arrivals.

Soteriades (2012) asserts that Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) globally should use new and suitable tactics, together with authorised tools and processes, to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of their promotional endeavours in different locations. Due to the involvement of several actors and the unique character of tourist products and experiences, tactics such as electronic promotion, strategic promotion, and value chain promotion effectively tackle the complexities in the field of destination marketing (Bobier *et al.*, 2019). In addition, Bobier *et al.*, (2019) asserted that Destination Management



Organisations (DMOs) have the responsibility of overseeing the planning, research, implementation, control, and evaluation of tourism programmes. Their primary objective is to cater to the requirements and preferences of both visitors and destinations. For DMO promotional campaigns to be successful, they depend on the collaboration of other groups and individuals, both inside and beyond the destination (Morrison, 2013).

Additionally, tourism industry professionals seem to participate in various promotional activities to advertise locations. The strategies employed by tourism industry professionals to market a destination may vary. Bobier *et al.*, (2019) assert that trade groups, such as travel agents, promote places by providing affordable vacation packages, therefore enticing a portion of travelers. In addition, Ekstrom (2023) asserted that Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) utilise several marketing tactics to efficiently reach their desired target demographics. The activities included in this list are print and digital advertising, social media campaigns, website development, search engine optimisation, public relations, and participation in travel trade exhibits and events. Tourism trade groups, such as hotels, vehicle rentals, and tour operators, can participate in advertising by selling tour packages. These packages can attract visitors by providing affordable prices and valuable experiences.

Moreover, Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) and professionals in the tourist industry may both have a crucial role in establishing an atmosphere that facilitates the development and provision of exceptional service experiences by coordinating their efforts. Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) may provide funds towards developing infrastructure in order to enhance the promotion of the destination. Additionally, Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) have the ability to stimulate and endorse tourist destinations through the coordination of cultural events, festivals, artistic exhibitions, and other cultural undertakings that enrich the overall visitor experience (Sotiriadis & Gursoy, 2016). Tourists who engage with the local culture are more likely to have a positive experience if tourist trade associations can actively promote local gastronomy, indigenous architecture, farmers markets, and other related activities, since they are the main facilitators of these services. These can also be employed in destination marketing. Sotiriadis and Gursoy (2016) found that the utilisation of local cuisine in destination promotion is seldom. Utilising local cues is far more efficient than relying on images of beaches or global amenities, which are ubiquitous in nearly every location worldwide.

Further, Wang (2008) stressed the need of collaboration, asserting that destination marketing is a collaborative endeavour that necessitates the cooperation of several organisations and enterprises within a certain geographic region to effectively work together towards a shared objective. Gunn previously underscored the significance of collaboration across several organisations in the advancement of a destination. He noted that the traditional tendency of various tourist sectors to pursue independent strategies is now being replaced by a growing trend of cooperation and collaboration. "No individual business or governmental institution can operate independently" (Gunn, 1988; Pinto & Kastenholz, 2011). Jansen-Verbeke emphasises

the need for networks that maximise the exploitation of "place advantages" and create synergies within a complex tourist offering (Pinto & Kastenholz, 2011).

Sharma (2016) argued that there are positive trends suggesting that tourist marketing strategies may be achieved via hard work and effort. It is advisable for most establishments to provide customised packages aimed at various target groups in order to attract a larger number of tourists. Tourists, particularly those with digital proficiency and a strong social media following, are the intended audience. This audience has the ability to captivate the attention of their acquaintances and followers by sharing their travel experiences on various social media platforms (Bobier *et al.*, 2019).

2.2. Challenges faced by DMOs and tourism trade practitioners in marketing a tourist destination

Prideaux and Cooper, as stated in Gretzel *et al* (2006), asserted that destination marketing organisations (DMOs) are non-profit or governmental entities dedicated to promoting a certain region to tourists. They frequently assume responsibility for crafting a unique portrayal of the location. DMOs may achieve this by effectively organising and synchronising the various tourist trade associations (such as hoteliers, tour guides, and transportation providers), providing comprehensive information to visitors, and overseeing the overall tourism operations within a certain area.

Tourist destinations are encountering many challenges in promoting their tourist potential. Dredge (2016) stated that Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) have encountered many obstacles in recent years, and there are suggestions that they might no longer be beneficial. This was a formidable test to their operational approach and exposed their shortcomings in all endeavours (Gretzel, 2022). Destination marketing organisations (DMOs) encounter several challenges when it comes to creating and executing effective marketing strategies. These challenges arise from the intricate and diverse characteristics of the tourism industry and its stakeholders (Gretzel *et al.* 2006). For instance, the involvement of many stakeholders in determining the purpose and growth of a tourist destination leads to a wide range of interests and objectives. These must ultimately converge in order to enhance the destination's marketed image (Gretzel *et al.*, 2006).

