

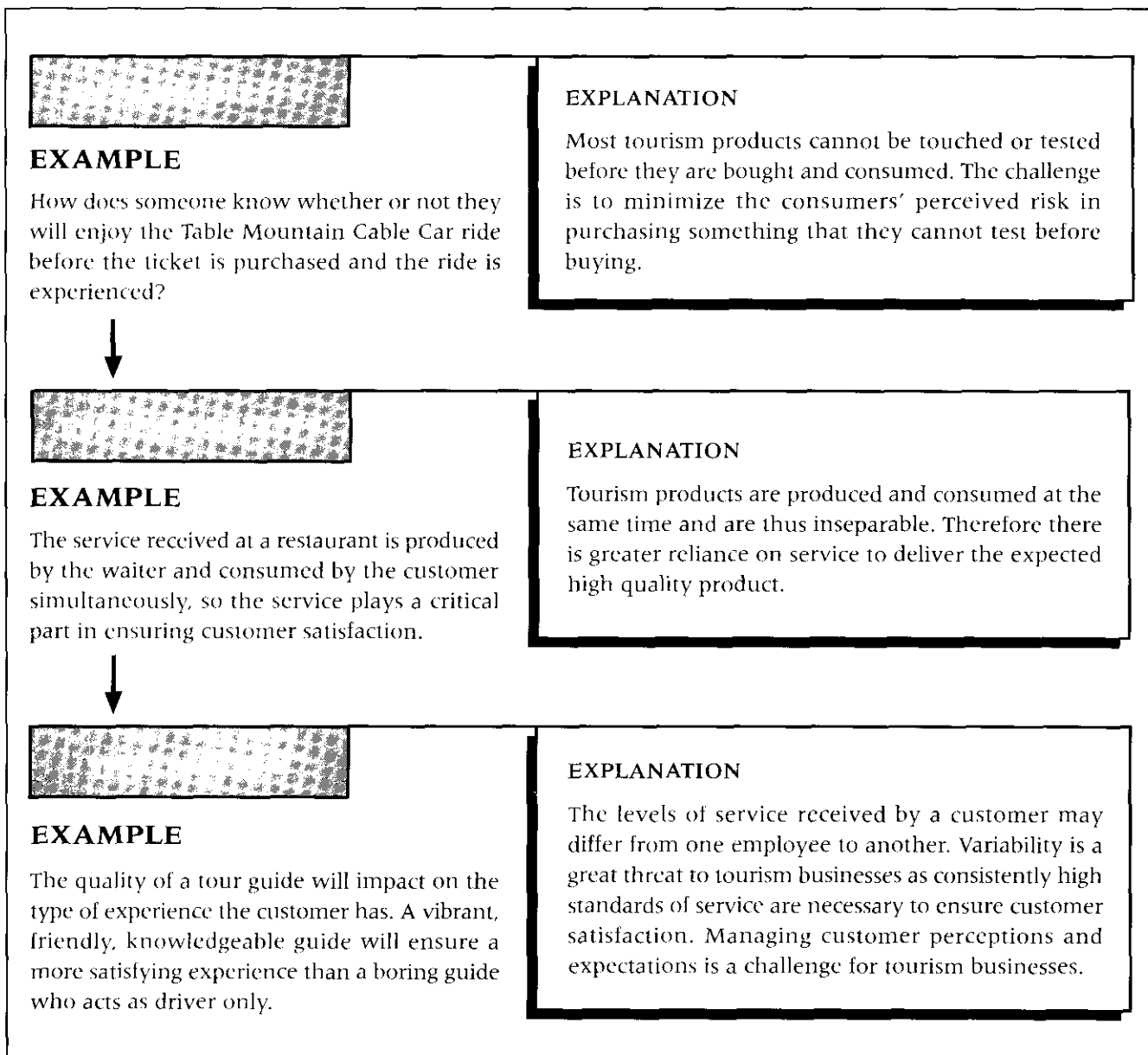
# Section 1:

## Understanding Tourism Marketing

### 1.1 The Distinguishing Characteristics of Tourism Products

Marketing tourism “products” is **different from most other products** because **what is being sold** is the **consumption of an experience rather than a tangible product**. The “product” is primarily **service-based**. This means that the customer often walks away from the tourism offering with only a **memory or experience**. An **example** of this would be a tourist’s **overnight experience at a bed and breakfast**. The bed and breakfast establishment will offer **a meal, a wake up call**, or possibly **advice on local tourist attractions** in the area, all of which are **forms of services**. So when we talk about “**tourism product**” it means the **combination of products and particularly services, which make up the total experience**. The marketing of tourism products poses some challenges to the tourism business. **The main characteristics defining tourism products are shown in Figure 1.**

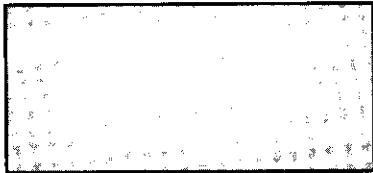
FIGURE 1: DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS OF TOURISM PRODUCTS





### EXAMPLE

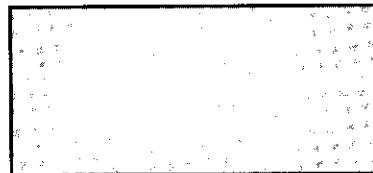
The perishable nature of a tourism product can be illustrated by the following explanation.



