



**TRAVEL E-COMMERCE MARKETING STRATEGY OF CTRIP IN TRAVEL ONLINE  
MARKETPLACE**



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### Abstract

**Research Title :** Travel E-commerce Marketing Strategy of Ctrip in Travel Online Marketplace  
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This study focused on researching the effect of market strategy in Ctrip online travel business. The study analyzed the effects of travel e-commerce marketing strategy that affected the development of company. This study found that establishing a correct business model and marketing strategy, implementing the model that includes and provides products to the needs of the market, promotion, and service are highly significant for the travel e-commerce to enlarge the market and increase income. With the constant development of Chinese travel e-commerce, many companies with different business models entered in this market. Therefore this study suggested that these online travel companies should review the consumer market and combine the findings that with own situations to find the most appropriate business model of development. Results indicated that an appropriate marketing strategy has positive direct effects on enlarging market share and increasing income. This thesis aimed at thoroughly studying the changes of Ctrip's business model to find out some strategy that can help other online travel companies to improve themselves.

**Keyword:** e-commerce, travel, market, business model



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## Introduction

E-commerce is the activity of buying or selling products on online services or over the internet. Electronic commerce draws on technologies such as mobile commerce, electronic funds transfer, supply chain management, Internet marketing, online transaction processing, electronic data interchange (EDI), inventory management systems, and automated data collection systems (Terzi, 2016). Tourism e-business through online information technology to make travel activities digitalized, including through internet share and released tourism and business information, and through the internet to advertise and sell tourism products and offer services such as search information, book tour products and pay for it.

The business model of Ctrip.com is similar to B2C (business to customer), marketing is the supplier who cooperates with Ctrip, the customer is the user who registered on ctrip.com and used the services or buys the products on ctrip.com. Suppliers pay commission and advertisement fee to ctrip.com, and ctrip.com sell services to users and then makes money through that spread (Duan, 2014).

The business model is to describe a fundamental principle that enterprises make values, transfer values, and gain values. In the first place, suppliers offer products to ctrip.com that include hotel room booking, air tickets, and tour products, etc. This price is the quotation price of suppliers.

The ctrip.com obtain the quotation price and product outline from suppliers; they will redo it and make extra value to these products or services. This process includes three-part that repricing, product development, product sale. If the present market is serious competition, then the company intends to reduce the price. This way, not only can retain regular customers, but it also can attract more new customers and potential customers. However, in this process of lowering cost, this part Ctrip.com needs to compensate their cash to suppliers (Gupta, 2014).

Regarding the part of product development, suppliers are divided into different types. There are hotel suppliers or airplane ticket suppliers, etc. Ctrip through researching and analyzing the habit behavior of

customers to summarize the additional needs of customers, then make the same type of product up to other product set so that customers can easily choose what they want. It is just one of the product development approaches of Ctrip.com. For product sale, Ctrip.com also has a gift coupon, Ctrip treasure, grow treasure in Ctrip wealthy center. It is a strategy that Ctrip.com pay the cost for making the company more famous, to attract more customers come to the assumption in Ctrip.com. Such as Baidu.com and Google.com use the keyword to search is a similar way as this (Bao, Li & Zheng, 2013).

In the end, after customers have purchased products and services in Ctrip.com, the suppliers of products and services need to pay a commission according to percentage to Ctrip.com. Therefore, Ctrip.com's almost income comes from the commission. Besides, it also has some income from the advertisement that suppliers advertise their products on Ctrip.com, but not the primary income.

### **Research Background**

Nowadays, increasingly competitive e-commerce industry, the survival, and development of travel e-commerce is no longer an easy task. If you want to seize market opportunities and gain market share or enhance the brand value of travel e-commerce, the marketing strategy seems particularly critical. If the marketing strategy is not correct, it will seriously lead to the loss of customers and the failure of business bankruptcy; if the marketing strategy is formulated correctly, it will create massive value for the enterprise and achieve high profits.