The difficulty of image is one of the issues identified by Muluneh *et al.* (2022). Once tarnished, reputation is something arduous to restore (Wall & Nuryanti, 2008). An unfavourable perception by tourists can have catastrophic consequences for a place (Gursoy, 2011), making it difficult to promote and sell the destination effectively. The process of repairing physical damage can be expedited, however rebuilding and fortifying the damaged reputation of a location may prove to be more intricate (Institute of Directors, 2024). Technological advancements, shifts in market and industry structures, economic downturns, warfare and terrorism, climate change, and natural disasters such as hurricanes and tsunamis, as well as disease outbreaks like SARS, Covid-19, and bird flu, have caused numerous crises that significantly impact destination marketing organisations. In addition, Gretzel *et al.* (2006) identified several challenges encountered by DMOs, such as adapting to technological



advancements, effectively managing expectations, shifting from destination marketing to destination management, facing increased competition, acknowledging the importance of creative partnerships, and establishing new metrics for success. The cited concerns may bear resemblance to the challenges encountered by some destination tourism trade associations in promoting tourist locations.

Due to shifts in national policy and inconsistent financing, the network of Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) has been fragmented, inadequately funded, and lacking coordination over time. Additionally, there are varying performance standards among different organisations (Local Government Association, 2021). In addition, several Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) were established with the purpose of offering comprehensive support services and striving towards a strategic objective for the sector, rather than only focusing on marketing and giving visitor information to attract visitors. Tourism trade associations in different regions get varying levels of assistance, leading to significant disparities (Local Government Association, 2021).

Sheehan *et al.* (2016) also mentioned that DMOs have become a crucial entity that not only supports knowledge management and strategic decision-making, but also responds to the growing demands of stakeholders. Furthermore, the lack of a distinct direction and collaboration between the government, DMOs (Destination Marketing Organisations), and tourism trade professionals leads to minimal endeavours in acknowledging the visitor economy during implementation or identifying the most suitable local approaches to accomplish destination marketing goals (Local Government Association, 2021).

3. METHODOLOGY

The data on promotional strategies and challenges is collected through in-depth interviews with stakeholders, such as DMO (GTA staff) and TTPs, employing a qualitative approach in this research. Recurring themes were identified and findings were categorised through thematic analysis. Diverse representation was guaranteed by the inclusion of participants with a variety of work experience and educational backgrounds. Data collection was conducted with the objective of comprehending the barriers to effective marketing, stakeholder collaboration, and promotional activities.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Demographic and work characteristics of the public DMO (GTA staff)

This section provides an analysis of the demographic characteristics of the Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) that were involved in the interview sessions conducted as part of the study. Table 1 presents a comprehensive overview of the characteristics of the tourists under study, encompassing variables such as sex, age, educational attainment, and years of work experience.

Table 1 presents data pertaining to the demographic attributes of the personnel employed by the Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO) in the Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA), who are entrusted with the task of promoting Cape Coast as a tourism destination. Three (3) tourists identified as male,

Table 1. Demographic and work characteristics of the public DMO (GTA staff).

P	Sex	Age	Education	Work experience
G1	Male	35	Degree	8
G2	Male	37	Degree	5
G3	Female	38	Masters	14
G4	Male	56	Masters	4

but just one person identified as female. Three (3) members of the participants asserted their ages to be within the range of 35 to 38 years, but one individual claimed to be 56 years old. Furthermore, two out of the four tourists reported possessing both a bachelor's degree and a master's degree.

Regarding work experience in the tourist business, three tourists reported having 4-8 years of experience, whilst just one person claimed to possess above fourteen (14) years of experience.

4.2. Demographic and work characteristics Tourism Trade Practitioners (TTPs)

This section provides an analysis of the demographic attributes of the tourists included in the research who are engaged in the tourist industry (trade practitioners). Table 2, displayed below, provides a comprehensive overview of the relevant information.

Table 2. Demographic and work characteristics of private DMO (TTPs)

P	Sex	Age	Education	Work experience
T1	Male	30	Degree	4
T2	Male	Above 50	Masters	14
T3	Male	53	Degree	28
T4	Male	Above 35	Diploma	10
T5	Male	30	Diploma	10
T6	Male	36	Diploma	9
T7	Female	28	Degree	4
T8	Female	28	Degree	2
T9	Female	35	Diploma	10
T10	Female	29	Degree	2
T11	Male	50	Degree	19
T12	Male	36	Degree	15

Based on the demographic data of private destination marketing organisations (TTPs) operating within Cape Coast, as presented in Table 2, it is seen that out of the twelve (12) participants engaged in the study, eight (8) were male and four (4) were female. Moreover, the majority consisted of nine (9) tourists who were within the age range of 28 to 36, while the remaining three (3) tourists were aged 50 or beyond.

