



MARKETING OF LOW-COST CARRIERS

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Abstract

The article deals with the marketing of low-cost airlines and marketing strategies. The article primarily focuses on three selected airlines - Wizz Air, Ryanair and easyJet. The aim of this article is to propose specific possibilities for improving marketing activities based on the theoretical basis obtained from relevant sources and the subsequent processing of the practical part. Proposals are based on the analysis of marketing strategies, including marketing mix, Porter's five forces model, perception map, passenger segmentation, BCG matrix and Ansoff matrix, and evaluate the success and effectiveness of airline marketing activities. The results of the analysis show that airlines could improve their marketing activities through various strategies, such as increasing investment in digital marketing, improving service and customer experience, adapting prices and product packages to the needs of different passenger segments, and expanding the market into new areas. These recommendations can help airlines improve their competitiveness and market success and contribute to their long-term success.

Keywords

marketing, marketing strategy, marketing of low-cost carriers, low-cost carriers, Wizz Air, Ryanair, easyJet.

1. INTRODUCTION

These days, low-cost airlines are an increasingly popular travel choice for many people. This final thesis focuses on the issue of marketing of low-cost airlines. The aim of the work is to propose specific possibilities for improving the marketing activities of selected airlines with the aim of improving their competitiveness and success on the market. The proposal is based on the analysis of marketing strategies and activities of airlines, with an emphasis on their success and efficiency.

The first chapter provides an overview of the professional literature in the field of airline marketing, with an emphasis on low-cost airlines. At the same time, it provides information on developments and trends in this area.

The second chapter, Methodology of the work, explains the methods used in the work and describes the selection of airlines and the basic models of marketing strategies that were used in the analysis. Next, this chapter explains the steps and procedures that were used in researching the marketing activities of low-cost airlines.

The third chapter of this final thesis focuses on the analysis of marketing strategies of selected airlines using marketing mix, Porter's five forces model, perception map, passenger segmentation, BCG matrix and Ansoff matrix.

The fourth chapter describes specific marketing activities of selected companies. These activities are described in detail and analysed in terms of their effectiveness and success in the market. It also considers how these activities contribute to the overall strategy of companies and how it affects their competitiveness.

The last chapter of this article focuses on proposing ways to make the marketing activities of airlines more efficient. They are based on the analysis of marketing strategies and assets of

selected companies, a summary of the possibilities of improvement and optimization of these activities, which could lead to better results in the field of marketing.

2. METHODOLOGY

The analysis is the first step in this methodology and allows us to obtain the necessary information about the marketing of low-cost airlines. In this step, we will focus on researching relevant literature and sources that will help us better understand the topic of our work. As part of this step, we will also analyse the strategies and tactics these companies use to acquire customers and stay competitive.

When creating a marketing strategy, we must consider several factors, including the competitive environment, customer needs and preferences, and strengths and weaknesses. These basic models of marketing strategies allow us a systematic approach to creating an effective and sustainable marketing strategy. Therefore, in the third chapter, we will devote ourselves to a detailed analysis of each of these models and apply them to real examples in the business environment. Based on this analysis, we will be able to create a comprehensive view of marketing strategies and provide guidance and recommendations on how we can improve our results on the market.

Synthesis is the second step in our work methodology and allows us to generate new ideas and perspectives. In this step we will try to combine the information we got in the first step and create new ideas. This step will help us find out how low-cost airlines can improve their strategies and improve their competitiveness. We will also focus on the use of new technologies and digital tools in the marketing of low-cost airlines.

Comparison is the third step of the work methodology and allows us to compare different approaches to the topic and

discuss their strengths and weaknesses. In this step, we will focus on comparing the different marketing strategies of low-cost airlines and discuss how these strategies work and what could be improved. We will also try to compare the different digital tools used by low-cost airlines and discuss the impact they have on their marketing strategy. This step allows us to make a final summary and evaluate our results.

3. MARKETING MIX AND ITS APPLICATION IN SELECTED AIRLINES

In addition to the marketing mix, we used other marketing models because the nature of the work required it. The basic elements of each model will be analysed and explained in detail to help understand how these models can be used to achieve success in the market. In this chapter, we will focus on the application of these marketing tools in the environment of selected airlines. Our goal is to explore how these tools help airlines identify their customers, improve their products and services, and increase their competitiveness in the market.

