

STRATEGIC MARKETING PLAN FOR HILL VIEW GUEST CENTRE,
ABOKOBI



ASHESI UNIVERSITY

**STRATEGIC MARKETING PLAN FOR HILL VIEW GUEST CENTRE,
ABOKOBI**

Applied Project

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Administration, Ashesi University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the
Award of Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration.

BSc. Business Administration

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I hereby declare that this Applied Project Report is the result of my own work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hill View Guest Centre, formally known as International Student Guest Centre, is a 3-star hotel located in Abokobi, Ghana. The expected outcome of increasing patronage as a result of the change in name remains unaccomplished.

To help Hill View Guest Centre address this problem, a qualitative needs assessment was conducted to identify the needs of the hotel which happens to be low patronage; even after the change in their name. The data collection methods used were semi-structured interviews, internet research, observation, and focus group interviews. The study confirmed the challenge of attracting and retaining customers and the resulting decline in the purchase of almost all of the hotel's services including rooms, and its effects on Hill View's revenue. The study revealed the absence of a targeted and appropriate strategic customer acquisition plan to match the new image of the hotel after the name change. Secondary research conducted using scholarly articles indicated that a strategic marketing plan is one key approach to controlling and retaining 75% of an organization's target market (Nwabuibe, 2014). Since Hill View Guest Centre aims to expand its customer base and improve brand awareness for its new image, a corresponding strategic marketing plan is needed.

The objective of the project was to use the outcomes of the needs assessment conducted on Hill View Guest Centre to develop a strategic marketing plan based on the SOSTAC planning model. The components of the proposed model are Situation Analysis, Objective, Strategy, Tactics, Action, and Control. This model was selected because of its ability to thoroughly address customer acquisition challenges as a broad strategy within marketing and branding. Thus, the strategic marketing plan will serve as a guide to enable the hotel to increase brand awareness, customer base and improve sales.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the internal and external environments in which Hill View Guest Centre operates. Externally, using a PESTLE framework, this chapter provides insights into the state of the hospitality industry in Ghana. Internally, it discusses an overview of the company's profile, outlines the company's history, mission, vision, and values. A SWOT analysis is then conducted to provide and gain insights into the unique position of the hotel with respect to its strengths, weaknesses and opportunities, weaknesses and threats.

1.1 Overview of The External Environment: PESTLE Analysis

The External environment focuses on the general environment in which Hill View Guest Centre operates and how the external environment affects the overall performance of the hotel in the country. In effectively analyzing the external environment, the PESTLE (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental) analysis framework would be utilized. PESTEL analysis is a framework used to analyze and monitor the macro-environmental (external marketing environment) factors that have an impact on an organization. The result is to identify threats and weaknesses which are used in a subsequent SWOT analysis that would be performed (ProfessionalAcademy, 2017).

1.1.1 Political Factors

Ghana is considered as one of the most stable countries in West Africa since its democratic transition in 1992 (BBC, 2018). The country has made significant efforts to consolidate its democracy, and there have been improvements in its democratic

system over the years (Fobih, 2008). The key democratic institutions in the country are the Judiciary, Parliament and the Commission of Human Rights and Justice (CHRAJ) continue to develop and strategically implement policies that foster a stable political climate in the country (Arthur, 2010). The stable political climate makes it conducive and attractive for tourists and locals; this promotes the progress and development of the hospitality industry.

1.1.2 Economic Factors

Per the Ghana Statistical Service, the Ghanaian economy is estimated to have expanded by 8.7% in 2017 from 3.6% in 2016 (Worldbank, 2018). This is primarily due to the growth in the oil and mining sectors. In 2017, the production of oil rose sharply because of the Offshore Turret Remediation Project. Also, gold output and cocoa production remained high.

Despite these pros, there have been some concerns about the quality of economic growth particularly in terms of inequality, employment and overall improvements in the livelihoods of Ghanaians (Alagided, Boateng, & Amponsah, 2013). Though the hospitality industry creates employment, business and development opportunities which contribute to the local economy, the industry is challenged with high operational costs. In the hospitality industry, utility bills are reported to cover approximately 40% of the operational cost (Ghana News Online, 2017). Companies in the hospitality industry are forced to increase prices due to the continuous increase in utility bills.

Additionally, the country is faced with the depreciation of the cedi which has raised numerous concerns. The empirical examination of the cedi depreciation

indicates an overall increase in prices and inflation. Thus, in a bid to improve the currency, the government ought to create strategies to make the economy competitive.

1.1.3 Social Factors

The social environment refers to immediate physical surroundings, social relationships, and cultural milieus within which defined groups of people function and interact. It is composed of social and economic processes, power relations, government, race relations, occupational structure, amongst others (Barnett & Casper, 2001). However, social environments are dynamic and change over time. In Ghana, the social environment affects the physical environment through the beliefs systems, quality of existing laws, taboos, attitudes, local administrators, amongst others. For instance, some Ghanaian societies hold the belief that water bodies, forests and other natural resources are sacred. As such regulations(taboos) were instilled to ensure that individuals do not misuse resources at their own will.

1.1.4 Technological Factors

In Sub-Saharan Africa, Ghana was the first to launch a mobile cellular network in 1992. The country was also one of the first countries in Africa to be connected to the internet and to introduce ADSL broadband services (Ghana Telecom, 2013).

Technology has tremendous potential for rural development in Ghana in the areas of agriculture, healthcare, micro and small enterprises (MSEs) and education. The hospitality industry continues to incorporate various digital platforms for conducting business such as online travel agencies, booking websites, social media, amongst others. Information Communication Technology (ICT) has also improved in the rural areas of Ghana through the provision of ICT distance learning courses, automation of rural banks, provision of IT community centers, amongst others. However, the issue

of unavailability of electricity poses a significant challenge to the utilization of Information Technology (IT) tools in rural communities of Ghana.

1.1.5 Environmental Factors

One of the numerous resources Ghana has is its natural forests which give it several resources. The country benefited from unique climatic conditions until the 20th century when the rate of exploitation increased as a result of population increase and the need for the development of infrastructure (Quacou, 2017).

In the hospitality industry, the main environmental impacts are in the form of waste disposal, CO₂ emissions, food waste, wastewater, smoke, waste energy, amongst others. Some companies in the hospitality industry are employing sustainability in the form of waste reduction measures, recycling, energy efficient technologies, amongst others. The implementation of these initiatives enables them to conserve the environment and appeals to individuals who are concerned about environmental sustainability. It also positions these companies as environmentally conscious or eco- friendly.

1.1.6 Legal Factors

In Ghana, there are various laws which apply to the operation of businesses. Some of these laws conform to the set international standards and underlying frameworks such as copyrights, trademarks, patents, and other related regulations. Also, there is the sanctity of contracts which ensures respect for commercial rights and obligations. The Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) has also made a conscious effort to make sure that operators in the hospitality industry meet set standards as the nation aggressively pushes towards raising more revenue from tourism (Ghana News Agency, 2017).

Through these regulations, companies in the hospitality industry are treated fairly. Also, the laws guard their operations and ensure that companies do not violate the rights of employees or avoid payment of taxes.

Companies in the hospitality industry are also charged with taxes such as VAT (Value Added Tax), corporate income tax, tourism levy, excise duty, license fees, tariffs, among others. The combination of these fees makes it expensive for companies to operate and affects the prices of services.

1.2 Insights from The Overview of The External Environment

Companies in the hospitality industry can thrive in countries free from turmoil. Ghana's stable political climate has made it an attractive environment for numerous businesses such as hotels and resorts to thrive. The country's stable political environment has made it appealing to tourists and leisure groups to visit.

The hospitality industry has provided avenues for employment, business opportunities, and development which have boosted the local economy. However, Ghana's currency fluctuations affect both consumer and business purchases in the hospitality industry. The rapid fluctuations of the Ghana cedi also affect the pricing in the hospitality industry. However, companies in the industry tend to price in USD (United States dollars) to hedge against these fluctuations.

Advancements in technology have given many businesses the opportunity to utilize digital platforms, software programs, and technological devices in their activities to improve operational performance and attract a larger customer base. Hotels are using information technology to fuel the growth of their organization through online check-ins, mobile bookings, amongst others. Thus, Hill View Guest Centre could bridge the gap between several people across the world by inculcating

some digital platforms to spur the hotel's growth. However, a major challenge the hotel is likely to encounter is the unstable power supply of electricity in the country. Thus, the hotel will incur an external cost in running generators or other forms of power supply to ensure a consistent flow of power.

The existence of policies and regulations in the hospitality industry ensures that businesses adhere to all applicable laws of the state in its operations. The existence of these laws ensures that companies in the hospitality industry do not violate the rights of employees or avoid payment of taxes. However, the cost incurred in the form of taxes impacts the industry. Companies in the hospitality industry are charged with taxes such as VAT (Value Added Tax), tourism levy, corporate income tax, excise duty, amongst others. This makes it expensive for companies in the hospitality industry to operate and impacts prices offered to customers.

1.3 Hospitality Industry Overview

Per UNESCO (2007), the tourism industry is one of the fastest growing sectors and a significant source of foreign exchange revenue for many countries globally.

Hospitality is a major aspect of the tourism industry. The hospitality industry is a combination of accommodation, food, and beverage grouping; which collectively makes up a large segment of the tourism industry (Westcott, 2012). Similarly, the role and benefits of tourism are not different for Ghana. According to the Ghana Tourist Board (2010), the sector is the third- highest foreign exchange earner for Ghana. The range of services offered makes it labour intensive which provides an avenue for employment. However, the sector is also expensive to operate. Companies in the industry incur high costs in the form of taxes, tariffs, license fees, amongst others.

However, this contributes to the nation's revenue, development, GDP and employment.

1.4 Porters Five Forces of Competition Framework

The Porter's five forces were established by Michael Porter of Harvard Business School in 1979. This framework is widely used in the analysis of competition within industries. The framework views competition from a horizontal and vertical perspective (Grant, 2016). The horizontal perspective involves competition from new entrants, competition from substitutes and competition from established rivals. The vertical perspective involves the bargaining power of suppliers and the bargaining power of buyers. The framework views the profitability of an industry as determined by these five forces of competition (Grant, 2016).

1.5.1 Competition from Substitutes

Per the Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA), there are approximately 2,800 registered hotels in Ghana. Out of these, 3-star and 4-star hotels hold the highest capacity with approximately 72% occupancy and 5-star hotels with approximately 68% occupancy (Ghana Investment Promotion Centre, 2018). However, the influx of substitutes in the form of guest houses, apartments, Airbnb's, hostels, hotels (budget, star rated, resort) and other housing units pose a threat to Hill View Guest Centre. The existence of these close substitutes implies that customers may switch to other substitutes in response to an increase in the price of Hill View's products and services. This is because demand is elastic with respect to price. Thus, the threat of substitutes is high for Hill View Guest Centre.