In terms of their educational credentials, the majority of the



TTPs (representing seven tourists) reported possessing a bachelor's degree. Three participants had diploma certifications, while just one individual indicated having a master's degree. Regarding the duration of work experience, two (2) participants reported having engaged in the tourist business for a period of two (2) years, four (4) years, and ten (10) years, respectively. Additionally, one (1) participant each indicated having accumulated nine (9), fourteen (14), fifteen (15), nineteen (19), and twenty-eight (28) years of experience in the field.

4.3. Destination promotional efforts undertaken by the DMO and tourism trade practitioners

This section presents an analysis of the data obtained from the Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO) and Tourism Trade Practitioners (TTPs) during the interview session. The focus of the interviews was to gather information on the various promotional initiatives implemented to enhance Cape Coast's appeal as a tourist destination. The researcher employed individualised in-depth interviews as a method for data collection. The data analysis in this section was conducted using the interpretative technique, which involved examining the interview replies in relation to the study's objectives and the subjective perspectives of the participants.

The replies were transcribed by manual means and thereafter subjected to coding and subsequent discussion. The findings and interpretation were given in a comprehensive manner, aligning with the research goals of the study. In addition, thematic analysis was employed to elucidate the emerging concerns associated with each study topic.

The participants for this group for the qualitative data were divided into two primary categories: DMO staff members and tourism trade practitioners. In order to maintain anonymity and confidentiality, the identities of the respondents were not released. Instead, the information obtained from the participants during the interview was presented and labelled with participant numbers supplied by the researcher.

4.4. Destination promotional efforts undertaken by the DMO

The study examined the DMO (workers in the GTA), focusing on the questions posed to them and their corresponding replies. The data collected from these interactions was then analysed, leading to the identification and categorization of several themes. The collected material was transcribed and subsequently categorised into thematic groups. This study examines the many initiatives undertaken to promote Cape Coast as a tourist destination, evaluating their efficacy and exploring the collaborative efforts of the Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) and tourism industry stakeholders in this endeavour.

The primary objective of the initial research inquiry was to investigate the perspective of the (DMO) staff in the GTA regarding the diverse promotional endeavours employed to market Cape Coast as a tourist destination. Additionally, the study aimed to enhance the effectiveness of pertinent promotional initiatives in attracting and persuading tourists to visit the aforementioned destination. The results obtained from the interview have been displayed in Table 3, as shown below.

Table 3. Themes from In-Depth Interview

Issues	Themes/Findings
Promotional activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Festivals and event promotion • Internet/Website, Apps and social media
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ineffective collaboration • Low local participation in promotion • Inadequate promotional funds • Lack of logistics • Strong bureaucratic system (Centralization)

The research examined the promotional strategies implemented by the (DMO) to promote Cape Coast as a tourist destination. These platforms play a significant role in disseminating information to tourists, enticing them to visit Cape Coast as a tourist destination, and facilitating the utilisation of services within the region. Moreover, the analysis of the participants' replies yielded two distinct themes. The promotion of festivals and special occasions and utilisation of organisational websites, mobile applications and social media platforms.

4.4.1. Promotion of festivals and events

The first theme identified with regards to the promotional strategy employed by the (DMO) (GTA) to promote Cape Coast as a tourist destination has to do with the utilization on promotion of festivals and events. The use of major festivals or events that are promoted within the destination settles as one of the effective activities that the DMO relies on to provide information about the destination, in order to attract tourists and have a strong position in their minds as well. It is imperative for the DMO to develop and promote more of events and festivals. One of the replies as given by G1, was that;

What we normally do in promoting Cape Coast is probably through the festivals that take place within the destination and special activities that we [GTA] also organise, such as Emancipation Day, Chocolate Day, World Tourism Day, and the Centra Expo or Tourism Awards.

Affirming the view expressed, G2 indicated that;

"We participate in many activities that promote Cape Coast; there are many festive occasions that we collaborate with the Traditional Council to organise to promote the destination, such as Emancipation Day, Panafest, and Fetu Afahye, among others.

The response from the interview provided insights into the promotional initiatives undertaken by the DMO (GTA) specifically in Cape Coast. The promotion of Cape Coast as a tourism destination through the utilisation of festivals and events promotion such as Emancipation Day, Chocolate Day, World Tourism Day Central/National Tourism Awards, Panafest, and Fetu Afahye, among others play a crucial role in providing tourists with the necessary information to construct a well-informed perception, so potentially influencing their decision to visit Cape Coast as a tourist destination.

4.4.2. Websites, apps and social media platforms

The second theme derived from the research interview question pertains to the promotional strategies employed by



the DMO (GTA) to promote Cape Coast as a tourist destination, the utilisation of various digital platforms such as websites, Apps, and social media platforms were stated. The use of digital or social media activities provides the opportunity to easily make information accessible to tourists and facilitate the formation of positive perception or good destination image. It is necessary for the DMO to promote the destination through such platforms. Moreover, these activities seem effective for the destination. During the interview with DMO officials, GT4 provided an explanation;

We have official Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook profiles, as well as the "visitGhana App," which we utilise to promote Cape Coast.