3.1. Marketing mix 7P'S

The marketing mix is an important tool for any business because it helps determine a strategy that will be effective in reaching customers and improving business performance. The concept of the "marketing mix" was introduced by Neil Borden in the 1950s, and the mix of different means was soon renamed the 4Ps by McCarthy. The 4Ps of the marketing mix are important to highlight some unique aspects of low-cost airline marketing. The 4P marketing mix includes four key elements: product, price, place, and promotion.

The 7P marketing mix is an extension of the classic 4P marketing mix concept. In addition to the four key elements, it also includes three other elements, namely people, processes, and physical evidence. This expanded model helps better account for marketing activities that are important to certain industries and types of businesses. A clear diagram of the 7P marketing mix is shown in figure no. 1.

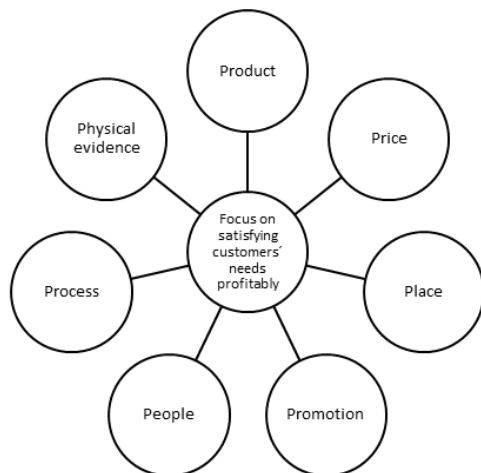


Figure 1 - The Marketing Mix 7P's

3.2. Porter's five forces model

Another of the marketing strategy models is Porter's five forces model. This marketing tool is used to assess the level of competition in each industry and uses the economics of industrial organizations. Its purpose is to effectively assess the competitive environment and potential profitability of the industry. If these forces change, it can directly affect the industry and the companies within it. Therefore, it is important to understand and respond to them for companies to maintain or gain a competitive advantage.

Here are Porter's five forces:

- 1 Threat of substitute products or services
- 2 Threat of existing competition
- 3 Threat of new competition
- 4 Bargaining power of suppliers
- 5 Bargaining power of customers

3.2.1. Threat of substitute products or services

Traveling by car or train can be an alternative to flying, but for some journeys traveling by air can be more time efficient. For example, for a trip from London to Barcelona, it would take several days to travel by car or train, while a flight would only take a few hours.

3.2.2. Intensity of rivalry between competitors

Competition among low-cost airlines in Europe is very high. By 2021, Ryanair said it wants to become the largest airline in Europe, competing with other low-cost carriers such as Wizzair and EasyJet, as well as traditional airlines.

3.2.3. Threat of new competition

In 2021, Flyr announced its plans to enter the low-cost market in Europe, which could be a potential threat to the likes of Ryanair, Wizzair and EasyJet. Flyr plans to begin operations in 2022 to compete with existing low-cost airlines.

3.2.4. Bargaining power of suppliers

In 2021, airlines complained about high rental fees at airports, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, when flight volumes were significantly reduced. Ryanair, for example, has accused airport operators of not sufficiently reducing the rent charge, which is still a significant cost to airlines.

3.2.5. Bargaining power of customers

Customers tend to compare prices between low-cost airlines and choose the one that offers the lowest prices. For example, in 2021, Ryanair decided to reduce ticket prices to a minimum to retain customers during the pandemic and compete with other airlines.

3.3. Perceptual map

A brand positioning map, also known as a perception map, is a graphical representation of how consumers perceive the positioning of a product or brand relative to competing products or brands. This map allows marketers and product development managers to better understand how consumers perceive their brand or product relative to their competition. A brand positioning map often includes two dimensions that are relevant to consumers, such as price and quality, and each brand or product is shown as a point on this map. The most common way to create a perceptual map is to construct two X and Y axes that are perpendicular to each other. It is not the only way to create a perceptual map, but it is the most used. Brands or products that are closer to each other are perceived by consumers as similar or comparable, while those that are further away are perceived as different. A brand positioning map can help marketers identify opportunities for new products or linking existing products to consumer demands. Such a map provides a clear, but on the other hand, subjective view of where the company is within the competition.

