CONCEPT OF CUSTOMIZED TOURIST OFFER OF VOJVODINA REGION

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Abstract: The paper presents an approach of implementation of MC strategy in the tourist offer of the Vojvodina region. The goal of the project Holiday Wizard is to bring the specifics of the region in the first plan so that it can, in an attractive way, sort the tourist offer, increase the number of guests and enable the consumers to personalize their stay in Vojvodina according to their needs, interests and financial possibilities.

Keywords: mass-custimzation, e-tourism

1. INTRODUCTION

It is widely known that with the introduction of internet to business, products and services have become more transparent, which has initiated a new philosophy of doing business through various shapes and views of electronic trade. The possibility of choosing a product which completely, or in a large sum, fits individual needs and personalized wishes of the consumer has resulted in the forming of the *Mass Customization (MC),* a strategy developed with the goal of shaping and personalizing the product (service) of mass consumption, with the effectiveness of mass production.

This approach offers gain to both consumers and the manufacturers. The consumers get the products of mass consumption adapted to the personal requests regarding dimensions, shapes, colors, etc. at acceptable prices, only slightly higher than standard, while the manufacturers notice a reduction in stored goods, loss in the supply chain, and much more accurate information regarding the consumers demands,

because a more intensive and closer relationship is achieved. Having in mind the scientific, technical and organizational potential firstly in the view of information technologies, modern companies are capable to secure a wide variety of products and services, in the sense of a large number of variables, with the effectiveness of mass production.

Tourism, as one of the most propulsive industrial branches, has very fast become a very fertile soil to implement the mentioned technologies and approaches. The reduction of interest for solid arrangements with fixed and predefined content is noticeable, and the public wants more freedom in the choice of arrangements, which allows users to adapt and correlate their needs and wants with the offer and the possibilities of the destination to which they are traveling to. Large and successful agencies have always been ready to please the special needs and wants of their clients, but that usually went with a much higher price than that of a standard service (Taylor Made Customization), which a normal consumer cannot afford. Global increase of investments in tourism, and with that, the increase of the competition between the tourist service providers, leads only to the need to find new, hidden market places which can secure significant profit with the help of widely used information technologies.

The combination of E-tourism and MC approach which carries with it **large flexibility, freedom and pleasure** of the consumer, at a price of a standard arrangement represents a serious business challenge. Here are some additional reasons which corroborate the statement above:

- Change from *mass tourism* (Turkey, Greece) to the tourist service focused on the individual, especially prominent to Vojvodina as a destination,

- Reduction of commissions (due to a large competition) to the tourist providers,

- The need for introduction of new/different models of attracting people by the providers through securing new value or new dimension of the offered service (active and creative vacation, exploring the cultural and national specifics, etc.),

- The possibility of a dynamic creation of service packages creates consumer's loyalty,

- The increase in the number of low budget air travel companies incites the wish for independent travel and individual creation of the content of a travel package,

- The existence of the large number of the cyber travel providers, as well as other subjects (air travel companies, cities, happenings) on the internet, force the need for the deeper and more complex approach in this business.

MC approach has four dimensions according to its character:

1. **Differentiation** – which allows the user of the services additional value because the tourist service completely or almost completely adapted to his individual needs and wants,

2. **Service price** – which is very close to the prices of the standard tourist offer, or in other words the price it is minimally higher which the consumer is ready to pay, but it will not set him in the next, higher market segment,

3. **Relationship** – information which is secured in the process of the creation of the tourist offer define the profile of every user, which creates a basis on which further trust and longtime relationship is formed,

4. **Service area** – current tourist *modules*: accommodation locations, restaurants, museums, galleries, sport centers, etc. represent the service area which functions on the principle of *mass production*, out of which a consumer creates his own arrangement.

The first three dimensions are directly focused on the consumer, while the fourth dimension represents an internal view at the whole phenomenon. In other words, in order for the approach to function properly, there must be modules in the whole system which are stable and work perfectly and by whose combination or adjustment you get the result you want.

There are two levels present for the implementation of the MC concept and determining its limits:

A) **The nature of the customization**, which involves that the user be active in the process of the creation of elements, in fact represents the depth of the customization. It is very important to set the depth accurately which will allow the introduction of the consumer to the services, because with that you determine the whole organization. That is how we differentiate eight levels of customization: 1. *Standardization* – previously determined arrangements, 2. *Usage* – modifying the previously determined arrangements, 3. *Packaging and distribution* – choosing the delivery system, vouchers, e-cards, etc, 4. *Additional services* – personalized services: SMS delay notifications, flight cancellations, etc, 5. *Additional work and services* – customizing the characteristics of the travel arrangements, 6. *Combining* – making arrangements through predefined modules, 7. *Development* – flexible tours which are defined by consumers and 8. *Design* – mutual forming of the tourist products.