In support of G4, G2 also said that;

The destination is also marketed on the GTA website and social media platforms. However, this is done by the marketing section at the Central Office in Accra.

G4 also added that;

The App, as well as the social media promotional tools, allow destination marketers invest to promote their activities and programmes. Furthermore, the App has photographs of key attractions and facilities, events in Cape Coast with their calendars, and makes it simple for tourists to acquire information on the destination.

This assertion validates that the DMO at the destination, has developed a website, a domestic social media platforms and campaign. These activities in facilitates the dissemination of information to potential visitors, so enticing them to consider Cape Coast as a desirable location for tourism. Consequently, DMOs have made advancements and allocated greater resources towards enhancing these platforms.

4.5. Challenges faced by the DMO in marketing cape coast as a tourist destination

This section presents a discussion on objective, which seeks to explore the potential problems faced by the Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO) in its promotional endeavours to promote the Cape Coast destination. The participants held the viewpoint that the Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO) had difficulties in carrying out promotional operations for Cape Coast as a tourism destination. The aforementioned issues provide obstacles to the seamless execution of promotional efforts, as they introduce a significant level of complexity and difficulty to the performance of associated responsibilities. Furthermore, many concerns or obstacles encountered were outside the purview of the Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO) and could only be mitigated to a certain extent. In relation to this matter, topics were derived from the perspectives of the participants on the difficulties encountered in the promotion of Cape Coast as a tourist destination. The factors contributing to ineffectiveness non collaboration was insufficient local engagement in promotional efforts, poor allocation of resources and logistics for marketing, and a centralised bureaucratic structure.

4.5.1. Ineffective collaboration

The initial theme identified in relation to research question four

pertains to the presence of inadequate coordination among stakeholders within the destination. Additionally, the presence of budgetary limitations poses a challenge in coordinating initiatives that facilitate the convergence of all relevant parties in order to establish an optimal strategy or platform for effectively promoting the destination. The viewpoints of the participants were recorded and then presented. According to G4, it was narrated that;

GTA faces a challenge when it comes to who bears the cost in destination team formation for the development of promotional programmes that make promotion tough for us.

G2 further added that;

Other governmental or commercial agencies do not aid in advertising the destinations since there is a lack of a holistic approach between tourism agencies and other governmental agencies, particularly those related to tourism.

The respondents' opinions suggest that the Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO) faces obstacles in effectively collaborating with other stakeholders in promotional initiatives for the Cape Coast destination. This obstacle hinders the seamless implementation of promotional initiatives. This finding aligns with the results drawn by Sakyi and Tengan (2021), which highlight the absence of collaborative efforts among various tourist stakeholders in Cape Coast, including local residents, companies, attractions, and governmental authorities, as a significant challenge faced by destination marketing organisations (DMOs). The subsequent issue that emerged in relation to research question four pertained to the observed lack of active involvement from the local community.

4.5.2. Low local participation

The second theme identified in relation to research question four pertains to the limited local interest in engaging with destination promotion. This lack of local involvement has a detrimental impact on the efforts made by the Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO) to enhance the overall appeal of the destination. Furthermore, due to the lack of enthusiasm among the local population, their actions have the potential to negatively impact the destination's image, resulting in a decline in its desirability. One of the participants, for example, stated that;

The inhabitants have little interest in tourism at the area, making tourism promotion difficult(G1).

Another participant further stated that;

Domestically, it is difficult to persuade locals to join in or support tourist activities because residents have little interest in travel and tourism (G3).

According to the statement made by participants of the Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO) in Cape Coast, it may be inferred that the local inhabitants exhibit minimal enthusiasm towards the efforts aimed at promoting Cape Coast as a tourist destination. The engagement of local stakeholders plays a crucial role in the promotion of a location. The lack of enthusiasm among local residents may be linked to their limited inclusion in the distribution of benefits derived from tourism activities occurring inside the destination. The subsequent topic for discourse pertaining to the research inquiry revolved about insufficiency in promotional resources.



4.5.3. Inadequate Promotional Resource and Logistics

The third issue that emerged from the investigation of research question four was to the insufficiency of resources and logistical support for the promotion of the destination. These resources encompassed human, financial, and material aspects. The absence of these resources and logistical support significantly impacts the promotional initiatives performed by the Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO), hence hindering their ability to effectively create and execute destination promotion activities aimed at informing and persuading tourists to visit the place. Despite the availability of some resources and logistical support, it appears that they are insufficient for the effective planning and implementation of promotional initiatives for the destination. The G2 demonstrated that;

"The challenge we face is a lack of resources [both financial and human], particularly funds to support our activities that help promote the destination, which are not released on time."