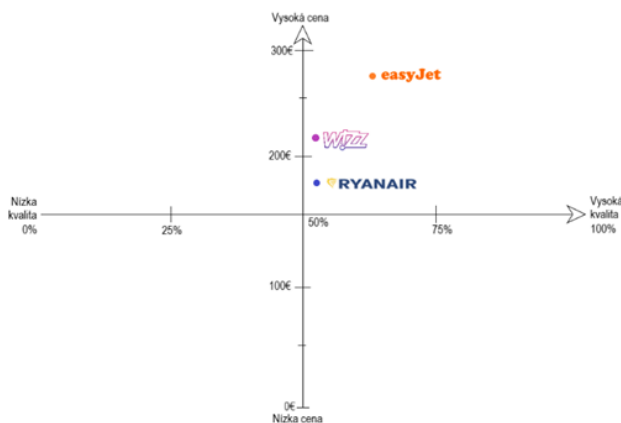


Figure 2 - The Perceptual Map

Based on the collected data, we created a perceptual map (Figure no. 2), where we displayed the ticket prices and quality of the airlines Wizz Air, Ryanair and easyJet. On the X-axis we have placed the quality rating of the airlines, where easyJet has the highest rating and Wizz Air and Ryanair have the lowest rating. On the Y-axis we have placed the ticket prices, where Ryanair has the lowest price and easyJet has the highest price.

3.4. Segmentation

Customer segmentation is the process of dividing customers into different groups based on common characteristics, needs and preferences. These groups can then be targeted with marketing campaigns and offers that are tailored to their specific needs. In the case of low-cost air transport, customer segmentation is an important tool that provides companies with customers with the greatest potential for purchases and thereby companies can gain a better position in the market.

In low-cost air transport, customer segmentation can be implemented using the following criteria:

3.4.1. Demographic segmentation

Customers are segmented according to their demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, income, education, and marital status. These characteristics can influence the customer's preferences when choosing a destination, type of travel and ticket price.

3.4.2. Geographical segmentation

In geographic segmentation, customers are divided based on their geographic location, such as by country, region, or city. This allows airlines to target specific destinations and target groups of customers interested in traveling to specific areas.

3.4.3. Psychographic segmentation

Psychographic segmentation divides customers according to their lifestyle, values, interests, and personality traits. This segmentation allows airlines to target customers who have similar interests and preferences and tailor their offers and marketing campaigns based on their needs.

3.4.4. According to the type of travel

Customers are segmented based on their type of travel, such as business travel, tourism, or visiting friends and family. This allows airlines to tailor their offers and services based on the needs of specific types of passengers.

3.4.5. According to the frequency of flying

Customers are divided based on how often they fly. This allows airlines to tailor their offers and services to frequent flyers and offer them better prices and increased benefits. For example, loyalty point programs or discounts for regular travellers. Benefits may include faster check-in, the ability to choose your seat on board, improved food services, and more. These benefits can be attractive to regular travellers and can motivate them to use the airline's services more often.

Figure no. 3 shows a bar graph showing the distribution of visitors of three airlines - Wizz Air, Ryanair and easyJet - by gender. The graph has 6 columns, with the first set of three columns showing the representation of women and the second set of three columns showing the representation of men.

The X-axis shows the individual companies that are compared, and the Y-axis shows the percentage of visitors in each gender group. The columns are colour coded for each airline. In the first three columns we see the representation of women. Wizz Air has the highest percentage of female representation with 51.71%. It is followed by Ryanair with 53.92% and easyJet with 53.59%. In the second group of columns we see the representation of men. Ryanair has the highest percentage of male representation with 46.08%, followed by easyJet with 46.41% and Wizz Air with 42.29%.

This bar graph allows us to easily compare the representation of visitors by gender in individual airlines and to draw conclusions about the preferences of individual groups.