### **Research Problems**

At present, a lot of research has been done on the development model, business model, and profit method of e-commerce about the tourism market. Among these analyses of the e-commerce, the model involves part of the marketing model analysis. Most of the research focuses on the innovative development of the model, and some of it refers to marketing strategy but based on the marketing model. In recent years, China's tourism e-

commerce activities have been increasing, but there are also many disputes between users and tourism e-commerce platforms. Qunar.com tourism e-commerce platform that has been exposed online has sold cross-border outbound air tickets at a low price. For some reason, the sale of air tickets before the platform defaulted caused the user's trust in the platform to decline sharply. Furthermore, to complete the sales task or increase their sales commission, many sales personnel of travel websites often exaggerate the characteristics and advantages of travel products, and it is easy to cause disputes after the sale is completed. Finally, these travel websites often rely on venture capital to operate. Especially as the business continues to expand, many investors continue to raise funds. Once the problem of the capital chain appears, it is easy to cause bankruptcy. Many travel agencies do not pay enough attention to travel e-commerce marketing strategies and fail to establish e-commerce channels on time. Although some travel agencies have established e-commerce platforms, they are often more important than content. They do not pay enough attention to promoting e-commerce platforms and the economic benefits they can bring. Companies in these travel industries tend to pay more attention to the sales of corporate entities. However, people now have a lot of work and require a more comprehensive introduction to tourism products in a shorter period. This was an advantage of tourism e-commerce; ignoring these companies result in a direct loss of economy and customers. So for the tourism industry, the development of e-commerce has promoted competition in the tourism industry, and it has inevitably increased the pressure on tourism companies. Only by finding the right and appropriate marketing strategies can seize the opportunity (Chevrier, 2018).

### **Objective of the study**

With the continuous development of China's tourism e-commerce, a variety of operating modes of tourism e-commerce have emerged in the tourism e-commerce market. The major tourism e-commerce companies have gradually explored the combination of the tourism consumer market and their conditions. This study was to examine that a suitable marketing strategy for online market development is essential for tourism e-commerce companies. This research also intends to investigate the factors that influence the market share of



travel e-commerce. Furthermore, to examine the influence of products, promotion, place, the customer value proposition in the online market. This paper starts with the analysis of the development and changes of Ctrip's marketing strategy. It uses this to study marketing strategies that can be used for reference and improvement by other tourism e-commerce businesses.

### **Scope of the study**

This paper uses a documentary research format to investigate the influence of product promotion, place, customer value proposition on market share toward travel e-commerce marketing strategy.

### **Research Significance**

With the continuous expansion of the scale of China's travel e-commerce market and the rise of various travel e-commerce websites, major travel e-commerce websites have gradually followed the trend and are increasingly diversified. For example, Qiongyou.com sharing optimization to Taobao Cooperate provides high-quality outbound tourism products; Ma fengwo.com has developed from an information interactive sharing model to expand online and offline markets simultaneously and signed cooperation with tourism service agencies. At present, various travel e-commerce websites have continuously adjusted their marketing strategies to gain more significant market share and occupy more travel consumer markets. Different online travel websites have constantly launched mobile clients and operated group purchases with hotels and other operations by providing differentiated products or services differentiation, and establish a right brand image to enhance their industry competitiveness (Choi & Liu, 2018).

### **Literatures Review**

Marketing strategy is a long-term, forward-looking approach and an overall game plan of any organization or any business with the fundamental goal of achieving a sustainable competitive advantage by understanding the needs and wants of customers (Baker, 2008). Through coordinated product strategy, pricing

strategy, place strategy, and promotion strategy to achieving corporate goals by providing customer satisfactory goods and service.

A market is the prospective travel consumer of a travel component or a tour package at the point of origin. At the same time, the destination is the place to visited or experienced within a geographical area of operation (Barbara & Andrew, 1980). This is a truly global industry, which needs to be studied from multiple perspectives. The traditional tourism market is very different from today's tourism market, so the marketing model also needs to be changed accordingly. With the improvement of people's life quality and the increase of public holidays formulated by the state in to promote the development of tourism, domestic tourism has become increasingly mature. In recent years, the number of outbound tourists has also increased year by year, thus the demand for tourism, which showed a rising trend.

With the variety of travel ways increase for tourists, in recent years, tourists in China have no longer been limited to participating in traditional tour groups. Therefore, there are more and more demands for travel e-commerce websites that can facilitate their travel, and they are more dependent on the use of tourism. Travel services are provided by e-commerce enhance travel experience (Dai, Jiang, Yang & Ma, 2013).

