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Changing Tourist Behaviour and the need for New Products

Our purpose is to identify why tourists choose the types of vacation they purchase. Tourist demand should not be spoken about in terms of product but in terms of motives. Consequently, supply must adapt to this new type of demand by creating new products.

It is fast becoming an obligation to know how to react to the new priorities of tourists and this involves re-thinking the role of management, strategy, and organization.

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1. Stakes

The world economy is currently confronted with change as well as with new stakes neither of which researchers or operators have taken into account. This obviously implies risks for the largest industry on the planet, namely Tourism.

The object of this article, which is the result of the conclusions of a survey, is to make a contribution to a field that carries more economic weight than the car industry but which paradoxically suffers from a serious lack of statistical information and research.

It is essential to further and to improve our knowledge about demand and to provide the actors with the necessary tools so that they can present a coherent and homogeneous configuration of their skills.

2. New trends

Our research has identified trends.

It is possible to identify the main motivating factors in terms of holidays.

Holidays are seen as something "sacred", even though the nature of what actually happens during this period may evolve. Of course, one can wonder if consumers' expectations are really new.

In any case, in the future it will be necessary for the tourist industry to take the following motives into account:

- The desire to discover which can be reduced to the "fantasy" involved in the act of discovering
- The need for risk free travel
- The need for individuality and ergonomics (personalization)
- The desire to do nothing and to live according to one's whims
- The need to get together in families but also to meet others

- The desire to be increasingly in harmony with the environment,
- The desire to manage time differently ¹

Certain basic trends may be factors of the micro-market. Conversely, some micro-changes are germs bearing the future (Antoine and Antoine Paille, 1997).

The emphasis on holidays has evolved according to our survey: the modern day tourist now goes away more in search of himself than to discover unknown places. He is more concerned with his personal “prosperity” and wishes above all to be taken care of and considered as an important individual.

Knowing how to respond to the new preoccupations of tourists on holiday is therefore an obligation for the people working in the tourist industry.

This means rethinking the problems of management, strategy, organization and even of marketing. The tourist industry has to be as flexible as possible. But too often products are for the mass market. Tourists have an increasing number of peripheral behavioral tendencies which can not be satisfied with a single product.

The behavior of the tourist may appear irrational. Within the space of a few minutes, the consumer can express interest for a cultural journey, then be on the verge of purchasing a stay in an hotel club in the tropics, but finally opt for a winter sports holiday.

The consumer is contradictory, different and unexpected (Boisdevesy, 1997). He dreams about freedom and adventure but lives and will continue to live his holidays in complete safety, only remotely connected to his fantasy world.

The consumer no longer belongs to a definite category. He is a multi-consumer, depending on the moment, the period, on needs and on desires.

¹ 30 qualitative conversations were had with people working in the tourist industry, 30 quantitative conversations were had with consumers of tourist products and 400 holiday-makers were quantitatively questioned.

3. New products

Tourism is at the very heart of this new approach to holidays because holidays are now both a luxury and a necessity in the modern world.

It is not the presentation of goods and services which is in question here but the way in which they are designed.

Let us take for example the way in which product supply has, as yet, failed to react to the number of single adults in France. According to official statistics there are currently 12 million single adults living in France yet in the majority the market continues to offer products based on “two people sharing”, with a supplement inflicted on those reserving as a single person. Such a potential market surely deserves a better deal.....

Supply must be adapted to a new type of demand. It must be emphasized here that holiday-makers’ and tourist requirements do not correspond to a particular product but to motives. They all wish to break with routine, with their habits and their daily lives, to get together as a family, in a couple, and amongst friends.

They want sun, warmth and an effortless vacation. It is difficult to assemble products suited to such abstract motives as a permanent renewal of products is required.

The development of new technology is reinforcing the effect of these changes. Faced with the necessity for a profound reorganization with regard to the construction of demand, today’s relatively young tourist industry is at a cross roads. The actors who adapt to this change will be the actors of Tourism in 2010.

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