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## **Ideas for Niche Marketing**

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With the conclusion of the period of what we may call the "era of mass tourism", tourism professionals are increasingly aware of the fact that no matter how good their product may be, it will never satisfy everyone. Instead, tourism officials have sought out different forms of niche marketing in which they try to aim their product toward the part of the public that is most disposed to visit their locale and to speak highly of it. While there are multiple ways to do this, it is clear that no niche marketing program will succeed without basic research. Research is not only the engine that drives good marketing; it is truly the marketer's eyes and ears. Below are a number of ideas on how to begin a niche marketing research program. Such a program need not be highly statistical or academic. In fact, a good deal of common sense research can be done by almost anyone who works within the tourism industry. In order to determine the type of niche marketing that your tourism entity may desire to do, consider some of the following ideas and concepts.

Think about what theoretical frameworks will guide your thought. For example you may want to consider a psychographic framework in which you look at the relationship between the local tourism community and the type of people it seeks to attract. Are the facilities in your community adequate for someone seeking a great deal of adventure or a more sedentary indoor experience? For example, a small tourism community might attract a very different clientele than a large city using culture as that locale's primary tourism resource. You will also want to consider how different your community is from its competitors. It is always a good idea for tourism community leaders to ask themselves four basic questions:

1. Why would anyone want to visit my community/locale?
2. What type of person would want to return after having visited my locale or attraction? What does my locale have to offer the return visitor?
3. Why would someone not visit my locale?
4. What type of person would not want to return after having visited my locale or attraction?

Another way to segment visitors is by age grouping. People who are deep into their senior years have very different wants and needs than people who are in their twenties. One of the largest age demographic groupings in North America is the baby boom generation. This generation can be divided into what we may call the "older baby boomers", ages 55-64, and the "younger baby-boomers", ages 46-55. Each of these subgroups has differing needs. The key to successful demographic tourism niche marketing is to make sure that your tourism product matches the niches you are marketing. Also, realize that there is no such thing as a single niche.

People fall into more than one category and to market successfully you must go after all of the groups that will be satisfied with your tourism product from a variety of perspectives. Take the time to develop a list of what is important to people in their senior years, middle age years, family years and pre-family years.

In today's world, families come in all sorts of sizes and combinations. One of the fastest growing groups is grandparent-grandchildren travelers. This new demographic group is especially hard to target as it is composed of two subgroups that have very different needs and desires.

Target your marketing to the twenty-first century's realities. For example, in the United States, a society values time as the most precious of resources. U.S. travelers are used to long hours of work, short vacations and often have fears of job security. European travelers, on the other hand, have a great deal more free time, tend to see leisure time not as a luxury but rather as part of life's necessities, and have less anxiety over the possibility of being laid-off. Asian tourists often desire to travel in groups and seek the comfort of knowing that all necessities can be pre-purchased.

If business travel is one of the niches that you seek, then make sure that your hotels can accommodate the needs of the modern business traveler. Business travelers want free Internet connections and easy access to business centers 24 hours a day. This is especially true of the North American business traveler. Business travelers, however, want more than simply a place to work while away from the office. People who are part of this travel group seek hotels that are willing to offer them individualized dietary programs and heart-healthy meals, specialized services to meet cultural and religious food needs, and 24 hour/day wellness centers. The business travel niche also means that your locale must have service personnel well trained in the importance of time, good service, efficiency, and security. Often business travelers will judge a location on efficiency, cost as related to services rendered, predictability of product, and ability to control his/her environment.

Often tourism and travel professionals tend to forget how important food can be to a niche market. Are your restaurants unique to your part of the world or are they principally chain and franchise restaurants? How available/accommodating are they to travelers who may arrive at odd hours? Are ethnic foods available and do they match the type of clientele that you are trying to build?

Develop a list of offerings and then seek out special tourism interest groups. For example, there are people who love visiting rural areas and those who prefer the urban environment. Market to those people who seek what you have. Some special interest tourism areas that you may target are eco-tourism, nature tourism, romantic tourism, cultural weekend tourism, religious tourism, historical tourism, and engineering marvel tourism. Each of these groupings is composed of people who have unique and special interests and that are willing to spend money to satisfy a particular tourism need.