However, due to the low threshold of online travel e-commerce, more and more tourism e-commerce companies continue to enter. The tourism resources of various e-commerce companies are robbed. The tourism e-commerce market policies and regulations are still not perfect, and it is easy to encounter low-price competition and malicious competition.

At present, domestic tourism e-commerce is relatively rapid, and suppliers are faced with more choices. Under the influence of commercial interests, suppliers choose e-commerce companies that they are willing to cooperate with according to their conditions and needs. In recent years, some suppliers have flowed to competitors increased difficulty of the Ctrip.com competition.

A marketing strategy refers to a business's overall game plan for reaching prospective consumers and turning them into customers of the products or services the market provides. A marketing strategy contains the company's value proposition, essential brand messaging, data on target customer demographics, and other high-level elements (Barone, 2019). Nowadays, an appropriate market strategy is very significant for travel e-commerce to gain travel market share. In the earlier period Ctrip didn't recognize how to make a suitable marketing strategy, promotion, and advertising more than products and services of providing then caused cost more than income. Then Ctrip realized that the correct business model and marketing strategy imperative for its own business to develop.

Online intermediaries allow customers and online sellers to maximize efficiency and effectiveness. Besides, online intermediaries sometimes support online social networks, which create a social community for suppliers and customers and directly connect them. Because of the dramatically increasing trend of e-commerce development, online sites allow suppliers and customers to do business in a digital environment (Chaffey & Ellis, 2012). Ctrip as a travel online e-commerce, the online market not only helpful in connecting tourists and travel agencies or suppliers. But also helpful when Ctrip handles the payment and processing of any orders, which adds an extra level of security for consumers and assistance for a travel agency or suppliers (Hendricks, 2019). Ctrip has caught up with the rapid development of the global internet, the improvement of network payment security, and the whole industry's advance to the internet, creating a pleasant network environment for the development of tourism e-commerce.

Most of the traditional marketing strategies in the tourism industry lack comprehensive planning, and it can't set targeted marketing strategies according to their business conditions. Some merchants blindly follow the trend when they compete, have no plans to promote, or adopt outsourcing strategies to let other marketing companies advertise. Thus these plans make the marketing strategy unable to meet its specific conditions and achieve the expected results. After complementing the tourism e-commerce marketing strategy, starting from the

e-commerce enterprise's positioning, formulate appropriate marketing strategies. These spending of the workforce, material, and financial resources can make marketing effect as it should be.

Traditional marketing uses ordinary marketing methods to increase publicity and visitors. Not only content monotony but also just have a small scope, it does not highlight the characteristics of the enterprise itself, and it is not attractive to consumers. Therefore, most of the promotion is invalid promotion. This requires traditional strategy marketing to join the tourism e-commerce marketing strategy. First of all, establish an online platform and in the development of online should be better than offline and attract users online consumption, and then through the continuous improvement of online and offline construction then let users share word of mouth and enhance the trust of potential users in the market (Sherman, 2019).

In marketing, a product is an object or system made available for consumer use; it is anything that can be offered to a market to satisfy the desire or need of a customer (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017). Ctrip, as the leading integrated service travel company in China offers a full range of travel services to more than 90 million registered members, including air ticket bookings, hotel bookings, business travel management, holiday bookings, unique merchant activities, and offering travel advice. In the early period of Ctrip operations, Ctrip.com mainly made a profit from providing travel consumers with low prices and low discount air tickets. When launching new products with a rapid penetration strategy, and in this short period to expand market share (Jian & Xiao, 2015).

In October 2007, Ctrip.com and Baidu.com carried out a full range of cooperation in the hotel search to deal with competitive pressure for Ctrip.com from the rapid development of search price comparison websites. Users can directly use Baidu maps to check the information and location of nearly 35,000 hotels in Ctrip and can jump straight to Ctrip.com to book. Baidu.com as a search engine is relatively fast and convenient, and after combining with specializing in the provision of tourism information website, not only complementary advantages. But also promote the promotion of tourism information and the development of online tourism.

Such a way of cooperation also provides comprehensive content support to Baidu.com tourism information search and promote the growth of Ctrip.com predetermined volume, to achieve work for mutual benefit.