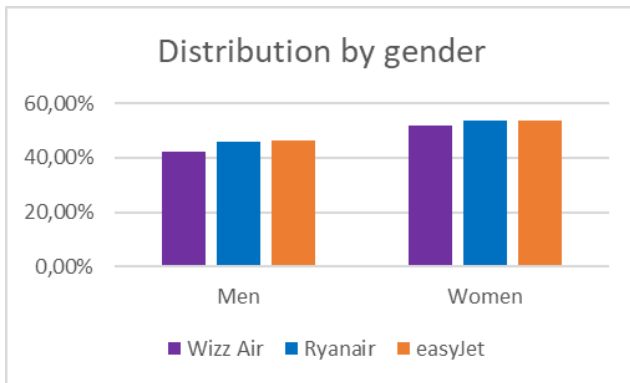


Figure 3 - Distribution by gender

Another division is the division by age. Bar diagram in picture no. 9 shows the percentage representation of passengers in individual age groups in three airlines - Wizz Air, Ryanair and easyJet. The X-axis shows individual age groups, and the Y-axis shows the percentage of passengers in each airline. The columns are color coded for each airline. We see that the overall highest percentage of passengers are in the 25-34 age group. Wizz Air has the largest share of passengers with 34.75%, followed by Ryanair with 32.21% and easyJet with 30.14%. In the 18-24 age group, Ryanair has the highest percentage of passengers at 18.08%, while easyJet has the lowest percentage of passengers in this age group at 16.99%. In the 35-44 age group, easyJet has the highest percentage of passengers with 21.66%, while Wizz Air has the lowest percentage of passengers in this age group with 22.50%. In the 45-54 age group, Ryanair has the highest percentage of passengers at 14.38%, while easyJet has the lowest percentage of passengers in this age group at 15.74%. In the 55-64 age group, easyJet has the highest percentage of passengers with 9.69%, while Wizz Air has the lowest percentage of passengers in this age group with 7.71%. In the over 65 age group, easyJet has the highest percentage of passengers at 5.78%, while Ryanair has the lowest percentage of passengers in this age group at 4.55%.

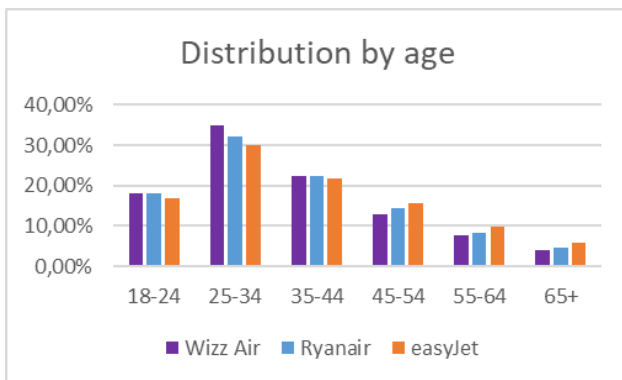


Figure 4 - Distribution by age

3.5. BCG matrix

The BCG matrix consists of four quadrants that account for high and low market share and high and low growth potential. Each quadrant is named and has specific characteristics.

Each of the four quadrants represents a specific combination of relative market share and growth:

1. Low growth, high share: companies should milk these "cash cows" for cash to reinvest.
2. High growth, high share: companies should invest heavily in these "stars" because they have high future potential.
3. High growth, low share: companies should invest in these "question marks" or discard them depending on their chances of becoming stars.
4. Low share, low growth: companies should cull, get rid of, or relocate these "pets".

3.6. Ansoff matrix

The Ansoff matrix is an analytical tool used to formulate a growth strategy for a company. This model was developed by Igor Ansoff in 1957 and is still popular today in the field of strategic planning and marketing. The matrix consists of four categories: existing products in existing markets, new products in existing markets, existing products in new markets and new products in new markets. Each category represents a certain type of growth strategy that a company can choose.

The Ansoff matrix is divided into four quadrants. The primary goal of the matrix is to identify the company's growth opportunities, so it is necessary to combine markets and products and divide them according to whether they are new or already existing. Subsequently, a matrix is created in which markets are located on the horizontal axis and products on the vertical axis. We further divide both variables (i.e., markets and products) into existing and new. The intersection of existing and new products and markets creates four quadrants that determine our specific growth strategy. In the following table we see the Ansoff matrix with four quadrants.

		Products	
		Existing	New
Markets	Existing	Market penetration	Product expansion
	New	Market development	Diversification

Figure 5 - The Ansoff Matrix

3.6.1. Ansoff matrix for Wizzair

Market penetration

Wizz Air can increase its market share in current markets by improving its offer and competitiveness against other low-cost airlines as well as traditional airlines. This may include improving service quality, increasing the number of flights, increasing flight capacity, expanding the number of destinations, and increasing cost efficiency.

Product development

Wizz Air may introduce new products or services, such as including the provision of travel insurance or car hire directly from their website. They can also expand into the premium segment of the market where they could offer luxury flights or services.

Market expansion

Wizz Air may enter new markets, for example new countries or new destinations. They could also increase the number of flights in existing markets to welcome more passengers.

Diversification

Wizz Air can invest in other areas that are linked to tourism, such as bus travel across Europe.

3.6.2. Ansoff matrix for Ryanair

Market penetration

Ryanair could focus on existing markets and try to gain more market share. They can offer cheaper ticket prices than the competition, improve the quality of their services and increase brand awareness.