G1 gave a narrative that;

There are numerous challenges, including insufficient logistics and funds as a result of our unit's status as a sub-vented organization.

The comments expressed by the participants validate the existence of problems related to the promotion of Cape Coast as a tourist destination. These challenges mostly revolve on the availability of resources, including financial, human, and material resources. While it is apparent that some resources were provided to the Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO), they were deemed insufficient in supporting the promotional efforts carried out in Cape Coast.

4.5.4. Strong bureaucratic system (centralization)

The fourth theme identified in relation to study question four pertains to the presence of a highly structured bureaucratic system, which poses significant challenges in carrying out promotional efforts. The centralization of promotional platforms and finances for engaging in promotional efforts at the destination posed significant challenges and complexities in accessing and using them. In this context, it is necessary for the Destination Management Organisation (DMO) to undergo an extensive procedural framework in order to secure the allocation of resources for the promotion of the destination and its associated activities. It is important to note that all decisions pertaining to these activities are centralised and made at the head office located in Accra. G3 indicated that:

Our system's bureaucratic aspect, with a centralised method of releasing cash and coordinating programming or activities to promote Cape Coast.

G1 also affirmed to the statement by expressing that;

We as a public DMO in Cape Coast, we don't have the funds to promote Cape Coast. This is because all the funds for promotional activities of the destination are centralized, and major promotional activities is done at the head office in Accra, which is through Fairs and Exhibitions. So, we only participate when our unit is called upon.

The narratives derived from the interview highlight that a significant challenge faced by the Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO) in their promotional efforts is the presence of a robust bureaucratic structure characterised by

centralization. The aforementioned challenges hinder the effective execution of promotional initiatives, hence negatively affecting the establishment of promotional events or platforms aimed at promoting the destination of Cape Coast.

4.6. Destination promotional efforts undertaken by the tourism trade practitioners

An interview session was conducted with members of the Tourism trade practitioners (TTPs) to explore the destination promotional efforts carried out by TTPs in Cape Coast as a tourist destination. This process resulted in the identification of several themes. The data collected from participants was transcribed and categorised into distinct themes. This section discusses and presents responses on ascertaining the promotional activities carried out by Tourism Trade Practitioners (TTPs) in their efforts to promote the destination. The responses obtained from the participants belonging to the tourism trade practitioners were presented and interpreted below in Table 4.

Table 4. Themes from In-depth interview

Issues	Themes/Findings
Promotional activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word-of-mouth/Referrals • Social media platforms and Website • Travel guides and Itineraries • Festivals and events • Package tours
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low community participation • Inadequate promotional funds • Strong Bureaucratic System (Centralization) • Lack of knowledge and skills in digital marketing • Inconsistency or multiple promotional messages

During the conversation, it was revealed that TTPs partake in promotional endeavours. The involvement of the area Marketing Organisation (DMO) alone is insufficient for promotional efforts, as the DMO primarily offers information and other services that attract tourists to the area. The conducted interview session with several members of the tourist trade practitioners yielded significant findings, which were subsequently transcribed and categorised into thematic groups. These were:

4.6.1. Word-of-mouth/referrals

The initial theme identified in response to research interview question one pertains to the promotional strategies employed by TTPs in marketing Cape Coast as a tourist destination, specifically focusing on the utilisation of the power of word-of-mouth. The participants' perspectives were conveyed through various means, with a selection of these being documented and then presented. During an interview with DMO workers, T1 provided an explanation.

I believe in the power of word-of-mouth, so I provide good tour service and refer other attractions to tourists, which would encourage them to refer Cape Coast to other tourists.

T2 added that;



I promote the destination through referrals by providing quality tour packages, which means that people who have used my services would recommend them to other tourists [word-of-mouth].

It was further expressed by T5 that;

The promotion of Cape Coast is not our obligation as guides, but I personally do it through word of mouth, by telling the history of our ancestors extremely well, which motivates guests to notify others about the place.

According to the perspectives shared by the participants, word of mouth was identified as a promotional platform utilised to promote the destination Cape Coast. This strategy seems to effectively attract visitors, especially those who are visiting the location for the first time and may not be familiar with it. This statement supports the findings of Murphy *et al.*, (2007), which revealed that travelers often depend on information from friends, relatives, and other travelers when planning their trips. The majority of tourists exhibit a preference for visiting attractions for which they possess reliable and verifiable information. In the absence of a reliable source of information, tourists tend to seek guidance from others or depend on anecdotal accounts in order to determine whether or not to visit a particular area. Hogan *et al.*, (2004) posits that word of mouth is a more effective means of cultivating positive attitudes towards an attraction compared to advertising.

4.6.2. Social media and website

The second theme identified in relation to research question one pertained to the utilisation of social media platforms and organisational websites. This facilitates the accessibility of information for visitors, hence influencing their decision-making process on the choice to visit the destination of Cape Coast. The perception of the participants was collected and subsequently displayed. T2, for example, said that;

I have an interactive website. I also promote Cape Coast on my Facebook page.