Almost all kinds of domestic tourism products can be found on Ctrip.com. Through technological innovation by integrating the internet resources and traditional tourism, the conventional way of tourism operation has been dramatically improved creating new product values. Ctrip utilizes the advantages of network resources that are interactive, open, free from time and space constraints, and dynamically integrates tourism resources. It also uses the model of travel e-commerce to make users' can operate fast and conveniently, and also the transaction links are combined and compressed, which significantly saves transaction costs. The transaction effect is significant. Ctrip has the most prominent tourism service contact center globally, with 12,000 seats and more than 10,000 call center employees.

Ctrip has also established long-term stable cooperative relations with 800,000 hotels in 234 countries and regions around the world; its tickets reservation network has covered nearly 2 million global routes, one-stop after-sales service, open tens of thousands of opening platforms for product selection, multiple travel guarantee, mobile application, website, full telephone service. On the one hand, the scale of operations provides more quality travel options, and on the other hand, the standardization of services is guaranteed. The quality of service is ensured, thus reducing operating costs.

In marketing, promotion refers to any type of marketing communication used to inform or persuade target audiences of the relative merits of a product, service, brand, or issue. The promotion aims to increase awareness, create interest, generate sales, or create brand loyalty. It is one of the essential elements of the market mix, including the four Ps, i.e., product, price, place, and promotion (Kotler & Kartajaya, 2018). If the users on the Ctrip station are VIP members, they can enjoy the consumption discount of nearly 3,000 particular merchants in most cities as low as 30 percent. In service, transaction, adopt the price discount strategy by adjusting the current price in the market to stimulate consumers to choose and buy their products. Use

quantity discounts and seasonal discounts, special prices, and a large number of quality products to attract consumers-Improved Ctrip's profitability as a whole.

Advertising Promotion: Ctrip.com not only provides very comprehensive tourist information on the official website. But also publishes the "Ctrip Walk China" series book and issues the "Ctrip free travel" Tourism Monthly Magazine.

Joint Promotion: Ctrip cooperates with several airlines, travel agencies, hotels in the development of joint promotions to form a substantial complementary advantage.

Place strategy in marketing incorporates the distribution by which a company puts its products and services in front of the consumers. A short quiz at the end will test your understanding. Place strategy plays a fundamental role in the marketing mix of a product or service. Place strategy outlines how and where a company will place its products and services to gain market share and consumer purchases (Simkin & Dibb, 2013). Nowadays, China's scaled online travel e-commerce is like two-way marketing, such as Ctrip.com that uses computer and mobile channel marketing. The major e-commerce companies regularly update the construction website according to the characteristics of their own business and service content. The mobile phone of the mobile terminal is also increasing the promotion and upgrading to enhance the practicability and applicability of the software and to improve the business content according to the changes in market demand at any time. The massive application market promotes to increase the download volume of mobile phones, which is convenient for the use of the computer and mobile phones of tourists. Users can form a dependence on e-commerce consumption and trust in tourism consumption, and the competition in tourism e-commerce is fierce. Today, it is crucial to grab the share of the mobile side.

Ctrip has invested a lot in improving its website research and development capabilities, and Ctrip also has established an online reservation system database, customer management system, order processing system, and service quality monitoring system. Ctrip has seen a significant increase in visits, and more suppliers are

more willing to cooperate with Ctrip. Ctrip has abundant resources of suppliers that expanded the choice of consumer users. Therefore Ctrip is more attractive for consumers and made the number of visitors is increasing, resulting in a substantial increase in trading volume.

Mark De Leon's value proposition will provide convincing reasons why a customer should buy a product and also differentiate your product from competitors. Gaining a customer's attention and approval will help build sales faster and more profitably, as well as work to increase market share (Frow & Payne, 2011). Understanding customer needs essential because it helps promote the product. A brand is the perception of a product, service, or company designed to stay in the minds of targeted consumers. Customers often use "mental shortcuts" to make purchase decisions, meaning that they rely on brand familiarity to make faster decisions (Shen & Yang, 2019). At present, China's tourism e-commerce adopts Ctrip's or eLong's mode. The business consists of ticket reservations, hotel reservations, holiday tour products, company travel, etc. The outcomes of online travel e-commerce appear highly homogenized and vicious price competition, making the industry can't develop orderly and healthy by hindering.