1.5.2 Threat of Entry

Tourism accommodation establishment, as Ghana Statistical Service terms it, is a private tourist and collective accommodation establishment. These include hotels (star rated, beach and budget), hostels, guesthouses and other facilities that provide limited accommodation overnight (Ghana Statistical Service, 2017). Between 2005 to 2014 there was an upward trend in the accommodation establishment with an increase in the number of hotels every year in Ghana. Accommodation establishments grew by 91.1% at an annual growth rate of 7.2%, the number of bedrooms and bed-places grew by 120.4% at an annual average growth rate of 8.8% and 7.1% respectively (Ghana Statistical Service, 2017). The occupancy rate for two, three, four and five-star hotels declined over the period which indicated an oversupply of accommodation in the market. The companies in the hospitality industry incur costs such as taxes, license fees, tariffs, amongst others making it capital intensive. Also, the high operational costs involved in running a hotel make it unattractive to enter the industry. Despite the high operational costs, there is continuous growth in the hotels; thus the threat of entry into the industry is moderate.

1.5.3 Rivalry Between Established Competitors

The hotel industry in Ghana is heavily populated with local and foreign companies. The increase in hotels in the country has given customers a wide variety of options to choose from and has created a very competitive industry. Budget hotels have risen over the years and accounted for approximately 70% of the market in 2014. Star-rated hotels experienced a modest rise, but the occupancy rate declined over the years (Ghana Statistical Service, 2017). This may imply that the demand for high-end accommodation in the country is declining. Between 2005 to 2014, 3-star hotels increased from 28 to 36 hotels (Ghana Statistical Service, 2017). Since Hill View

Guest Centre is a 3-star hotel, it is at risk by the rise of 3-star hotels in Ghana. Thus, the rivalry between established competitors is high.

1.5.4 Bargaining Power of Suppliers

Kotler et al. (1998) indicate that in the hospitality industry, there is a great demand for enhanced technology in terms of booking reservations and supply of global information. However, the supplier that exercises power over other companies in the hotel industry is human capital: skilled personnel. The hotel industry is mainly service-oriented making it highly labour intensive. The service-based nature of the hospitality industry plays a critical role in the selling of hotel services to customers. Thus, suppliers of inputs to the hotel do not contribute directly as much as skilled human resources. Thus, the bargaining power of suppliers in the hospitality industry is moderate.

1.5.5 Bargaining Power of Buyers

The hospitality industry is saturated with many companies both locally and internationally owned. This creates a wide variety for customers to choose from. Technology has also made it easy for customers to be informed about the services hotels offer and price range. Through this, they can choose what offer is affordable, desirable or suitable to them. Thus, the bargaining power of buyers is high in the hospitality industry of Ghana. Therefore, Hill View Guest Center needs to develop effective strategies that can attract a large share of the market.

1.5.6 Insights on Hill View's Competitive Profile Based on The Porters Competition

Framework

The existence of close substitutes in the hospitality industry implies that customers may switch to other substitutes in response to an increase in the price of Hill View's products and services. This is because the threat of substitutes is high in the hospitality industry of Ghana. Hill View Guest Centre is a 3-star hotel. Some rivals of Hill View Guest Centre include Peduase Valley Resort, Hillburi Hotel, and Landsdown Resort. The existence of numerous established hotels makes competition intense. Thus, the rivalry between established competitors is high. Also, the hotel industry is mainly service-oriented making it highly labour intensive. Thus, the service-based nature of the hospitality industry plays a critical role in the selling of hotels services to customers. Hence there is the need for Hill View Guest Centre to inculcate strategic training programs that will stimulate employee interest and dedication in running the affairs of the hotel.

1.6 Company Profile - Hill View Guest Centre, Abokobi

Hill View Guest Centre, formally known as the International Students Guest Centre (ISGC), was established in December 2015 by the President of Guinea; His Excellency Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo. The facility served as a multipurpose centre that provides accommodation to local and international students in Ghana. The student centre was named in honour of the late Jose Maria Nsue Ndje, an exceptional student from Equatorial Guinea who died while studying in Ghana. On 25th July 2018, the company converted its business model from a student's guest centre to a hotel. This decision to transition to a hotel was made as a result of the underperformance of the student centre and a change in management.

The hotel is located in Abokobi, in the Greater Accra Region in Ghana and is approximately a forty-minute drive from the Kotoka International Airport. It is a 3-

star hotel with comfortable rooms comprising of 100 standard rooms, 26 executive rooms, and two chalets. The facilities in the hotel include a gymnasium, library, salon, laundry, sports complex, swimming pool, restaurant, and a multipurpose auditorium. The hotel currently serves as a multipurpose centre that provides accommodation to local and international students, tourists, business professionals, leisure groups and families. It also has enough facilities that can cater to Meetings, interviews, Conferences, and Events (MICE).

1.6.1 Mission

To provide an efficient and holistic experience in the hospitality industry.

1.6.2 Vision

To become the standard for hospitality in the African sub-region.

1.7 Rationale for Selecting Hillview Guest Centre

The selection of Hill View Guest Centre was based on the fact that since its transition to a hotel the company has not made a conscious effort to improve its marketing strategically. This is evident on all their social media platforms and website.

Secondly, the company has struggled with the attraction and retention of customers since its establishment. Thirdly, being a customer who has patronized the hotel's services for two years, I see potential in the hotel's resources and ability to attract a larger customer base.

The researcher developed an interest in Marketing, Branding and Competitive strategy over the years. Extensive research in marketing firms and the global marketing industry stimulated the researcher's interest. Thus, in a bid to solidify knowledge gathered over the years, the researcher deemed it fit to undertake this

project to explain the role of marketing particularly in a service-oriented environment: the hospitality industry.

1.8 Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Analysis

A SWOT analysis is an examination of an organization’s internal strengths and weaknesses, its opportunities for growth and improvement, and the threats the external environment presents to its survival (Harrison, 2010). In performing a SWOT analysis for Hillview Guest Centre, primary and secondary data were collected. This helped to analyze the internal and external environment of the company.

Swot Analysis of Hillview Guest Centre, Abokobi

<p>STRENGTH</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Numerous recreational facilities 2. Reliable Wi-Fi services 3. 24hr Security and large Parking lot 4. Serene atmosphere 5. Friendly Employees 6. Conference packages 7. Beautiful Architecture 	<p>WEAKNESS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Poor road network leading to the hotel 2. Weak brand awareness 3. Weak online presence: Inconsistent 4. Insufficient employees
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expansion of the target market 2. Improved marketing opportunities 3. High unemployment 	<p>THREATS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pressure from local competitors 2. The industry is highly dependent on the economic conditions 3. Increasing costs of operations indirectly affecting hotel rates

1.8.1 Strength

- Hill View Guest Centre has numerous facilities ranging from laundry, salon, library, swimming pool, restaurant, gymnasium and auditorium. The variety of the company's facilities positions it well above its numerous competitors particularly in terms of variety, quality, and maintenance of these facilities.
- The Hotel offers quality and reliable 24-hour internet access. This internet is accessible to guests and is available in every part of the hotel. The reliability of the hotel's internet service makes it useful to students, business personnel and individuals attending seminars or conferences.
- The Hotel is located in Abokobi, a suburb of Accra. Customers get great views of the mountains and the picturesque landscape. The proximity to the Aburi mountains provides a serene and cozy climate for relaxation.
- Hill View Guest Centre has 24-hour security. The hotel has prioritized the security of guests by providing well-abled security guards and security cameras. Also, the hotel has a large parking space that can accommodate approximately 60 cars.
- The Hotel has conference packages that can accommodate approximately 300 guests in the auditorium and 600 people on the compound. The availability of a large compound makes it attractive for Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Events (MICE).
- Employees of the hotel are amicable and always available to assist guests. The high level of professionalism and customer service is applaudable.

1.8.2 Weakness

- Hillview's main weakness is the poor road network leading to the hotel. The road leading from Oyarifa – Teiman highway to the hotel is untarred. It is very dusty and filled with numerous potholes. This makes it inconvenient for customers who are very conscious about the well-being of their cars. The inaccessibility to a transport system when leaving the premises makes it unattractive to customers who do not have vehicles.
- In terms of food service, the patronage of the restaurant during the weekdays is very poor. The restaurant is mostly empty. During the weekdays' time taken for a customer to get some meals are approximately thirty minutes.
- Low brand reputation. Hill View Guest Centre is fairly new and has not been able to capture a wide segment of the market. Also, some individuals still identify the facility as a student guest centre. Although there have been efforts to advertise the change in name, customers may still not be aware of the new offerings of the hotel.
- The hotel's online presence is not very active; there is not sufficient information about the hotel's products and services. Since the transition to a hotel, the company's booking sites have not upgraded its information adequately.
- In terms of employees, the number of employees handling recreational facilities is inadequate. Only one employee is handling the swimming area which involves arranging meal orders, swim lessons, lifeguard and general safety around the area. Also, one employee is responsible for the gym, tennis court and basketball court.

1.8.3 Opportunities

- Expansion of the guest centre's target market. The guest centre has numerous facilities; however, it creates the impression of a youthful spot. It could expand its target market by marketing to the older generation to utilize its swimming pools, gymnasium, chalet, amongst others.
- The availability of digital platforms provides the opportunity to attract and reach a larger market. To maximize revenue and increase the customer base, there is a need for the hotel to implement innovative marketing and sales strategies. Particularly because of its transition from a guest centre to a hotel. This will aid in the attraction of new customers and obtain adequate feedback to handle operations.
- The high rate of unemployment in the country provides the hotel with access to a large pool of skilled and unskilled labour. Running a hotel requires a very high level of professionalism and customer service to retain and attract customers. To maximize productivity, the hotel could employ highly skilled management and semi-skilled employees to balance cost and operational activities.

1.8.4 Threats

- Irrespective of the numerous strengths of the hotel, the increase in the number of 3-star hotels in the industry poses a major threat to the hotel. The hotel ought to compete strategically to obtain a larger share of the market.
- The recent economic challenges in the country particularly in terms of inflation, foreign exchange, amongst others affect the hotel's operational costs leading to changes in pricing.

CHAPTER 2: PROJECT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

2.0 Overview

This chapter outlines the research methods and findings of the needs assessment conducted at the Hill View Guest Centre. It describes the methodology and research tools employed in gathering the data and discusses findings from the research conducted. A needs assessment is a systematic approach to studying the state of knowledge, ability, interest or attitude of a defined audience or group involving a particular subject (McCawley, 2014). The purpose of this needs assessment was to understand Hill View's context, its operations, and how this impacts its image and strategy. Also, to identify the hotels needs so that the outcome and insights could be used to inform a strategy to improve the hotels services.