T7 also narrated that;

We also promote our facilities on social media platforms, where we specify our location, which attracts tourists to the destination.

T6 commented to affirm that;

We have social media handles (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) and a website that we use to promote our facilities and Cape Coast in general.

The perspectives expressed by the participants validate the assertion that TTPs utilise social media platforms and organisational websites as means to promote the destination by engaging with and disseminating information to both current and prospective visitors. The subsequent topic for discourse pertains to the utilisation of trip guides and itineraries.

4.6.3. Travel guides and itineraries

The third issue that emerged in regard to research question one was centred upon the utilisation of travel guides and itineraries. The distribution of information to visitors is facilitated, therefore influencing their decision to visit the site of Cape Coast. The participants' impressions were documented and then presented. According to T2, it was reported that;

As a travel operator, I promote Cape Coast and other facilities

in my itineraries, and through travel guides (for example, Brat guide, Wanderlust, and Lonely Planet).

T8 added that;

As guides we develop itineraries for clients, which has the attraction and facilities in Cape Coast.

The aforementioned statement asserts the efficacy of travel guides and itineraries in the promotion of tourist destinations by providing comprehensive information on the destination, its attractions, and accessible amenities. Furthermore, it posits that these resources play a pivotal role in attracting travellers to the destination. The subsequent topic for discourse pertains to the promotion of festivals and occasions.

4.6.4. Promotion of festivals and events

The fourth theme that emerged from question one pertained to the promotion of occasions and festivities. The utilisation of festivals and events as a promotional platform serves to effectively draw tourists to areas, such as Cape Coast. The aforementioned approach may be characterized as a social dimension technique for promotion, with the potential to attract a substantial number of individuals to a particular location. The use of festivals and occasions as promotional platforms has shown to be fruitful for many destinations, provided that the execution is effective. The viewpoints of the participants were obtained and thereafter presented. One of the narrations provided by T1 was that;

The promoting of Fetu Afahye and the Year of Return has benefited Cape Coast a lot, by attracting domestic and international tourist to the destination.

T3 added that;

As tour guides, our activities that we engage in promoting the destination, is the use of the festive occasions: Panafest, Emancipation Day, which are well-known organized activities.

Affirming the opinions expressed by T1, T5 added that;

In my opinion there are no specific promotional activities that are undertaken to promote Cape Coast, but people get to know about Cape Coast as a result of programmes that are been organized within the destination. For instance, "The Year of Return". The initiation and advertisement of the programme went viral. So, people from various part of the world gets to know about Cape Coast and visit attractions like the Castle. There are also programmes like Panafest and Emancipation Day, which also draw people to the attraction.

These perspectives affirm that the marketing of festivals and events has been utilised as platforms to promote the destination of Cape Coast, resulting in a significant influx of tourists to the area. This phenomenon contributes to the growth of tourist arrivals to the location and enhances the utilisation of various existing amenities and services. The subsequent topic for discourse pertains to the utilisation of package tours.

4.6.5. Package tours

The fifth issue that emerges from the analysis of question one pertains to the packaging and advertising of tours or travel packages for visitors. The creation and promotion of tour packaging serve as a platform for promoting comprehensive services that are combined from many tourist service providers or stakeholders within a given area. The use of a single



promotional campaign allows for the dissemination of several pieces of information to visitors, effectively persuading them to engage with the location and its various tourism offerings. The replies of the participants were collected, and the following excerpts represent a selection of the remarks provided. T2 provided evidence that;

I sell package excursions on the destination to tourists.

T4 added that;

Mostly I think we develop package tours for tertiary and second cycle students, and walking tours.

Based on the commentary, it can be inferred that package tours were established and actively pushed as a means to entice travelers to visit Cape Coast for various tourism activities. Moreover, it is feasible to meet the expectations of tourists by offering high-quality tour services.

4.7. Challenges faced by tourism trade practitioners in promoting cape coast as a tourist destination

This section presents on the question intends to discover the difficulties encountered by practitioners in the tourist industry when engaging in promotional endeavours to market the Cape Coast destination. The study revealed that there were several problems affecting the efforts of the TTPs in advertising Cape Coast as a tourism destination. These challenges hindered their ability to effectively convince or attract tourists to their facilities or services. Furthermore, this impedes their ability to effectively carry out their operations, so impacting the quality of their service offerings. Additionally, the participants expressed the belief that the effectiveness of destination advertising would have been significantly enhanced in the absence of these constraints. The data supplied by the participants was transcribed, thereafter categorised into thematic groups, and ultimately led to the formulation of certain findings. The factors contributing to the limited involvement of the community, insufficient allocation of promotional resources, a centralised bureaucratic structure, insufficient expertise in digital marketing, and the presence of inconsistent or conflicting promotional messages were identified.

