PROGRESS IN TOURISM MARKETING

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Keywords: destination marketing, product, consumer, market, collaboration governance

SUMMARY

For destination marketing to be effective and succeed both now and in the future — and to counter the threat of increasing consolidation across the industry — it is clear that destinations need to bring all of the individual partners together to co-operate rather than compete, and to pull resources towards developing an integrated marketing mix and delivery system. Whether one is referring to intra-destination networks, relational brands or forms of collaboration governance, this step towards the need for greater collaboration is referred to as the 'network economy'.

The paper explores a range of key topics within the marketing arena and relates them to different types of organization within the tourism sector. It begins with an explanation of the challenges posed by the service nature of tourism businesses, looking in turn at intangibility, inseparability and variability. Potential solutions to each challenge are examined, demonstrating how the elements of services-marketing mix can be used separately or in combination to address the challenges identified.

There is particular focus on the importance for tourism managers of understanding buyer behavior, of identifying and using the most appropriate distribution and promotional methods for their particular products and services, of anticipating critical incident points during service delivery, of integrating physical evidence into service offering and developing and managing relationships.

In many instances, product marketers need to be more innovative in their adoption of marketing techniques and strategies in meeting the needs of more demanding customers. For example, the highly competitive global market for tourists serves as a catalyst for tourism destinations or product to seek more innovative 'relationship' marketing strategies so as to engender a degree of loyalty and stimulate lucrative repeat business among their visitor base.

Tourism, with its special blend of challenges, is particularly interesting when it comes to the application of services-marketing theory. There are many things happening technologically, with the impact of the internet creating opportunities as well as threats across the industry. Collaboration is, therefore, likely to represent the sine qua non for successful marketing in the future. Likewise the destination's ability to gain — and maintain — control over its destiny in the market is more often than not dependent on inter-destination solutions while the need for a change in organizational culture, is beginning to emerge in the form of cross-border (be it local or regional) marketing partnerships.