2.1 Methodology

In gathering data for the needs of Hill View Guest Centre, a qualitative approach was used. Qualitative research seeks to understand a research problem from the perspectives of the local population it involves (Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, Quest, & Namey, 2005). Its strength dwells in its ability to provide textual descriptions of people's experiences on a given research issue. The main research tools used in gathering information on the needs of Hill View Guest Centre were observation, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and internet research.

2.1.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used because it allows participants to freely express themselves and gain a better understanding of the problems at hand. In conducting the

interviews, a convenience sampling approach was used. Convenience sampling is a type of nonprobability sampling in which people are sampled simply because they are convenient sources of data for researchers (Lavrakas, 2011). The purpose of utilizing a convenience sampling method was mainly because of the easy accessibility to management and employees of Hill View Guest Centre.

The interviews took place over two weeks. Data was recorded by note-taking. A total of seven staff members were interviewed based on availability. This involved the marketing manager, general manager, front desk manager, and four employees. The semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain a better understanding of the hotel's history, mission, operations, human resource management, marketing and the challenges the hotel encounters to obtain a better understanding from an internal perspective. The interview guide is shown in Figure 1 of the Appendix.

2.1.2 Findings from Semi-Interviews

1. It was indicated that the company obtains more revenue from MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions) as compared to the hotel rooms. At the time of the interview, there was nobody in any of the rooms. However, a total of six students who paid for the full fees of the student centre for a year were still living on the premises.
2. Both management and employees expressed their concern about the low patronage of the hotel's rooms.
3. Two employees expressed how the low patronage of the hotel's services could be a result of low brand awareness.

4. At the time the interview was conducted, there was nobody assigned to handle the social media accounts of the hotel.
5. It was also noted that the hotel's restaurant and recreational centre are usually patronized only on weekends.
6. Management also expressed their concern about the low patronage of the hotel services, particularly the decrease in the patronage of room services which is a major source of revenue to the hotel.
7. Employees indicated that they were understaffed in almost every department.
8. Majority of employees found out about the hotel through friends and family.
9. The marketing and sales employees are in the same department. Employees in this department are understaffed and are requesting the creation of separate departments.
10. There is no clear segregation in the marketing and sales department. There were no clearly stated roles.
11. The least purchased service is the hotel's laundry service.
12. They provide flexible pricing strategies for events.
13. Booking sites utilized are Booking.com and TripAdvisor.
14. The hotel heavily relies on referrals.
15. They do not have a TV commercial.

Overall interviews between management and employees indicated a low trend in the patronage of the hotel's services particularly hotel rooms and hostel facility thereby leading to low revenue.

2.1.3 Internet-Based Research

This form of research involves the use of the Internet in collecting data. It offers opportunities to access larger and more diverse samples (Salkind, 2010).

Internet research was conducted to evaluate the company's online presence in relation to its competitors, its online reputation, what people are saying about the company and evaluate the improvements that can be utilized to build a strong brand for the company. In conducting the research, it was discovered that the company has a website, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram page. Information gathered on all three platforms indicated that the company had transitioned from a student centre to Hill View Guest Centre. However certain buttons and functions do not work on the hotel's website. It does not allow users to make reservations via the website.

Secondly, the hotel's booking page on TripAdvisor still bears the previous name. Thus, guests may not be able to access the hotel's service on TripAdvisor. Expedia no longer accepts bookings for Hill View Guest Centre. The hotel does not have sufficient reviews and ratings on Expedia. Despite these shortcomings, reviews from the hotel's social media indicate that the customers are pleased with the serene environment and beautiful architecture of the hotel.

2.1.4 Observation

This form of research involves participant observation. This is useful for gaining an understanding of the physical, social, cultural, and economic contexts in which study participants live; the relationships among and between people, contexts, ideas, norms, and events; people's behaviors and the activities people engage in, how frequently, and with whom (Mack, 2005).

Participant observation was carried out for two weekdays. Data was recorded by note-taking. It was observed that front desk personnel were very friendly and

welcoming. Secondly, there was low patronage of the hotel's services on the two days observed. Thirdly, meals ordered at the restaurant took longer than expected. Only one employee handled the gym and the recreational facility. Thus, it was ineffective for individuals who need one-on-one interactions with the gym facilitator. Overall maintenance was good; all rooms and facilities were clean.

2.1.5 Focus Group Discussions

This is a qualitative research method in which selected individuals discuss a given topic or issue in depth (Eeuwijk & Angehrn, 2017). In conducting the focus group discussion, seven customers were interviewed. These customers were students who are residents of the hostel facility on the premises.

2.1.6 Findings from Focus Group Discussions

A focus group discussion was held between the six students who reside in the hostel facility of the hotel. Data was collected via audio recording and notes with the consent of research participants. All the students were international students. They discovered the hotel through their high schools abroad and others through scholarship packages from the Government of Guinea. However, among their peers in the Ghanaian universities, the facility is not well known. They also indicated that Wi-Fi services are poor. They were unhappy with the speed of the internet. They also indicated that the meals served were monotonous and will be pleased with varieties that include international cuisines. In terms of pricing, customers felt the amount they paid for the housing facility should enable them to access high-speed wi-fi and international delicacies.

2.2 Outcome of Research Conducted

Observation and interviews conducted with management and employees indicate that the hotel is having challenges in attracting and retaining customers. Interviews with staff also show that there is low patronage of the hotel's services which has led to a decline in the customer base and a decline in revenue.

2.3 Problem Statement

Hillview Guest Centre, Abokobi is experiencing a gap in attracting and retaining customers which have led to a decline in revenue due to low patronage of the hotel's products and services.

2.4 Objective of The Project

The objective of this project is to improve brand awareness, increase the hotel's customer base and improve the sales of Hill View Guest Centre.

CHAPTER 3: MASTERY OF SUBJECT MATTER

3.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter reviews scholarly articles and literature to identify theories and frameworks that will guide the development of an ideal solution for Hill View Guest Centre. Prior to this chapter, the main challenge identified was the misalignment of hotels approach to customer attraction and retention, with the hotel's new image and the hotel industry's unique need for a coordinated customer acquisition plan. Thus, this chapter uses scholarly articles to provide insights on literature, tools, and models that will essentially aid in customer acquisition for Hill View Guest Centre.

3.2 Marketing

Most people think of selling and advertising when it comes to marketing. They think about catalogs, newspapers, radio, tv commercials, sales calls, amongst others. However, marketing from that perspective is only the tip of the iceberg. Marketing ideally deals with an understanding of the needs of the consumer. Once the needs of the consumer are understood, and work is done to provide superior value, products and services become easy to sell. The aim of marketing is to make selling unnecessary (Kotler, 2010). The author explains that once marketing is done correctly, selling would be unnecessary. Selling and advertising are important elements of the marketing mix which are used together to cater to customer needs and build strong customer relationships. Thus, it is essential to provide a clear description of marketing from the perspective of marketing professionals.

Kotler (2010) defines marketing as the process whereby companies create value for customers and build strong customer relationships to capture value from customers in return. Kotler explains that it involves the engagement of consumers and building

profitable relationships. The American Marketing Association also defines marketing 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 (Gregory & Wilkie, 2009). This provides an insight into marketing from the perspective of marketing professionals.

The definitions from the various authors show how marketing goes beyond selling and advertising. It shows how important it is to create value for customers and capture value in return. Thus, simply, marketing is two-fold: value creation and value capturing. When companies create value for customers, they are also able to capture value in return in the form of sales, profit, and long-term equity.

3.3 Marketing Mix

The Marketing mix concept was developed by a marketer known as E. Jerome McCarthy in 1940. He established the 4 P's which is composed of product, price, place, and promotion. The marketing mix is an operational part of a marketing plan. Kotler and Armstrong (2016) define the marketing mix as the set of marketing tools that work together to engage consumers, build customer relationships and satisfy the needs of customers. It helps a firm to implement its marketing strategy. The service marketing mix is also referred to as the 7P's. This includes process, people and physical evidence. The hotel lies within the service industry. Thus, it embraces the 7 P's marketing mix. This is composed of product, price, promotion, place, people, process and physical evidence. The *product* or *service* is the extent to which a hotel develops a comprehensive service offer to satisfy the needs of consumers in a highly competitive market (Hameed, Al-Zaytoonah, & Mustafa, 2014). In terms of *pricing*, it is a key element of the marketing mix which serves as a competitive weapon in the

market place (Okokon, 2013). It is the money paid in exchange for a service. In the hospitality industry, operators utilize pricing policies and strategies in setting prices in a bid to achieve the set objectives (Hameed, Al-Zaytoonah, & Mustafa, 2014).

Promotion within the hotel industry deals with identifying the needs of consumers and applying marketing concepts that can be easily communicated to a target market using mediums such as advertising, personal selling, publicity, amongst others (Okokon, 2013).

Place refers to the location of the business. This is essential to marketing professionals because it helps in adding value and creating consumer satisfaction. The *people* refer to the service providers and the extent to which the hotel utilizes customer-oriented practices to create customer satisfaction. The *physical evidence* refers to the extent to which the hotel creates a hospitable and customer friendly environment for customers. Finally, the *process* deals with the mechanisms and flows of activities used to deliver a service to consumers. Thus, the 7 P's marketing mix will be an ideal element used in creating a strategic marketing plan for Hill View Guest Centre.

3.4 Marketing in the Hotel Industry

Hotels are a service thus require service marketing. This is a subfield of marketing categorized into two components. This includes the areas of goods marketing and marketing of services. Service marketing is composed of financial services, telecommunications services and all types of hospitality services (Hameed, Al-Zaytoonah, & Mustafa, 2014). Thus, the marketing of Hill View Guest Centre's services involves service marketing.

In the hotel industry, the philosophy of marketing is customer oriented (Okokon, 2013). This implies that the services are created from the customer's point of view. With the competitive nature of the hospitality industry, a company cannot successfully operate by solely relying on its product or service (Chigozie, 2007). Marketers are adopting the principles and theories of marketing in a bid to achieve the ultimate goal of customer satisfaction. Thus, in a bid to overcome the competition from players in the hospitality industry, there is the need to embrace and implement marketing concepts to gain a competitive advantage.

3.5 Characteristics of Hotel Services

Intangibility, variability, inseparability, and perishability are the main features of hotel service. In terms of intangibility, services do not possess a physical presence thus intangible. They cannot be smelled, tasted, held or touched. These features primarily distinguish it from a product (Hameed, Al-Zaytoonah, & Mustafa, 2014). In terms of variability, the mass production of a product turns out to be homogenous. However, in the case of a service, it varies in nature. Every service is unique and cannot be exactly replicated even by the same provider. The inseparable nature of the hotel service requires that employees understand the delivery system to yield customer satisfaction. Hotel services are perishable. They cannot be stored, saved or resold once been used. When the service is rendered to a consumer, it cannot be given to another consumer (Hameed, Al-Zaytoonah, & Mustafa, 2014).