4.7.1. Low community participation

The initial theme to be derived within the context of question four from the TTPs interview guide. The tourism industry professionals have noted that the promotion of Cape Coast as a tourist destination has been hindered by limited engagement from the local community. The community displays minimal interest in supporting the promotion of Cape Coast due to their limited benefits from the generated tourism revenue. The measures undertaken by the local population are in direct opposition to the efforts and intentions of the TTPs. The participants expressed their viewpoints, of which a selection has been showcased. T2 indicated that;

The local community believes that the attractions and tourism services provided do not benefit them." As a result, they will not discuss the destination with others, and anything related to tourism upsets them. However, if this challenge does not persist, we would have a smooth promotion of the destination.

T1 also added by saying that;

The locals are of the opinion that the attractions are here

especially the castle, they don't benefit or get anything from it, so therefore, they will not talk about it to others, and the attraction irritates them.

The assertions put forth by the participants provide confirmation that those residing in the area are not actively engaged in the promotion of the site. The presence of a negative attitude among certain people towards tourists has a negative effect on the effective advertising of the destination, as it contributes to the formation of an unfavourable perception of Cape Coast as a tourist destination. The subsequent topic for consideration is to insufficiency of promotional funding.

4.7.2. Inadequate promotional funds

The second theme derived from question four pertained to the insufficiency of financial resources allocated for promotional activities. The promotional endeavours carried out by TTPs have been adversely impacted due to insufficient financial resources for the development and execution of their planned operations aimed at informing and persuading visitors to choose their services. Moreover, several tourism trade practitioners (TTPs) encounter challenges in securing sufficient financial resources from their headquarters to effectively market their facilities at the destination. Consequently, they face difficulties in promoting the destination and its offerings. The perspectives of some individuals, as obtained via the process of conducting interviews, were as follows: T5 opine through the narrative that;

Yes, there is a challenge, which has to do with funds (financial one). That is, promotion goes with money, the fact that you need to do that it comes with some kind of monetary factors, and this is what is limited or not there at all.

T3 indicated that;

The revenue mobilise here goes directly to Accra, so we don't get any funds to do any promotion.

The viewpoints articulated by the participants substantiate the assertion that there existed a deficiency in funding for promotional activities, hence impeding the efficacy of all endeavours aimed at promoting the destination. The subsequent topic of discussion pertains to the bureaucratic system.

4.7.3. Strong bureaucratic system (centralization)

The third issue derived from question four pertained to the insufficiency of financial resources allocated for promotional activities. The bureaucratic structure of operation inside the destination has had an impact on the promotional efforts carried out by Tourism Trade Practitioners (TTPs). The TTPs occasionally depend on the DMO for support in promoting the destination. However, the DMO has challenges in mobilising resources for these promotional activities, which are ultimately advantageous for the TTPs. These difficulties arise due to the lengthy processes required in resource mobilisation. This phenomenon has a tendency to impact TTPs that possess constrained promotional capabilities and are burdened with many tax obligations. The aforementioned statements represent the replies provided by the participants. T5 has this to say;

"The revenue generated here from us by GTA, which are from our taxes are directed directly to Accra, so they don't have much money to promote themselves." They also need to write to Accra,



which, as you know, is the bureaucratic aspect of our system when it comes to getting money from the government.

T4 added that;

Even for you to mount a bill board or posters to advertise, you have to go and see the municipal assembly, GTA, and other people for them to give you approval, by the time you are done you have spent a lot of money and what you want to do will be close (like trips).

Based on the information provided by the tour guide, the promotion activities in Cape Coast faced difficulties due to the bureaucratic nature of the Destination Management Organization's (DMO) system and inadequate funding allocated to the DMO for promoting the destination and its tourism trade practitioners' facilities. Some of the funds could have been utilised for conducting training programmes or promoting the facilities and the destination itself.

4.7.4. Lack of knowledge and skills in digital marketing

The fourth themes that emerged from question four was the deficiency of knowledge and abilities pertaining to digital marketing. The promotional efforts carried out by Tourism Trade Practitioners (TTPs) have been hindered due to their incapacity to effectively market their amenities and the location. Utilising digital platforms for promotional purposes presents itself as a challenging endeavour that requires a diverse set of skills and competence. In addition, the utilisation of inadequate digital marketing technologies may lead to ineffective destination advertising. Digital platforms have emerged as contemporary means of promoting tourism, since tourists have redirected their attention towards a more accessible method of accessing information. Nevertheless, the TTPs exhibit a deficiency of understanding and technological expertise pertaining to effectively using digital platforms for the purpose of promoting their facilities and the destination. These were some of the responses given by participants. T11 indicated that;

It is difficult to promote the destination through some various promotional means or platforms; like twitter, Facebook, which they will ask you to pay or do certain things to attract people.