### EXAMPLE

Accommodation is an important element of a visit, but people visiting the Western Cape will come to experience the heritage attractions or the wineries, as well as a range of other attractions.

Discovering ways to market your offering with these attractions, will make the experience more attractive for the visitor.



### EXAMPLE

At any one time, every person has more than one place they would like to visit, for a range of reasons. A range of factors will determine what is at the top of the list and therefore which experience will be the next to be undertaken. At any one time, a person will have a list of:

- "Holidays": trips away from home for one month or more
- "Breaks": between 1-4 weeks to a destination away from home
- "Short Breaks": quick getaways close to home, which aim to 'recharge the batteries'

### EXPLANATION

A scheduled flight on an aeroplane will leave whether the plane is half empty or filled to capacity. Once the plane takes off the empty seats can be seen as unrealized profit.

### EXPLANATION

The product offering is one of many in the destination experience. Many different tourism products may complement one another in the destination context. Understanding the "drivers" of visitation is important. In other words, what are the attractions or reasons that motivate people to visit your area?

### EXPLANATION

Factors which influence people's decisions include:

- Disposable Income
- Time Available
- Children/No Children
- Travelling Companions
- Special Interests
- Perceptions of a Destination or Experience

A single woman who is an executive with a high pressure job is on the lookout for special deals on weekends away, as she needs regular short breaks to 'recharge her batteries'. She has a special interest in art, so direct-mailing her your specially priced accommodation packages, which include entrance to local art galleries, will capture her attention and may prompt her to book while the special price is available.

It is a challenge for tourism marketers to hit the right "triggers" (or motivators) which will convince the customer that the product will meet their needs now. As a tourism operator, it is impossible to control some of these determinants, but if you have an understanding of your customer this knowledge can be used to influence the customer.



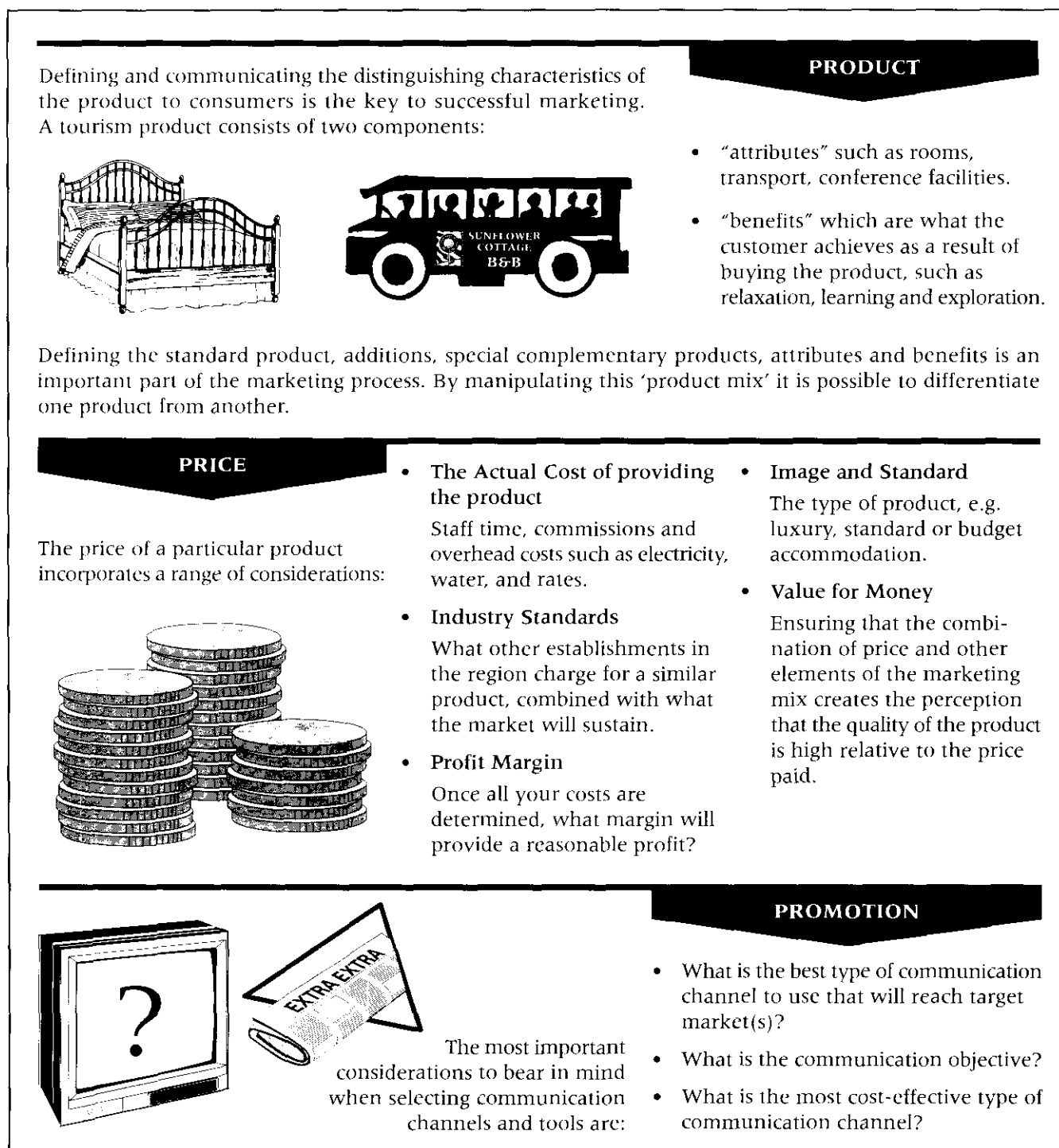
## 1.2 The Tourism Product Marketing Mix