3.6 Strategic Marketing Plan

Hoang (2007) defines marketing planning as “a systematic process concerned with devising marketing objectives and appropriate marketing strategies to achieve these

goals". This serves as a guide which enables a company to achieve its strategic objectives by utilizing strategies and tactics using the customer as the starting point (Kotler, 2010). A marketing plan involves strategic and operational decisions (Widiarti, 2007). Segmenting, targeting and positioning are important elements in a marketing plan.

Nwabuibe (2014) describes strategic marketing planning as an operational process which involves the combination of consumer experiences with the direction of what the company wants and needs to be successful. This enables the company to identify and evaluate market opportunities, promotional opportunities, and target market. It also enables the company to develop and implement positioning by employing strategies and assessing the impact of the marketing efforts of the company (Nwabuibe, 2014). However, strategic marketing plans are significantly concerned with a competitive advantage. The function of a strategic marketing plan is evaluated a company's current position, where it wants to go and how it can get there (Nwabuibe, 2014). Effective strategic marketing plans utilize micro and macro strategies to evaluate the internal and external environment in which the organization operates.

The goal of a strategic marketing plan is to increase a company's market share, improve consumer satisfaction, and create brand awareness. The objective of a strategic marketing plan is to control and retain 75% of the target population in the market (Nwabuibe, 2014). Since Hill View Guest Centre aims to expand its customer base and improve brand awareness, the strategic marketing plan will be an ideal solution to its problem.

3.7 Marketing Frameworks and Models

There are many models that help to create valuable opportunities to promote the growth of companies. These models can guide in planning and creating suitable marketing plans. Some of these models include the SOSTAC model, PASTA model, 7 Ps of the marketing mix, the Ansoff matrix, BCG matrix, amongst others. However, in selecting an appropriate marketing framework or model, it is ideal to evaluate the current market situation.

3.7.1 SOSTAC Model

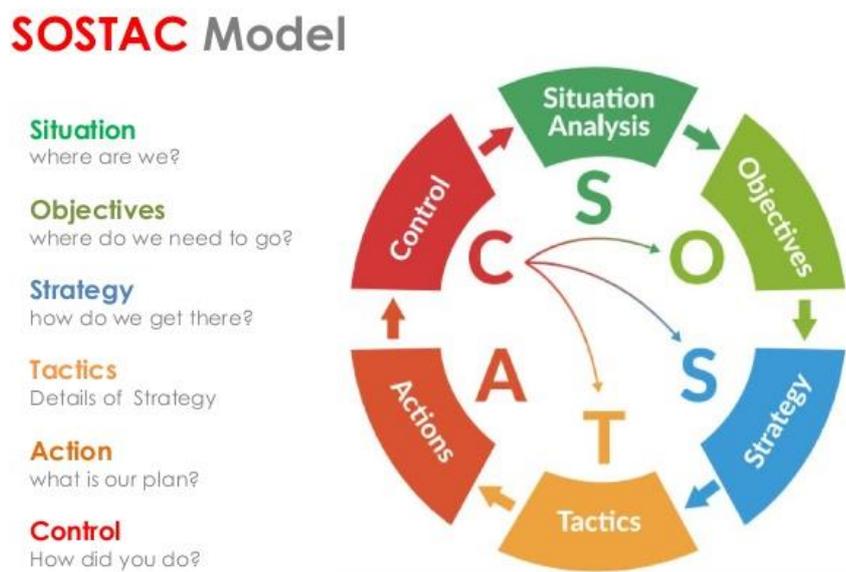


Figure 1: SOSTAC Model

The SOSTAC model as shown in *Figure 1* is a planning and marketing model developed by Paul Russell Smith. It is a systematic, logical and widely used tool for creating strategic marketing plans (Chaffey & Smith, 2013). It aids in developing and managing marketing strategies, preparing marketing plans, corporate plans and campaigns (Chaffey & Smith, 2008). SOSTAC model is also suitable for e-marketing strategies and e-marketing plans.

SOSTAC is an acronym which represents situational analysis, objectives, strategy, tactics, action, and control. All of these components are essential tools that have been enhanced for marketing. The *situational analysis* is the first element of the SOSTAC model which assesses the current situation of the firm by asking the question “where are you now?”. Secondly, *objectives* look at where the firm wants to go or want to be. Thus, there is the need to create SMART (specific, measurable, actionable, relevant and time-bound) objectives (Partner, 2017). Thirdly, *strategy* deals with the analysis of information gathered from the situational analysis to determine how to achieve the set objectives. It evaluates “*how we are going to get there?*” The strategy component enables the company to evaluate how they are going to differentiate themselves (Partner, 2017). *Tactics* deal with “*how exactly are we going to get there?*” At this stage, the company ought to evaluate which tools are right for the target audience and how these tools are going to be used. However, the previous stages and elements of the SOSTAC model are crucial for the success of this stage. Most people tend to delve into tactics based on feelings instead of research and development.

The *action* element of the SOSTAC model deals with *who does what* and *when?* It involves preparing a plan or a schedule to implement the tactics formulated. The *action* is prepared by questioning “*what needs to be done?*”, “*when it will be done?*” and “*who will do it?*”. Additionally, if there is a need to outsource any service or material, it ought to be indicated. Lastly, *control* is the final element of the SOSTAC model. It answers the question of “*how do we monitor performance?*” This is done to monitor and measure performance to determine if the organization is achieving the set strategic objectives. It also looks at what reporting tools will be utilized.

3.7.2 PASTA Model



Figure 2: PASTA Model

The PASTA model is a five-step model which is used to create an operational plan. They are ideal for creating a communications plan and marketing communications plan. The model begins by clearly defining the problem. It is then followed by an analysis. An internal and external analysis of the organization is conducted. This is done to evaluate the market and environment in which the organization operates. Thirdly, the “strategy” or “concept” step consists of four modules which are the target group, objectives, proposition, and positioning. These building blocks are interdependent. The next step is “tactics.” This is made up of the communication tools, techniques, and devices used in the plan. However, the tools and techniques are weighted to determine which can be used to achieve the target within the strategy. Finally, the “action” step. This step involves the creation of

schedules, determining a budget and assigning people to perform tasks (Smart Insights, 2017).

The SOSTAC and PASTA models are important models that help to spur the growth and achieve the objectives of a company. However, organizational plans present an operational and strategic perspective. An operational plan includes a marketing communications plan and communications planning. It is a normative plan to obtain to achieve an intended result (Smart Insights, 2017). However strategic plans have a broader horizon as compared to the operational plans. Strategic plans include business plans and marketing plans. PASTA deals with operational planning while SOSTAC deals with strategic planning. Additionally, the objectives of the SOSTAC model are independent while the objectives of the PASTA form a part of the strategy.

Based on the needs of the hotel, the SOSTAC model will be ideal in planning and preparing a successful strategic marketing plan for Hill View Guest Centre. This is particularly because the first two elements provide detailed research on the situation and objectives which will guide in the development of strategies and tactics to be implemented. Also, the insights identified in the previous chapter can be thoroughly addressed in the first and second components of the SOSTAC model.

CHAPTER 4: SOLUTION/ TOOL AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter utilises a comprehensive model for Hill View Guest Centre that addresses the challenge of attracting and retaining customers, brand awareness and sales. The chapter ultimately aims to apply concepts into the model to develop a solution that will achieve the set objectives.

4.2 The Proposed Solution

Findings from research conducted show that the hotel is struggling with attracting and retaining customers. It has low brand awareness and is encountering low patronage of services. Thus, this project is critical, and it is needed to improve the company's awareness, increase its customer base and ultimately increase sales. The proposed solution for Hill View Guest Centre is a strategic marketing plan using the SOSTAC model. This is shown in the figure below:

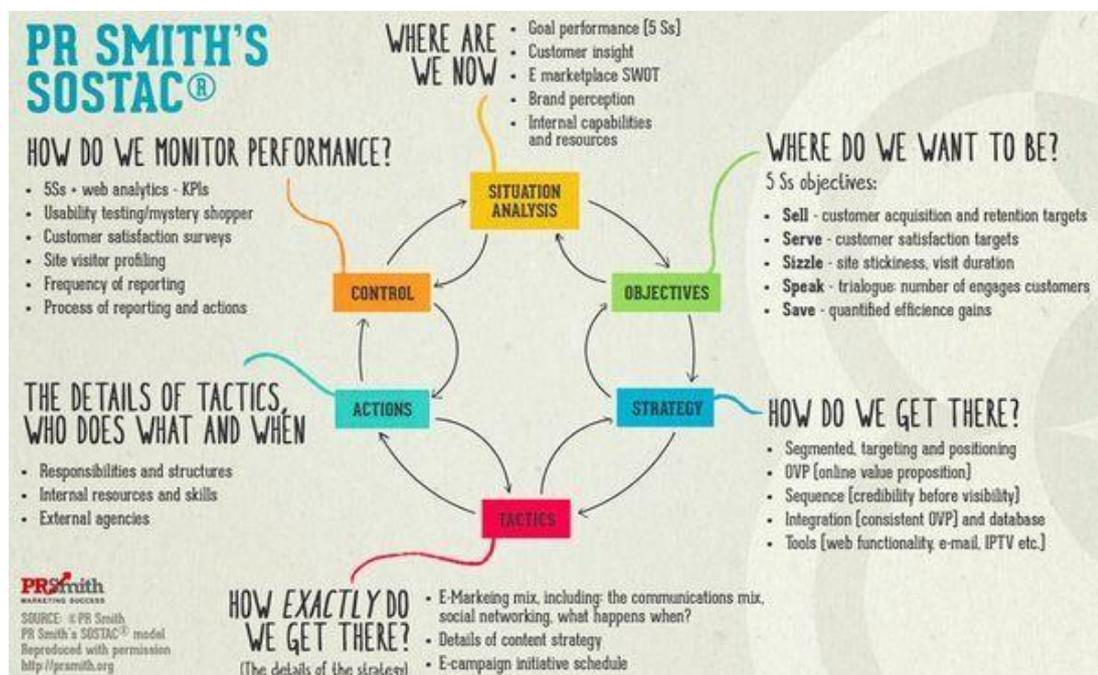


Figure 3: SOSTAC Model

4.3 Situation Analysis

The Situation Analysis is the first element of the SOSTAC model which assesses the current situation of the firm by asking the question: *where are you now?* The aim of this element in the model is to assess the company's current situation. This is divided into two sections mainly internal and external environment. Thus, to effectively evaluate the current situation of the hotel, an internal and external analysis is conducted. This consists of a SWOT analysis, internal capabilities and resources, competitor analysis, customer insights and market trends.