Product development

Ryanair could develop its existing products, for example with more comfortable seats on board. Another alternative is to improve the quality of services, for example by ensuring a problem-free Wi-Fi connection on board the plane.

Market expansion

Ryanair could try to find new markets, for example by expanding its destinations or starting flights to new countries.

Diversification

Ryanair could develop new products that may or may not be related to air travel, such as an airport transfer or a complete journey planner. They can also expand into other industries such as tourism.

4. ANALYSIS OF MARKETING ACTIVITIES OF SELECTED LOW-COST AIRLINES

Marketing channels are the ways in which companies communicate with their customers and try to sell their products or services. These channels can include various media such as TV and radio ads, print ads, digital media ads, email marketing, social media and many more. Each marketing channel has its own advantages and disadvantages, and not every channel is suitable for every company or product. For example, television advertising can be effective for large brands with extensive advertising budgets, while small businesses might choose other channels such as email marketing or social media. It is important to choose the right marketing channels for your company and product to achieve maximum results within the designated budget and target market. Organic search and direct search are key channels for airlines such as Wizz Air, Ryanair, and EasyJet to acquire new customers and retain existing ones. Organic search occurs when a customer uses a search engine on the Internet and finds a company's website. A direct search occurs when a customer enters the exact name of a website into a search engine. There are some factors that explain why airlines like Wizz Air, Ryanair and EasyJet use these channels the most. One factor may be that airlines have strong brands and a strong online presence, so customers may be motivated to search directly for the company's website. In addition, organic search and direct search are relatively inexpensive and effective ways for companies to get traffic to their website. This is not to say that airlines do not fully utilize other marketing channels. Every company has unique needs and goals that influence their decisions about which channels to use. For example, companies can use social media to increase brand awareness and direct marketing, such as email marketing, to acquire new customers and retain existing ones. Overall, however, organic, and direct search remain important channels for airlines due to their efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

5. POSSIBILITIES OF IMPROVING THE MARKETING OF LOW-COST AIRLINES

5.1. Social networks

This table no. 1 shows the number of fans and followers of each company on various social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and TikTok.

Table 1 - Fan base on social networks

	Wizz Air	Ryanair	easyJet
Facebook	3 412 878	5 012 213	1 873 244
Instagram	574 tis.	971 tis.	431 tis.
Twitter	67,3 tis.	713,9 tis.	576,9 tis.
TikTok - Likes	0	29,1 mil.	2,6 mil.
TikTok Follows	-	2 mil.	223,3 tis.

In terms of marketing, individual companies could improve their social media presence by trying to better interact with their fans

and followers. They can try to share relevant and interesting content that might engage their target audience.

Wizz Air has a relatively small number of fans and followers on Twitter and TikTok compared to Ryanair and easyJet. It can try to improve its presence on these platforms by posting regular and interesting content that would appeal to travellers and aviation fans. Wizz Air could improve its operations by publishing regular and interesting content that would appeal to travellers and air travel fans. She can also try to communicate better with her fans and followers to gain their trust and loyalty.

From the table, we can see that Wizz Air has not yet published any post on TikTok, therefore it has 0 likes and only a small number of fans in this box. The company could change this situation by participating more actively on TikTok and posting regular and relevant content that would engage its target audience.

Wizz Air could publish short videos on TikTok that would show travel and the adventures that come with it in an interesting way. For example, it could post videos that show interesting places that passengers can visit, or videos that show how passengers can prepare for a flight. He could also use popular trends and funny moments to attract the attention of his followers and thus increase his visibility on TikTok. In addition, Wizz Air could use influencer marketing and work with popular influencers on TikTok to help it gain new fans and increase its awareness on the network. By doing so, they could improve their presence on TikTok and increase their visibility to travellers who might be interested in their services.

Ryanair has a huge number of likes on TikTok, which means that its content is popular and attracts a lot of attention. However, it has a negligible number of fans compared to the number of likes. He can try to improve his presence on TikTok by sharing interesting content that could motivate people to follow him and become his fans. It could also improve its presence on TikTok and other platforms by seeking more engagement and interaction with its fans. It can also seek to better personalize its content and try to reach travellers and fans directly and relevantly.

EasyJet has a relatively low number of fans across all platforms, including TikTok. It can try to improve its social media presence by regularly sharing interesting and relevant content that would engage travellers and aviation fans. They could also use influencers and work with them to increase their visibility and gain new fans.

easyJet could improve its presence on all social media by trying to regularly share interesting and relevant content. She can also seek to collaborate with influencers who would help her gain new fans and increase her visibility.