After technological innovation Ctrip makes market segments to develop new products such as team tours and conference reservations, deeply explore the potential of the online travel consumer market, and form a complete technological innovation and independent research and development system. Moreover, through the integration of online and offline channels to operate their brands, strengthen the core competitiveness of the website and brand advantages, and comprehensively enhance profitability.

Market share is the percentage of a market (defined in terms of either units or revenue) accounted for by a specific entity. "Marketers need to be able to translate and incorporate sales targets into a market share. This will demonstrate whether forecasts are to be attained by growing with the market or by capturing share from competitors. The latter will almost always be more difficult to achieve. Market share is closely monitored for signs of change in the competitive landscape, and it frequently drives strategic or tactical action (Glaesser,

Kester, Paulose, Alizadeh & Valentin, 2017). According to the newest research report of Analysys International Data Base, the macroeconomic and tourism growth slowdown has affected the growth of the online travel market. The ticket market has been regulated by the airline's "straightening and lowering" competition and bundling sales.

The impact of the health incident has intensified the narrowing of the growth rate of online tourism market transactions and finally increased by 9.3% year-on-year in 2018.

On the one hand, the tourist has got mature travel to consume habits and promote this tourism e-commerce market to develop higher. On the other hand, online tourism services are combined with offline and provide standard products. It helps suppliers offer better services in the tourism industry chain.

Travel e-commerce has been the main strength of tourism development. Tourism e-commerce like Trip keeps promoting increase revenue because it continues to study the connection between suppliers and customers. On the whole, in the short term, the head manufacturers will still put the market in a high concentration state by the accumulated high barriers.

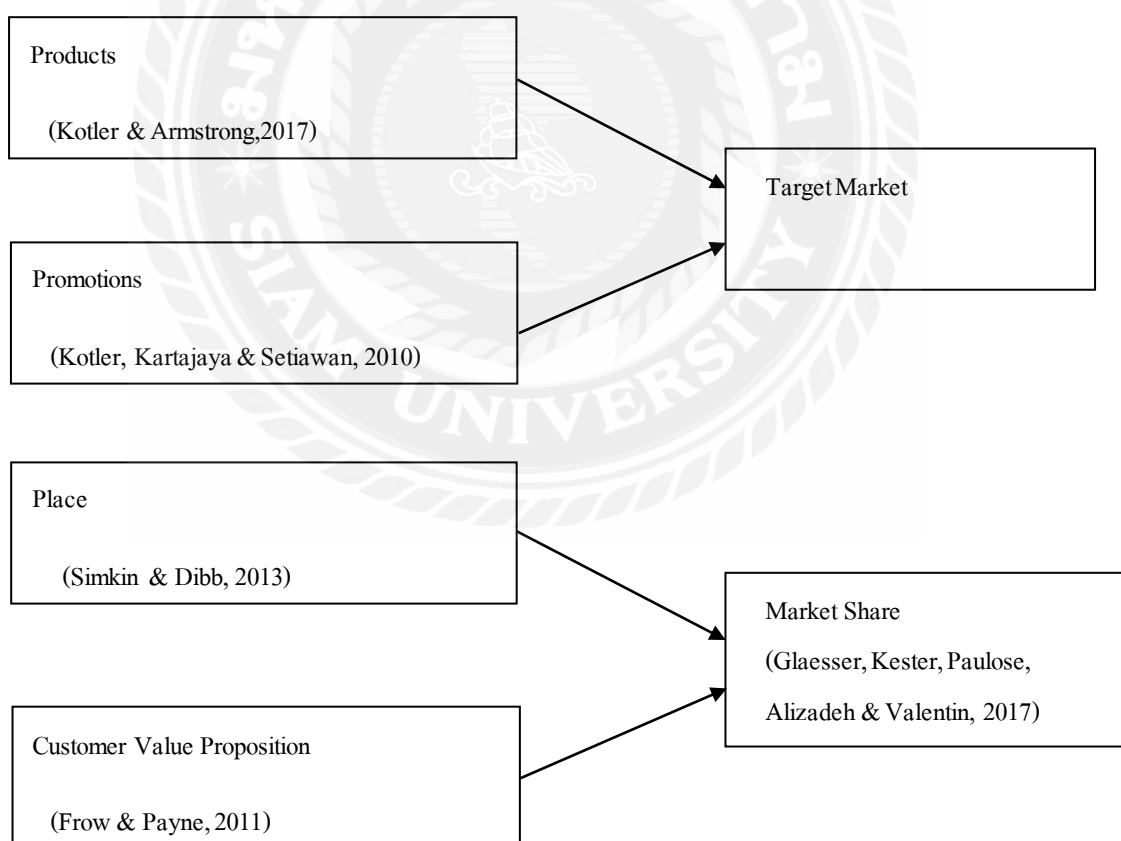
According to analyze the data, the transportation booking market in the online travel market still accounts for the leading share of the transaction. Comparing with the 2017 years, the percentage of online transportation booking markets fell 1.7%, while online accommodation bookings and online holiday travel market shares were kept increasing trend with 1.5% and 0.2% (Han & Xing, 2019). Tourism e-commerce business continues to upgrade online tourism products, expand more online tourist holiday destinations, outbound travel, and domestic new destinations. Also, update the online holiday product structure. More local amusement products become the main component of online holiday products. Online tourism is continuously recognized by the capital market. Online holiday integrated online travel agency, outbound travel, non-standard accommodation, peripheral travel, and other areas of capital intervention are driving the industry to accelerate development. From the perspective of market segments, as people pay more attention to the tourism experience,