4.3.1 External Analysis: Pestle Analysis

The detailed analysis of the external environment can be found in Chapter 1.

4.3.2 SWOT Analysis of Hill View Guest Centre

The full details of the SWOT analysis of Hill View Guest Centre can be found in Chapter 1.

4.3.3 Internal Capabilities and Resources

Hill View Guest Centre currently has 100 standard rooms, 26 executive rooms, and two chalets. The facilities in the hotel include a gymnasium, library, salon, laundry, sports complex, swimming pool, hostel, restaurant, and a multipurpose auditorium. The hotel currently serves as a multipurpose centre that provides accommodation to local and international students, tourists, business professionals, and families. It also has enough facilities that can cater to MICE. Also, the facility has a large compound that can cater for outdoor events such as weddings. This can accommodate approximately 500 people. In terms of facilities, the company has a broad range of

resources; however, the major service that will be enjoyed by most people on vacation is a spa. If added, it may improve the customer base.

The hotel has an online presence. This is a good medium to attract a wide range of customers from different geographic locations. The company has a website and can be accessed at <https://hillviewgh.com/index.php/facilities/>. The website enables existing and potential clients to learn about the company's products and services. However, currently, bookings cannot be made on the website. Some buttons are inactive on the website and images are missing. The facilities featured on the website show only a restaurant. Also, old events such as Valentine's Day promotions are on the home page of the website. Lastly, some pages are inaccessible, and this may deter potential customers due to lack of information and improper structure of the website.

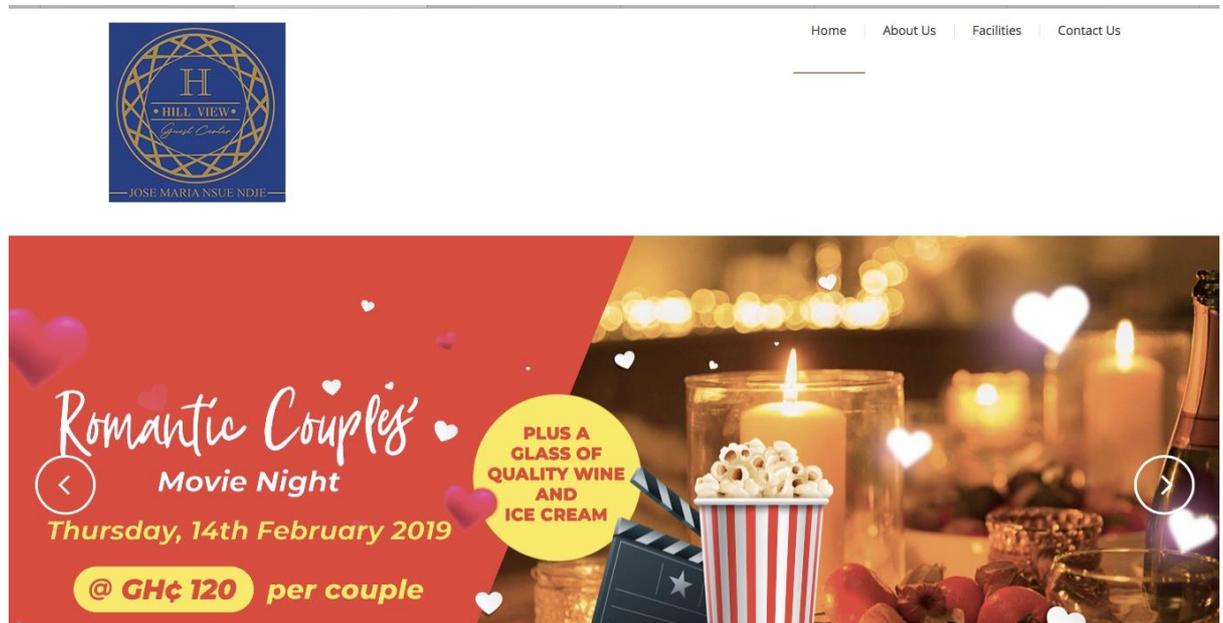


Figure 4: Hill View Guest Centre Website

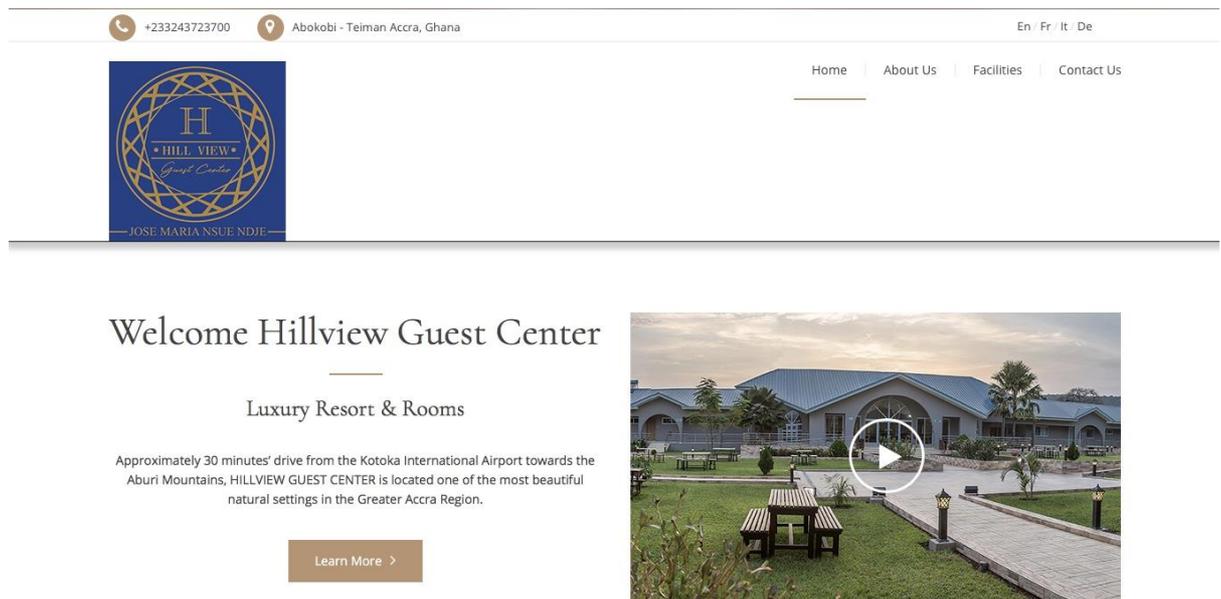


Figure 5: Home Page of Hill View Guest Centre

The company also has a social media presence. It has a Facebook, Instagram and Twitter account. The Facebook page of the hotel is not very active; this is shown in Figure 4. The last post of the hotel was in January 2019. Customer reviews from the Facebook account show that customers are pleased with the serene environment of the hotel. The hotel's use of social media is very limited. Thus, there is a need to utilize digital marketing strategies to attract a larger target market.

The occupancy rate of the Hill View Guest Centre is critically low. When the research was conducted, the hotel rooms were empty. The only residents in the facility were seven students who reside in the hostel facility. Currently, the hotel's main source of revenue is from MICE. The hotel attempts to boost purchases through promotions during festive seasons such as Valentine's Day and Christmas. This is usually done through word of mouth, flyers and social media posts. Currently, the marketing departments method of attracting customers is through face to face meetings and referrals.