T3 added that;

I will also say that, it is very difficult for me to use social media well like the other guys, I am old. So, I find it difficult posting things to attract tourists and do tours for them.

The statements made by several tourism trade practitioners clarify that, a significant obstacle they have in promoting Cape Coast is their limited access to various promotional venues, including digital tools for destination marketing. The aforementioned observation aligns with the conclusions drawn by Sakyi and Tengan (2021), whereby they identified a scarcity of knowledge and competencies in the field of digital marketing within small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operating in the tourist sector in Cape Coast.

4.7.5. Inconsistency or multiple promotional messages

The fifth theme derived from the analysis of question four pertained to the presence of inconsistency or the existence of various promotional messages. Furthermore, the existence of several platforms providing varying information on certain attractions or facilities at a given destination contributes to

the perplexing positioning of such sites in the eyes of tourists. The participants provided their perspectives on this matter, of which a selection is presented. T4 gave his response by saying:

There are inconsistencies in the messages that are being disseminated to promote Cape Coast as a tourist destination, which affects our businesses.

T6 added that:

"People post a lot of information on social media platforms that are inconsistent and makes it difficult for tourists to decide whether or not to visit Cape Coast, making it difficult for us in our promotion.

The replies provided by the participants serve to validate the existence of discrepancies within the promotional messages disseminated or provided to visitors, which aim to shape their view and ultimately influence their decision to travel to a certain destination. Regrettably, several tourism trade associations may fail to effectively distribute pertinent information to travellers. In instances of this nature, tourists may perceive the place as lacking sufficient attraction to warrant a visit.

The interviews provide evident indications of the existence of challenges pertaining to the promotional operations carried out by tourist trade practitioners in Cape Coast. Several challenges are associated with restricted community engagement in promotional endeavours, inadequate financial resources for promotion, a robust bureaucratic structure characterised by centralization, inconsistency or the presence of various promotional messages, and a dearth of proficiency and expertise in the field of digital marketing. The aforementioned problems provide obstacles to the seamless execution of promotional endeavours aimed at cultivating a robust tourist perception, hence influencing decision-making processes and enticing visitors to choose Cape Coast as their preferred tourist destination.

5. CONCLUSIONS

While DMOs and TTPs implement numerous promotional strategies, such as digital platforms and festival promotion, the investigation indicates that substantial obstacles continue to exist. Examples of these factors are inadequate funding, low local engagement, and centralised decision-making processes, which impede the efficacy of marketing. The visibility and appeal of Cape Coast as a tourist destination can be improved by addressing these challenges through strategic resource allocation, capacity development, and collaborative efforts.

Furthermore, it was suggested that in order to address the obstacles encountered by Cape Coast as a tourist destination, a variety of strategic interventions should be implemented to improve the effectiveness of promotional efforts. To begin, it is imperative to cultivate partnerships among local communities, Tourism Trade Practitioners (TTPs), and Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs). These collaborations have the potential to consolidate resources, share expertise, and develop unified campaigns that emphasise Cape Coast's distinctive allure while simultaneously fostering inclusivity and shared benefits among stakeholders.

Additionally, it is imperative to involve local residents in benefit-sharing initiatives and awareness programs. A sense of ownership and pride in the destination can be fostered by



engaging the community in tourism promotion, which in turn results in more authentic representations and more robust local support.

Furthermore, digital marketing should be prioritised in order to effectively target diverse markets and broaden one's reach. Training DMOs and TTPs in the utilisation of digital platforms, including social media and websites, can modernise promotional initiatives, enabling Cape Coast to engage global audiences and employ data-driven strategies to attract visitors. To guarantee that regional DMOs have the autonomy necessary to address local requirements, it is equally crucial to decentralise decision-making. Empower DMO and TTPs by allocating resources to implement promotional activities independently promotes innovation, timeliness, and adaptability in marketing endeavours.

Moreover, the uniformity of messaging across all promotional channels guarantees a brand image that is both compelling and consistent. Transparent and consistent communication fosters trust among travelers and ensures that their expectations are in accordance with the destination's actual offerings, thereby increasing satisfaction and the likelihood of repeat visits. By integrating these strategies into Cape Coast's destination marketing strategy, the region can experience a substantial increase in visitor arrivals, sustainable economic development, and competitiveness.

It is suggested that several research and strategic directions be undertaken to enhance the efficacy of tourism promotion in Cape Coast. It is imperative to conduct quantitative studies in order to quantify the precise influence of promotional initiatives on tourist arrivals. This approach is data-driven, which will allow stakeholders to identify the most effective strategies and optimise resource allocation.

The sustained effectiveness of enhanced marketing strategies necessitates longitudinal studies that evaluate their long-term effects. This type of research will offer valuable insights into the long-term impact of promotional activities on economic outcomes and tourist behaviour, thereby influencing future decision-making.

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