5.2. Webpages

Table no. 2 expresses the traffic of selected airlines' websites, which includes information on monthly visits, new visitors, number of pages per visit, duration of visit and exit rates.

Monthly visits indicate the number of visits to the site for one month. Monthly new visitors refer to the number of unique visitors who visited the site for the first time in each month.

Visits/New Visitors indicates the average number of visits per new visitor. Visit duration is the average time a visitor spends on a site, while pages per visit refers to the average number of pages a visitor views during a single visit. Bounce rate expresses the percentage of visitors who left the page without taking any action (e.g., clicking a link or filling out a form). A higher bounce rate can be a sign that visitors didn't find what they were looking for or didn't feel motivated enough to stay on the site longer. The green colour in the table represents the company that is the winner in the given category, i.e., the best among the three and the red colour indicates the company with the worst results.

Table 2 - Official website traffic

	wizzair.com	ryanair.com	easyjet.com
Monthly visits	17,85 mil.	48,79 mil.	22,30 mil.
Monthly unique visitors	7,846 mil.	21,22 mil.	10,79 mil.
Visits / Unique visitors	2,28	2,3	2,07
Visit duration	0:06:56	0:07:04	0:06:59
Pages per visit	6,21	7,21	5,49
Bounce rate	29,47%	30,63%	34,61%

Based on the data provided, airlines should take some of the following steps to improve their marketing activities:

1. To improve the user experience on websites:

Since Ryanair and easyJet have relatively high bounce rates, these companies could try to improve the user experience of their websites. This could include improving site navigation, simplifying the booking process, or providing more information about travel packages and offers.

2. Improve content quality:

Companies could try to improve the quality of their website content to attract more visitors and keep them on the site. This could include improving the visual design, providing more information about destinations, or providing useful travel tips.

3. Focus on acquiring new visitors:

Since Ryanair has the highest number of visits per unique visitor, focusing on acquiring new visitors could be beneficial for the company. They can do this by using digital ads and marketing campaigns aimed at new visitors.

4. Increase the conversion rate:

Companies could try to improve the conversion rate of their website, which could lead to an increase in site visits as well as an increase in conversions. They can do this by optimizing landing pages, testing different versions of the site, or improving site content to increase demand for their services.

5. Strengthen social media:

Businesses may consider boosting their social media presence as these platforms are becoming increasingly popular and are a great way to reach potential customers. They could invest in advertising campaigns and focus on sharing interesting content and stories related to their brand.

6. Use email marketing:

Email marketing can be an effective way for companies to keep in touch with existing customers and reach potential customers. They can send personalized emails such as news and offers to keep their customers interested.

7. Improve SEO:

A high ranking within search engines can be important for companies to increase the number of visits to the site. Companies should consider optimizing their website for SEO, which includes things like using keywords and improving their site content.

These steps could help airlines improve their marketing activities and attract more customers to their sites. However, it is important to remember that every company is unique and may require different steps and strategies to achieve its goals.

6. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the marketing strategies of three selected low-cost airlines - Wizz Air, Ryanair, and EasyJet - we concluded that these companies have very similar marketing strategies. All three companies use the 7P marketing mix, which means they focus not only on price, but also on product, place, promotion, processes, physical environment, and people.

However, Ryanair seems to be the most effective company in terms of pricing strategy as it offers the cheapest tickets of the three. These companies are big competitors in the market, which leads to fierce competition.

Given the results of the analysis, we created a perceptual map that allowed us to visually compare the position of these three airlines on the market. Based on the perception map, we saw that Ryanair appears to be the cheapest option, but EasyJet and Wizz Air have a stronger position in some areas.

Based on the analysis, we have identified some areas where these companies could improve their marketing strategies. Companies could improve their promotion and communication with target groups to increase awareness of their product offerings. In addition, they can expand their product portfolio to increase value for customers and improve their competitiveness in the market.

Overall, we conclude that low-cost airlines have very similar marketing strategies that focus on achieving competitive advantage through pricing strategy and process optimization. However, to maintain a strong position in the market, these companies must constantly improve and adapt their marketing strategies to the changing needs and preferences of customers.

Overall, marketing has been shown to be a key factor in the success of low-cost airlines. Their ability to offer low ticket prices

while maintaining quality service and customer satisfaction depends on an effective marketing strategy.

The results of this work can be useful for all those interested in the marketing of low-cost airlines. Moreover, this work can provide new ideas and inspiration for other researchers in this field.

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