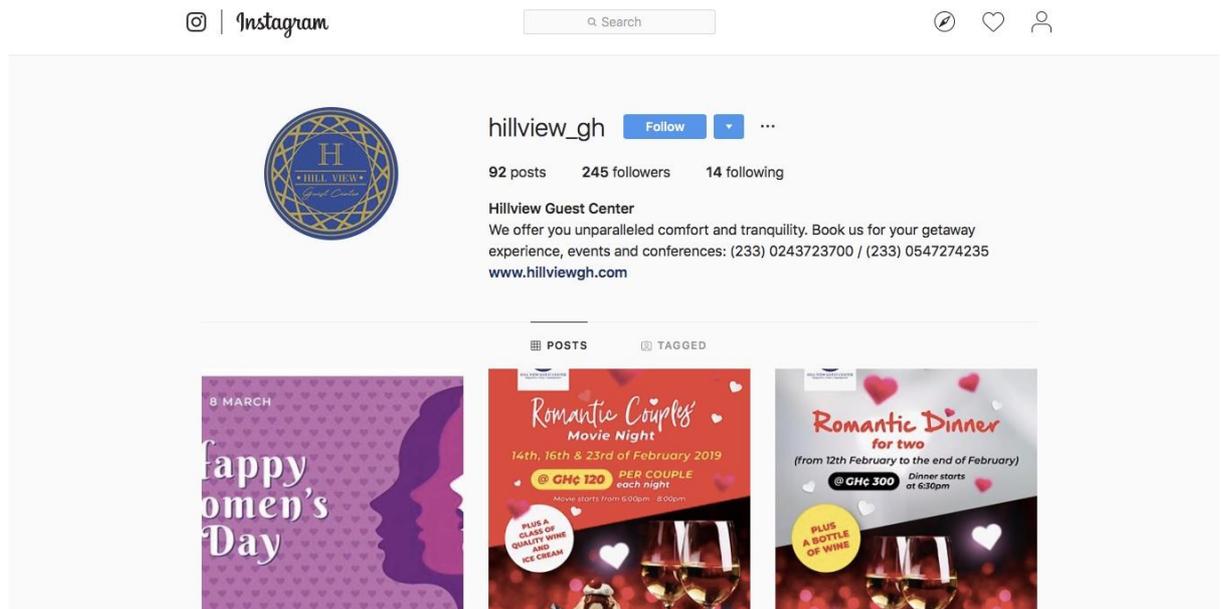


Figure 6: Instagram Page of Hill View Guest Centre

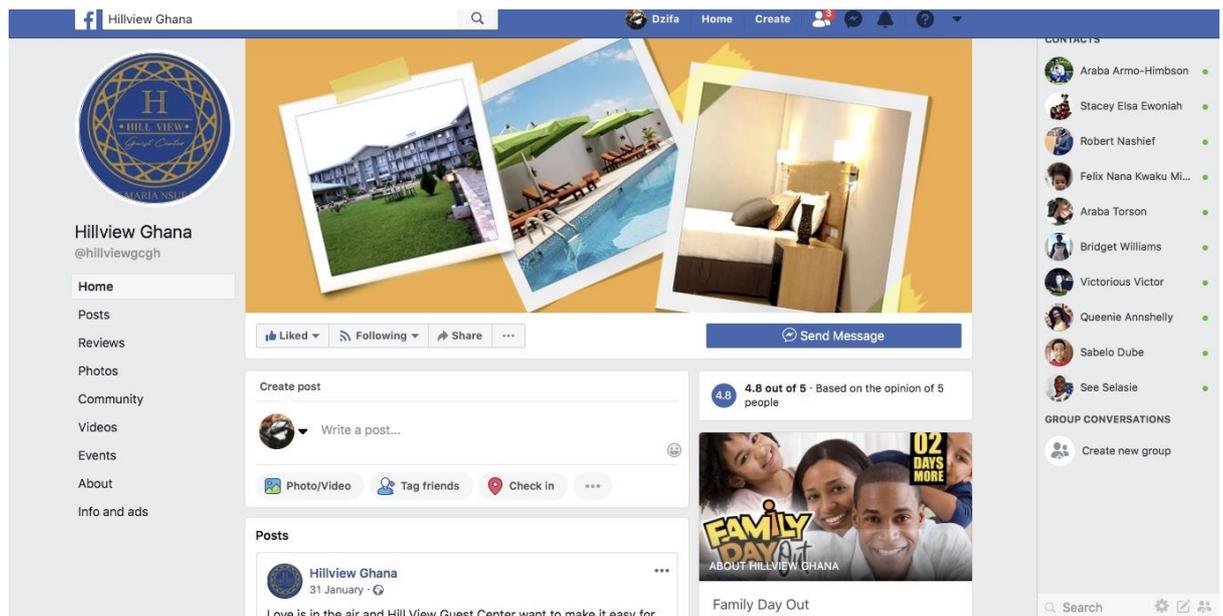


Figure 7: Facebook Page of Hill View Guest Centre



Figure 8: The Twitter page of Hill View Guest Centre

4.3.4 Customer Insights

From the focus group discussion with customers of the hotel, it was indicated that customers were pleased with the architecture of the hotel. The serene environment and the various facilities make it an enjoyable place to be. However, there were some challenges discussed. Firstly, poor Wi-Fi services. Customers were not pleased with the unstable internet service particularly residents who had tasks to complete. Secondly, the location of the hotel. Customers who do not have cars have to walk for approximately 10 minutes on an untarred road to access public transport. Thirdly, the constant delay in food services. On the weekdays, meals served takes a longer period to be delivered. Another insight was that all the customers found out about the hotel through friends and family. In terms of pricing, customers were not pleased with the increase in the price of the pool services.

4.3.5 Market Trends

The hotel industry in Ghana is populated. The influx of substitutes in the form of guest houses, apartments, and other housing units poses a threat to Hill View Guest Centre. The existence of these close substitutes implies that customers may switch to other substitutes in response to an increase in the price. Also, there is a lot of competition from international hotels who have set up a franchise with reputable and admirable services in the country. The majority of hotels are also employing the use of technology in the form of e-commerce and internet-based platforms to promote their businesses.

4.3.6 Competitor Analysis

Based on the research conducted, Hill View Guest Centre’s competitors include HillBuri, Peduase Valley Resort, and Lansdown Resort. To effectively ascertain the hotel's current position, an analysis based on social media integration was conducted. The table below shows the company's competitors, and the comparison is based on some social media accounts, ratings, and reviews.

Features	Hill View	HillBuri	Peduase Valley Resort	Lansdown Resort
Number of social media accounts	3	2	3	3

Number of Facebook followers	4148	4135	14262	2990
Facebook Rating	4.8	4.6	4.5	-
Number of Twitter followers	15	3	1476	25
Number of Instagram Followers	248	1035	1952	5474
TripAdvisor Reviews	-	76	63	14
TripAdvisor Ratings	-	4/5	4/5	4/5
Booking.com Ratings	-	8.2/10	8.2/10	8.0/10
Booking.com Reviews	-	21	33	14
Reviews on Google	26	397	972	168
Ratings on Google	4.2	4.2	4.3	4.1

Table 1: Social Media Integration of Hill View Guest Centre and its Competitors

4.3.7 Comparison of Social Media Accounts

Hillburi has the least number of social media accounts. Peduase Valley Resort has the highest number of Facebook followers while Lands down resort has the least number of Facebook followers. Hill View Guest Centre held the least number of Instagram followers and the second lowest Twitter followers.

4.3.8 Comparison based on TripAdvisor, Google and Booking.com Ratings and Reviews

Hill View Guest Centre is inaccessible on TripAdvisor and Booking.com thus there were no ratings and reviews available. HillBuri and Peduase Resort held the highest ratings on Booking.com while all three competitors rated 4 out of 5 on TripAdvisor. Hill View Guest Centre held the least reviews on Google while Peduase Valley Resort held a leading position of 972 reviews.

The social media integration of Hill View Guest Centre and its competitors shows the need for Hill View Guest Centre to increase its social media presence. The moderate rating also indicates that customers are satisfied with the service. Considering the hotel being in existence for a shorter period compared to its competitors it shows that the hotel is doing well. However, there is a need to strive for excellent services.

4.4 Objectives

The objective element of the SOSTAC planning model asks *where do we want to go?* To fulfill the proposed solution, there is a need to set SMART objectives. This acronym represents Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-Bound

objectives. Hill View Guest Centre ought to set SMART objectives to curb its problem of attracting and retaining customers.

The objective of the proposed solution is:

1. To increase Hill View Guest Centre's brand awareness among locals and tourists by 15% by the end of 2019.
2. To increase consumer base by 25% by attracting new customers and retaining existing customers by the end of 2019.
3. To increase purchases of rooms by 25% through promotions.

4.5 Strategy

This element asks *how we will meet the objectives?* This element constitutes segmentation, targeting and positioning. In creating strategies for a company, it is essential to select a suitable growth strategy. The Ansoff Growth Matrix as shown in *Figure 9* helps to decide on which products or services to sell and which markets are suitable to compete in. Based on the various elements in the Ansoff Growth Matrix, the suitable growth strategy for Hill View Guest Centre is Market Penetration. This is because hotel services already exist, and its market is already in existence. Thus, market penetration is ideal. Market penetration involves the attempt to increase sales without leaving the original product market strategy at the cost of rivals in the market (Ansoff, 1957). It deals with the growth of the company by increasing sales of current products to current market segments without changing the product (Kotler, 2010).

Based on the set objectives for the proposed solution, implementing a Market Penetration Strategy will be suitable and secure. The risk associated with market penetration is minimal because the hotel already knows the characteristics of its products and services as well and its advantages and disadvantages. The strategy

competes for the same clientele which involves locals, tourists, and MICE. However, market penetration requires real push as there is a lot of competition in the existing market. Thus, there is a need to segment focus and target.



Figure 9: Ansoff Growth Matrix

Source: (Smart Insights, 2017)

4.5.1 Segmentation

Market segmentation deals with the division of a market into distinct groups of buyers who have different needs, characteristics, or behaviors, and who might require separate products or marketing programs (Kotler, 2010). This could be based on psychographics, geographic, demographic and behavioral variables (Kotler and Keller, 2006). In the hotel industry, segmentation is usually based on demographics and geographic variables (Widiarti, 2007). The preference of guests could be based on

status or class, the location of the guest and their nationality. Thus, the market segmentation of Hill View Guest Centre is shown below:

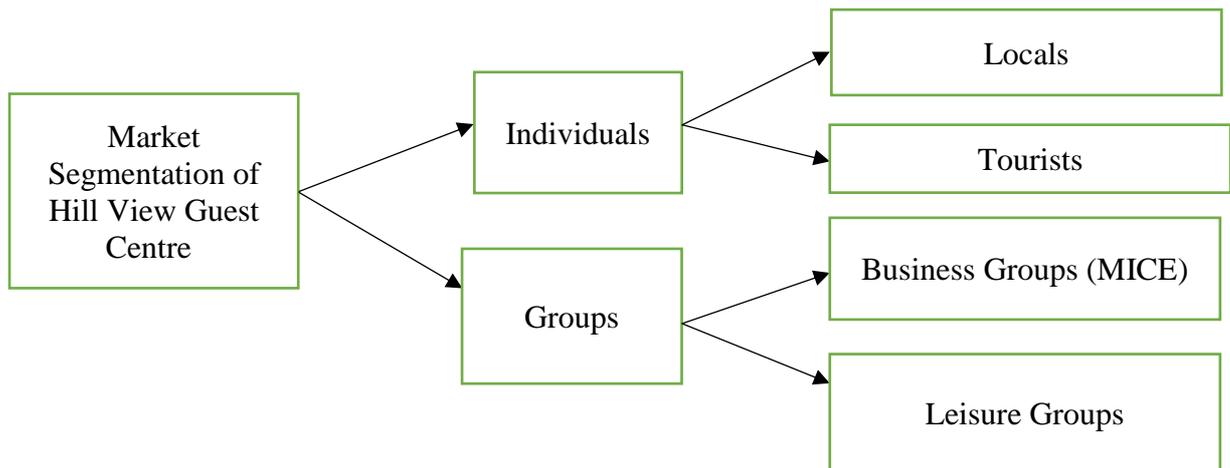


Figure 10: Market Segmentation of Hill View Guest Centre

4.5.2 Targeting

Target Marketing enables companies to especially prioritize the needs of the targeted consumers concerning prestige, desire, habits, price, amongst others. Hill View Guest Centre can attract its target customers by targeting individuals and groups; it can serve best and create optimal satisfaction. Also, there is a need to select the most profitable category to serve. Based on the segmentation, Hill View Guest Centre's target market are locals, tourists, business groups and leisure groups.

4.5.3 Positioning

Once the company has identified its target market, it is essential to create a positioning. This consists of a market offering that occupies a clear, distinctive, and desirable place relative to competing for products in the minds of target consumers

(Kotler, 2010). With the growth of the hotel industry in Ghana, Hill View Guest Centre ought to develop a strong positioning to create a clear distinction from its competitors. Thus, a proposed positioning for Hill View Guest Centre is:

“To individuals, business and leisure travelers, Hill View Guest Centre is dedicated to creating a glamorous getaway by offering quality, customer-centric experiences because tranquility and customer satisfaction is our most valued asset”.

4.6 Tactics

The section involves the measures and tools that will be used to implement the strategy. In the previous section, the selected strategy is Market Penetration Strategy. This section will utilize the 7 P's Marketing Mix to achieve this strategy.