Many small businesses **mistakenly understand marketing to be just promotion and advertising**. In fact, marketing is a **much broader concept** that can be applied to all parts of a tourism business. The marketing concept is **about satisfying needs of customers** by creating and selling a product or service that meets these needs. A **customer-driven approach is crucial** to an effective marketing effort. Knowing what the customer wants and being able to provide it is what marketing is about.

**Marketing tangible products** has traditionally been exercised in **four broad areas, the marketing mix**. The marketing mix is also commonly known as the **“Four Ps” (Product, Price, Promotion and Place)**. Because tourism products consist primarily of services in addition to the traditional, the tourism product marketing mix requires three additional areas that are of specific importance to tourism marketing.

The seven “Ps” of tourism marketing are described in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2: TOURISM PRODUCT MARKETING MIX



## PLACE

- **Direct distribution** means that the company takes full control of taking the tourism product to the market. For example, if you were trying to attract business for an airport transfer shuttle company, you may need to utilise personal selling. This would involve meeting potential clients at their offices.

**Distribution** is concerned with **how to get the product to the market**. Two main categories of distribution methods are:

- In **indirect distribution**, the company exercises less control over the process of reaching your market. For example, a small attraction may be able to utilise a local tourism authority or tourism bureau. They may be able to take bookings for you or put potential customers in contact with you directly. A charge may be levied for such a service.



## PROCESSES

There are many different types of processes involved in running a tourism business, for example, administration, training, planning and strategising, recruitment, distribution, purchasing and service delivery. It is important to ensure that these processes are planned and carried out properly so that operations run smoothly and problems are rectified quickly.

For example, a hotel needs efficient front and back office communications to ensure high quality service and an experience without inconvenience for the customer.

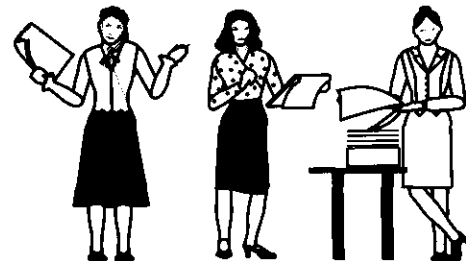
A great deal of attention needs to be paid to processes in a service-oriented business. Dealing with staff turnover, sick leave, suppliers and distribution channels all have an impact on how the service is delivered. Implementing clear procedures will ensure that the best possible service is delivered at all times.

## PEOPLE

In tourism businesses, service forms a large part of the product offering. Service invariably involves front line people and it is here that a tourism offering can really do well or fail miserably. It is extremely important to ensure that all staff dealing with customers carry out excellent service delivery at all times. Due to the strength of word-of-mouth promotion in the tourism industry, service excellence is paramount.

Staff professionalism can be boosted and grown through solid training and employee reward systems. Discussion sessions with staff that deal with customers on a daily basis can be useful to bring about improvements to the service/product.

Internal marketing is the act of marketing one's business through one's staff and is a common practice amongst service-oriented companies. It is crucial to ensure that staff 'buy into' the promise of customer service excellence. The staff must be familiar with the goals and objectives of the business so that their duties are carried out in the correct manner.



## PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The physical evidence of a tourism product refers to a range of more 'tangible' attributes of the operations.

'Tangibilising' the product is a good way of giving positive and attractive hints or cues to potential customers with regard to the quality of the product. For example, if you run a shuttle service then it is important to ensure that your vehicles are spotlessly clean at all times. Elements such as quality and attractiveness of décor, effective layout of establishment, tidiness of surroundings and quality of promotional material are all important.