the proportion of online accommodation and online holiday transactions in the online travel market has increased. Among them, housing as a nuclear one in the travel experience accounting for 19.3%, an increase of 1.5% year-on-year.

### Finding and Conclusion

Figure: Model used as a guideline for this research



## **Recommendation**

Since the long-term development, Ctrip business has mainly come from air tickets and hotels reservation. Compared with the same travel e-commerce companies such as Tuniu.com and Mafengwo.com, which have arisen later, Ctrip.com has stayed in a single business profit model for a long time, and later acquired Qunar.com, which the network, the business of the two home appliances business is also primarily coincident.

As a customer service advantage in the online tourism industry, it also has become the cost pain point of Ctrip. The vast customer service team has to pay a large salary, and these expenses need to be earned back from the users, which leads to the lack of price advantage of the same product compare with competitors.

With the continuous improvement of the living standards of the people, the people's disposable income is increasing. Many tourism e-commerce companies have to think significantly to develop domestic and foreign tourism products, starting from different tourist groups and different consumption habits. The group travels abroad or privately-guided private tour guide services, as well as contact with local people to provide unique local special services, as well as the sale of individual tourist activities that are convenient for tourists, to continually dig deep and find new consumption points (Catherine & Rob, 2009).

Collect information through the robust resource support tourism e-commerce, establish a customer information resource database, analyze the general consumption propensity and consumption pain points of

various customers in time by arranging big data, and then let the product department make timely plans the information. Coping with the solution and developing new tourism products, and based on this customer information, determine the product price for each customer group.

Through cooperation with tourism e-commerce, those have industry influence, joining hands and sharing resources to strengthen the reputation and brand value further, expand the sales of tourism products, and strictly follow the standards of tourism e-commerce industry to provide quality services. Win the target market, increase customer and market share, and achieve high-efficiency and high-yield goals.

Though Ctrip had developed previously more than many other travel e-commerce, Fliggy and Meituan will get the trends that the later comers surpass the formers. Fliggy is most similar to Ctrip at the beginning that made not an appropriate marketing strategy without product support. Simultaneously, Fliggy had explored suitable marketing strategy for own business that rely on Alibaba to make much cooperation with travel agency even overseas agency (Liao, Chen & Sun 2010).

Meituan is another travel e-commerce competitor of Ctrip, which develops later than Ctrip for ten years. However, Meituan gained 46% of the travel online market share nearly half of this market (Chao, 2018). Meituan made promotions that suitable for customer value proposition and reliance on the service of takeaway food to draw customers. What Meituan explained that marketing strategy needs products, advertising, place, and customer value proposition match marketing (Xiong, 2011).

There is a rapidly changing in tourism market nowadays, to develop in this market and stay competitive for a long time, it is necessary to adapt tourism e-commerce and traditional tourism to each other, adjust their marketing strategies according to market changes, and be able to recognize disadvantages in their marketing strategies in time, and dare to compete and face challenges, and to meet needs of consumers. In short, tourism e-commerce companies should strive to keep pace with the market and choose the right marketing strategy for their self.

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