4.6.1 Product

Hill View Guest Centre is a full-service hotel that provides a wide range of products and services. This includes 100 standard rooms, 26 executive rooms, and two chalets. Other facilities include a gymnasium, salon, library, salon, laundry, sports complex, swimming pool, hostel, restaurant, and a multipurpose auditorium. However, its core product is the hotel rooms. Currently, the hotel rooms are the least purchased service while spaces for Meetings, Interviews, Conferences, Events (MICE) being the highest purchased service. To increase the demand for the hotel rooms, Hill View should set goals for occupancy every year. The hotel ought to create strategic plans to accommodate low and high seasons. To boost hotel room purchases, Hill View should consider the following:

1. Collaborate with online travel agencies. Online travel agencies have access to a broader audience compared to hotel websites. They also provide access to

international guests. This will help Hill View build its brand awareness and provide access to a larger customer base.

2. To leverage on low seasons, Hill View should create promotional packages. The packages should have added values in the form of the availability to sporting activities or healthy cuisines for guests who are health or fitness focussed and trips to tourist sites near the hotel. Some of these packages can be in the form of a girl's weekend packages, themed parties, birthday parties, amongst others. Through this Hill View will be able to mask the prices of rooms with features that appeal to guests and increase demand for rooms. Through this Hill View will add value to consumer experiences and will be differentiated from its competitors.
3. To ensure optimal customer satisfaction and repeat purchases, Hill View Guest Centre should make feedback a brand experience. This will be done utilizing visually appealing, and user-friendly surveys during customer check out. Additionally, customers who fill out surveys will be offered a discount for their next purchases of hotel rooms at Hill View Guest Centre.

4.6.2 Price

The availability of substitutes in the hotel industry has made people price sensitive and value conscious. In a bid to improve the hotel's objective of increasing customer base and sales, it should adopt pricing for seasonality and parity pricing. Price for seasonality involves setting prices in line with the season where the country is filled with tourists. The aim of this strategy is to increase revenue every season and encourage tourists to visit. In Ghana, Easter, Christmas and New Year's is a heavily

celebrated season. Hill View could utilise seasonal pricing and offer discounts and packages to attract tourists to the hotel.

Hill View should also incorporate parity pricing. This involves setting prices similar to that of Hill View's competitors. However, Hill View should provide a superior value that gives it a competitive advantage over its competitors. Hill View is close to many tourist sites in Ghana thus it could offer guests the opportunity to visit tourist sites such as Aburi Botanical Gardens, Umbrella rock, Aburi craft markets, amongst others.

4.6.3 Physical Evidence

The hotel has a serene and relaxing ambiance as it provides a picturesque view of the Aburi Mountains. The cozy climate also provides a soothing environment making it an ideal destination for a vacation. The hotel's architecture, artifacts, and infrastructure make it attractive and unique. The hotel has proximity to many tourist sites. Thus, the availability to these features enables Hill View to position itself in a manner that allows guest to rest, relax and tour.

Below are some pictures of Hill View Guest Centre:



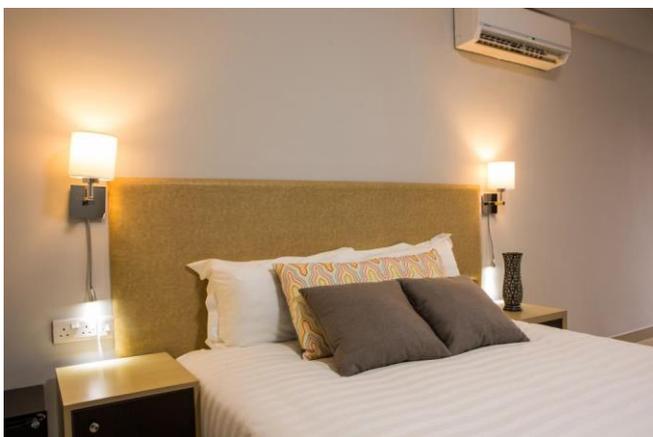
Swimming Pool Area



Gym



Hostel Lounge



Standard Single Room



Auditorium

Figure 10: Pictures of Hill View Guest Centre

4.6.4 Promotion

The availability of digital technology has transformed how companies in the service industry interact with consumers. These tools are shaping consumers experiences, brand awareness, and conversations. To improve brand awareness and improve interactions between existing and potential clients, the hotel industry utilizes digital marketing. Digital marketing provides a digital channel which aids in customer acquisition, promotes brands, promotes repeat purchases and ultimately increases sales. In the case of Hill View Guest Centre, social media marketing, SEO (search engine optimization) marketing, email marketing, and mobile marketing should be used.

- Social Media Marketing

- i. The hotel should focus on three main social media accounts: Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.
 - ii. Post interesting content at least three times a week.
 - iii. Respond to customers messages, comments and feedback professionally and timely.
 - iv. Create interesting questions or interactive contents and include an award.
- SEO Marketing
 - i. Utilize blogs to write about customer experiences and menus such as exclusive dining experiences at the hotel, chef specials, live band experiences, Christmas at Hill View, etc.
 - ii. Invite well-known people who have a positive reputation and huge following to the hotel's events and ensure that they post content about Hill View Guest Centre.
 - Email Marketing
 - i. Send out creative and personalized emails that will trigger customers to purchase the hotels' services by using images and creative texts.
 - ii. Email surveys to learn about customers experiences, preferences, etc.
 - iii. Send out newsletters to the targeted customers at least twice a month.
 - Mobile Marketing
 - i. Utilize broadcast messages to share information with customers.
 - ii. Messages sent to customers should be brief and creative.
 - iii. Provide the opportunity to unsubscribe.

The place and distribution are many times the key to success. Hill View Guest Centre is located in Abokobi. The distance from the main road to the hotel is not constructed and very dusty. This affects transportation accessibility for clients who do not have personal forms of transportation. The hotel should provide customers with a shuttle service to the nearest transport station or consider constructing the road to the hotel. In terms of distribution, the hotel should also consider partnering with hotel representatives, travel agents, and airport representatives to promote the hotel widely.

4.6.6 People

The employees of Hill View Guest Centre are the hotel's best asset. Although Hill View Guest Centre has a beautiful environment and a broad range of facilities, it cannot operate effectively and efficiently without skilled human resources.

Considering the hotel transitioned from a student centre to a three-star hotel, the employees have to be retrained. Thus, the hotel should implement the training programs shown in the table below:

Table 2: Proposed training programs for Hill View Guest Centre

Types of training	Content	Course names	Selected staffs
General Studies	Courses cover product knowledge and courses that are mandatory for hospitality businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hotel general orientation - Path to Authentic Hospitality - Orientation follow-up - Codes of business conduct & ethics - Fire control & prevention - First Aid - Human Trafficking 	All levels
Job skills development	Specific courses designed to improve skills needed to perform a certain task, job or function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - M-concierge training - Online computer training - Food safety management system - Cashier procedures - Wine training - How to use outlook 	Depending on job requirement and individual development plan
Soft skills development		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Driving to customer preference - Changing the conversation - The arrival experience 	
Management skills development	Courses aim at developing management and leadership skills, provide necessary knowledge to train employees at lower levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leadership series phase 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Coaching skills + Receiving and giving feedback + Core skills and leadership expectations - Leadership series phase 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Time & task management + Balanced approach to managing + Communicate effectively at work + Managing the work of other - Leadership series phase 3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Introduction interviewing skills + X on skills training + X on Group training - Path to Authentic Hospitality - Development of SOH materials - HySat - Performance Development Plan training - Staff engagement action planning 	Team Leader (only phase 1) Assistant Manager Manager Division head Executive Community

Source: (Do, 2013)

4.6.7 Process

The process of delivery of goods and services is essential in the hotel industry. It should be highly managed to support the efforts of the marketing department.

Currently, bookings cannot be made on the website. Thus, the hotel needs to fix the problem to promote purchases amongst locals and tourists. Also, on TripAdvisor, the

hotel has the previous name; thus, customers who are not aware of the previous name may not be able to purchase the services of the hotel. However, since the hotel has a hostel facility, there is the need to include that as part of their offering on all their digital platforms.

4.7 Actions

This section discusses the action plan that will be implemented to achieve the set objectives of Hill View Guest Centre. It will involve activities, timelines, personnel in charge and the costs.

Timeline	Activity	Personnel in Charge	Cost
All year long(January– December)	Digital Marketing: web design, content creation, and social media marketing.	Marketing Manager- Hire a digital marketer to handle all social media platforms and online bookings.	GHC2000 per month GHC24000 per year
Every quarter (January- March) (April- June) (July-September) (October – December)	Employee training and re-training: workshops and seminars.	Human Resource Manager	GHC2000 per quarter GHC8000 per year
January- December	Materials Christmas Promotion and Packages	Marketing and Sales Manager	GHC3000 per year
TOTAL			GHC35,000

4.8 Control

The *Control* element of the SOSTAC model asks “*how do we monitor performance?*”

This helps to monitor, measure and evaluate activities of the organization. Hill View Guest Centre would be incorporating digital tools; thus Google Analytics should be used to monitor the hotels online performance and progress. Google Analytics helps to identify the characteristics of individuals accessing the hotel's site. This involves gender, location, age, amongst others. It will also enable the hotel to identify how users interact with their sites. Such as the number of clicks, purchases, the most and least used features on the site. Through this Hill View will be able to prepare content that targets the ideal customer, increase traffic to the hotel's website and improve consumer interactions.

In addition, the balanced scorecard will be used to measure and evaluate Hill View’s Guest Centre’s Performance. The balanced scorecard is a carefully selected set of quantifiable measures derived from an organization’s strategy. It mainly serves as a communication tool, measurement system and strategic management system (Niven, 2006).

HILL VIEW GUEST CENTRE BALANCED SCORECARD		
Indicator	Objective	Measure
<i>Brand Awareness</i>	To increase Hill View Guest Centre’s brand awareness among locals and tourists by 15% by the end of 2019.	Compare previous years patronage of hotels services and online performance to the current year's performance.

<i>Customer Base</i>	To increase consumer base by 25% by attracting new customers and retaining existing customers by the end of 2019.	Compare previous years patronage of hotels services to the current year's patronage.
<i>Room accommodation</i>	To increase purchases of rooms by 25% through promotions.	Compare previous years patronage of hotel rooms to the current year's patronage.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter discusses recommendations, limitations, and conclusions of the project. The recommendations provide insights on how Hill View Guest Centre can achieve the set objectives. Additionally, the limitations discuss the challenges encountered while conducting research for the project.

5.2 Recommendations

The growth and availability of substitutes in the hotel industry in Ghana will require Hill View Guest Centre to be strategic and innovative in its operations. Thus after conducting research, I recommend the following:

First, management needs to separate the marketing and sales department. A recent study by the University of Texas McComb School of Business shows that companies who separated the roles of marketing and sales departments reported high growth rates compared to their competitors (Chief Outsiders, 2012). The separation of the department will enable sale representatives to sell the products and services the hotel has in stock while the marketing department will work on the strategic marketing plans of the hotel by examining the marketplace and taking strategic decisions. This will also involve actively managing the brand through positioning, managing brand awareness and managing digital marketing. The sales department will focus on metrics such as weekly, monthly, quarter targets while marketing focusses on yearly targets. This will enable the sales department to develop strong relationships with customers and develop strategic channels of communication. Although there will a separation in the department, both sales and marketing must

work together. The marketing department will provide support to the sales department by providing a system for effective sales because, without marketing, sales suffer.

