

Testimony from Lynn Huber

Bachelor Thesis 2016

Title of the study:

Potential analysis of the autumn as theme product in the Swiss Alps for the Dutch market specific to Switzerland Tourism's segments

Summary:

The study of tourism demand of a specific market for a destination, during a certain period needs to consider numerous different aspects (i.e. the economy, travel trends, destination's assets, etc.). Few research has been conducted by the tourism marketing organization Switzerland Tourism (ST) concerning tourism during the fall season in the Swiss Alps. The Dutch market appears to have a prospect of success in being targeted for Switzerland during this period, as there is a strong interest for the nature and the mountains, as well as a growing participation of autumn holidays in the Netherlands. This bachelor thesis attends to assess that level of potential and to deepen the research into ST's visitor segments. In order to accomplish this task, desk research has formed the basic part of the study, completed with data investigated through a quantitative online survey and backed up by expert interviews, providing added value to the content.

Findings gathered in the context of this Bachelor thesis affirm that there exists a high level of potential among the Dutch. This market's needs and motivations to relax on a holiday, being surrounded by beautiful natural landscapes and having many outdoor possibilities, matches with the offer in the Swiss Alps during the fall. Additionally, the (up-coming) travel trends and the economy, amongst others, favor the development of tourism during this season. More precisely, the tourist segments created by ST with high potential include the so-called "Nature Lover" and "Outdoor Enthusiast". To a slighter extent, the "Attraction Tourer" segment also shows some potential for the future. The autumn is recommended to be more actively promoted by ST Netherlands as part of the extended Summer theme product. Its implementation at ST Netherlands could be of interest for further research.

Testimony:

The topic that awakened my curiosity emerged during my internship at Switzerland Tourism (ST) Netherlands. In fact, the company uses Winter and Summer as seasonal marketing units but not the other two seasons of the year. Therefore, I decided to investigate in the potential of the fall season, as it has never been consistently researched until now. In a further step, it has been decided to narrow the study down to the Alpine sector as well as to the Dutch market and the specific ST segments. As the BeNeLux markets were still in a transitory consolidation, the study has decided to be conducted in the Dutch market only.

The core objective of this study has been to research and to understand the Dutch market travelling in September, October and November and to determine his level of interest in a holiday in the Swiss mountains. Researching whether the travel demand on the Dutch side matches with the autumn product in the Swiss Alpine sector and its external factors, has enabled to define the level of potential. A final objective has then been to investigate which Dutch ST segments were attractive to be actively targeted and to provide ST Netherlands with valuable recommendations. This study has enabled ST Netherlands to realize the high potential the autumn season has for the Dutch market. As the headquarter in Zürich is intensifying the research and the marketing activities for the fall season, ST Netherlands can also put forward the potential of their market. Furthermore, they were able to gain knowledge about which ST segments show the greatest prospect to be targeted for the autumn season. Thanks to this study, I had the opportunity to have very interesting conversations with key tourism stakeholders, to present them my

recommendations as well as to gain knowledge in the field of strategic marketing management. To reach the end result of this thesis has not been an easy way. In fact, a lot of reflection was needed, which constantly changed the structure of the work and the focus of the content. It has been quite challenging to select the important elements to consider and to develop in order to stay on the right track and truly answer the research question. Therefore, critical thinking and synthesis were essential skills. The marketing and statistics courses from the previous three years at the HES-SO as well as the exchange semester at the NHTV in Breda, were extremely valuable for this work. Furthermore, it was a great help and time-saving to have chosen the right people to support me throughout the whole process. Moreover, to have selected the most relevant interviewees enabled the thesis to gain some great added value. Finally, as the autumn is becoming more and more popular and of interest in the tourism sector in Switzerland, I believe that the skills and knowledge I have gained through my research will provide me an added value to my tourism degree.