Secondly, the company needs to incorporate digital marketing to improve its brand awareness. Hill View Guest Centre needs to take advantage of the available online platforms such as social media, online travel agencies, hotel booking sites, amongst others to increase brand salience and generate a larger customer base. Their current website is incomplete, images do not completely appear, and bookings cannot be made on the website. Thus, there is the need to create a visually appealing, active and user-friendly interface to attract potential customers. The hotel should also develop an active and interactive social media presence to increase brand awareness. The hotel needs to assign an employee to handle all online platforms such as social media accounts and online bookings.

5.2 Limitations of project

There was limited access to customers; thus customer insights were gathered from only student residents through a focus group discussion. However, most research participants resided in the facility for approximately six months and provided in-depth content on their interactions with Hill View Guest Centre.

5.3 Conclusion

The purpose of this project was to use the outcomes of the needs assessment conducted on Hill View Guest Centre to develop a strategic customer acquisition plan. To achieve this objective, a strategic marketing plan was developed based on the SOSTAC planning model. The strategic marketing plan will serve as a guide to enable the hotel to increase brand awareness, customer base and improve sales.

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APPENDIX

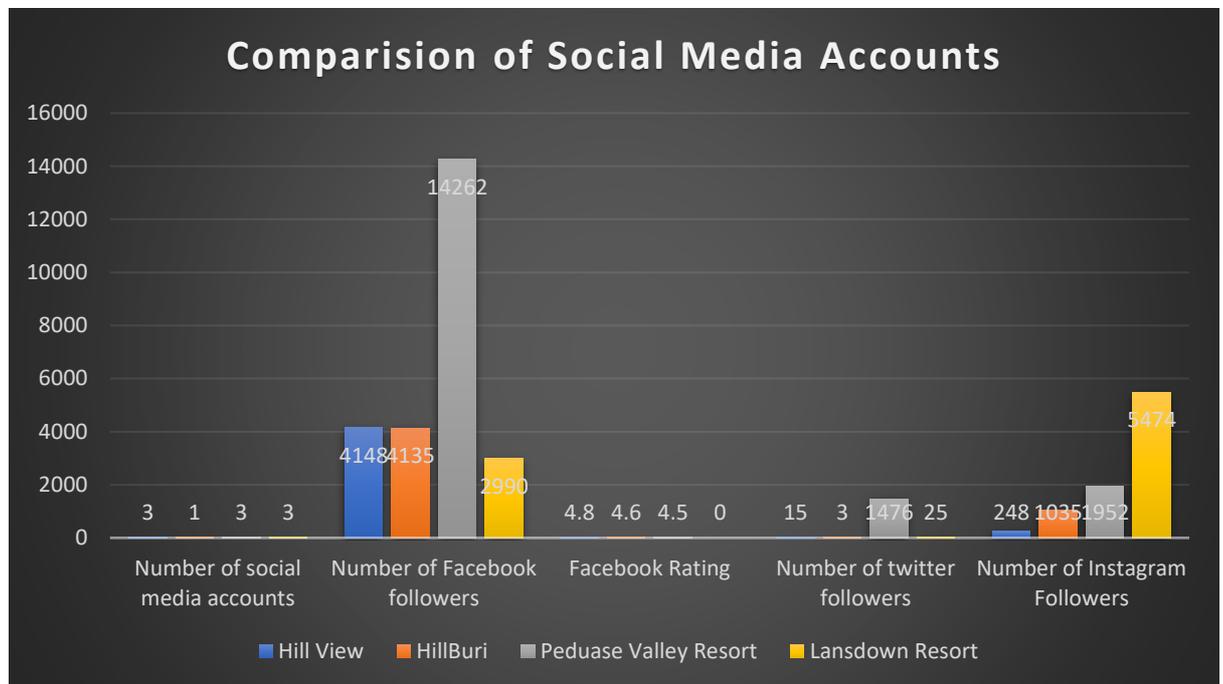


Figure 11: Comparison of Social Media Accounts

Interview Consent Form

The purpose of this research is to find insights about Hill View Guest Centre. This consent form is mandatory and essential to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation. Kindly read the accompanying information and sign this form to certify that you approve the following:

1. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research.
2. There are no anticipated risks associated with your participation, but you have the right to stop the interview or withdraw from the research at any time.
3. I agree with my interview being audio-recorded.

4. I do not expect to receive any benefit or payment for my participation in this research.
5. I understand that all the information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
6. I understand that my identity will remain anonymous.

This study and consent form has been reviewed by the Ashesi University IRB for Human Subjects Research. If you have any questions about the approval process, please contact the committee through irb@ashesi.edu.gh. For further details, please email Dzifa at dzifa.anagblah@ashesi.edu.gh

Signature of research participant

Respondent's Signature	Date
------------------------	------

Signature of Researcher

Researcher's Signature	Date
------------------------	------

Interview Guide for Management and Employees.

Management

1. When was ISGC established?
2. What was the mission of ISGC?
3. Why did the organization transition from ISGC to Hillview Guest Centre?
4. What is the mission and vision of Hill View Guest Centre?

5. How long have you been working with Hill View Guest Centre?
6. How has the working environment evolved since you joined the company?
7. How does the company attract customers and how does it ensure that customers revisit the hotel?
8. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the hotel?
9. What is the hotel's target market?
10. Who are the hotels, three main competitors?
11. How many departments does the hotel currently have?
12. What is the product and service portfolio of the hotel?
13. Approximately how many walk-in guests do you receive in a day?
14. What are the main challenges the hotel encounters?
15. If you could change anything about the hotel, what will it be and why?

Employees

1. Which department do you work in and what is your role?
2. How long have you been working at Hill View?
3. What is your highest level of education?
4. How has your department evolved since you joined the organization?
5. What are the strengths and weakness of your role?
6. What are the strengths and weakness of your department?
7. What are the main challenges the hotel encounters?
8. If you could change anything about the hotel, what will it be and why?

PROBLEM/SOLUTION DASHBOARD

The objective of the project was to use the outcomes of the needs assessment conducted on Hill View Guest Centre to develop a strategic marketing plan based on the SOSTAC planning model. The components of the proposed model are Situation Analysis, Objective, Strategy, Tactics, Action, and Control. This model was selected because of its ability to thoroughly address customer acquisition challenges as a broad strategy within marketing and branding. Thus, the strategic marketing plan will serve as a guide to enable the hotel to increase brand awareness, customer base, and sales.

<p>Situation Analysis</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. External Analysis 2. SWOT analysis 3. Internal Capabilities and Resources 4. Customer Insights 5. Market Trends 6. Competitor Analysis
<p>Objectives</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To increase Hill View Guest Centre’s brand awareness among locals and tourists by 15% by the end of 2019. 2. To increase consumer base by 25% by attracting new customers and retaining existing customers by the end of 2019. 3. To increase purchases of rooms by 25% through promotions.

Strategy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Market Penetration 2. Segmentation 3. Targeting 4. Positioning
Tactics	7 P's Marketing mix
Action	Timeline to achieve set objectives
Control	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Google Analytics 2. Balanced Scorecard

Figure 12: Solution and Implementation Plan

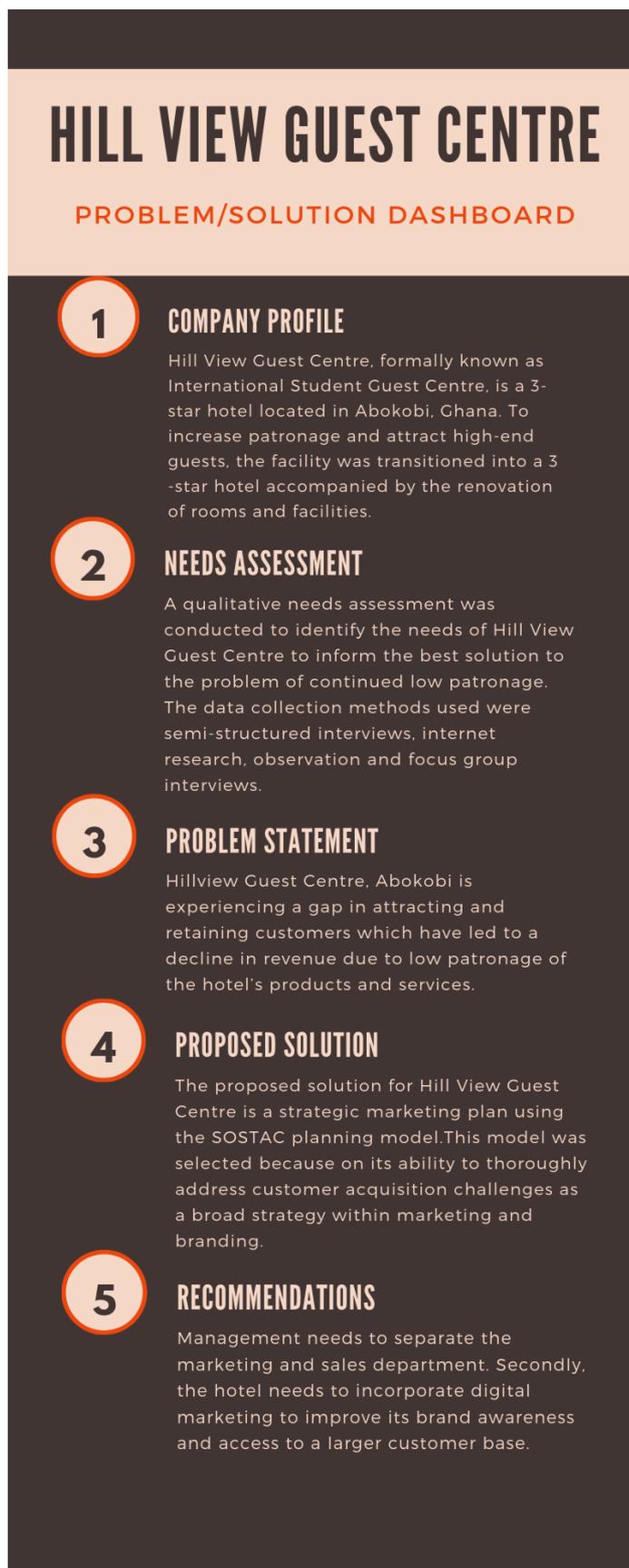


Figure 13: Problem/Solution Dashboard