B) **Mechanisms for securing the customization with standard expenses** are based on a modular approach which represents the key aspect of success, because you can get a wide variety of choices out of combining a relatively limited number of standard elements in one offer. Standard modules should, by the nature of things, function within standard prices and expenses.

Product characteristics which a consumer wants to customize so that he could raise the value of his vacation are the following:

Shape adaptation: Motivation of the consumer and the benefit he gets by adapting the shape is better *adaptation/fitting of the product with the rest of the products and needs* in his environment, *expression of his own style and taste* (e.g. travel information which are correlated with the profile of the consumer).

Fitting adaptation: Motivation of the consumer is the *adaptation of the product and services to his own personal needs and it is less motivated by esthetic reasons, but in fact, it is motivated by practical reasons which contribute to greater comfort.* (e.g. customized catering depending on the fact if the consumer is a vegetarian, diabetic or if he wants a different choice of food out of religious reasons, or if he wants that the meeting place has in offer various relaxation content).

Function adaptation: Motivation of the consumer is the *individual choice of product/services based on its functionality.* Modern products have a large number of functions, and the consumer wants the product which has exactly those functions that he needs. (Search of tourist offers and content according to a certain profile, e.g. flight to a certain destination on a specific date).

Modular adaptation: The consumer can also define certain requests involving the production process or the way/shape of the delivery (e.g. choice of hotel/air travel company according to his own preferences, membership, discounts, etc.). Apart from this, consumers can demand a certain form of ticket issuing (electronic or regular mail, etc.).

2. INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The main tool with which a consumer of the tourist services begins creating his dream vacation, and makes his ideas come true to the letter is the ICT (Information and Communication Technology) system which represents the essence of technical support. With this system, a direct contact with the consumer is secured and the implementation of all the previously mentioned adaptations is enabled, which leads to the creation of new products.

By analyzing ICT systems of tourist organizations and agencies, we can see three basic levels which are in use: ***the physical level***, which involves the technical device through which communication is being done, ***the code***, the software or protocol which is used, and ***the level of content*** which is made up of multimedia content.

There are two kinds of information: consumer information which lead to the result efficiently, by reservation of flights, hotels, etc. in a certain destination and in a specific time and those other

emotional/symbolic, which should attract, explain and truthfully represent specific tourist content. MC strategy in the area of tourism should be built on the development of emotional and symbolic interaction with the potential service consumer, which should result in a creation of trust based on good recommendations when making the choice of destinations, honest and true report of impressions and observations, etc.

3. HOLIDAY WIZARD PROJECT

The project Holiday wizard relies on the advantages of the MC concept in two segments. One is the promotion of the specific tourist offer of Vojvodina, and the other is the open possibility of the choice of content which every consumer can adapt to his own interests and needs. The basic postulates, the promotional and the commercial dimension of the project, are built on the idea that an increasing number of tourists connect their vacation with other activities. The so-called active vacation is connected with different recreational sports, but research shows that an increasing number of tourists expect to get to know the cultural-historical facts, tradition and the natural environment of the region they are visiting. Other forms of tourism which satisfy even more specific demands of the consumers are spreading fast, like for example adventure, romantic and nostalgic programs, cultural and eco tourism, spa and wellness and even programs with religious content. Current popularity of the eco and village tourism creates the need for the constant discovery of new destinations characteristic for a specific area. On the other hand, all the more people understand the significance of the need to protect the environment so they are searching through the tourist offer for places where ecology is highly valued.

All the stated forms of the tourist offer fit within the geographical, natural, cultural-historical, infrastructural and other potentials of Vojvodina. Tourism in this region, slowly but surely, is entering the phase of serious expansion. A lot has been done on the strategic concepts of future development, but the specifics of the possible offer are very rarely used.

That is why the goal of the project Holiday Wizard is to bring the specifics of the region in the first plan so that it can, in an attractive way, sort the tourist offer, increase the number of guests and enable the consumers to personalize their stay in Vojvodina according to their needs, interests and financial possibilities.

Figure 1 Holiday Wizard was created as a brand for alternate tourist offers which bring the individuality of every guest to the very surface

The logo (Figure 1) of the project is supposed, in time, to become a trademark of the personalized tourist offer of this region. The design solution of the logo, with the colors of Vojvodina, brings a few specifics of Vojvodina to the surface (plain, farm as an ethnical mark, sun) which are, at the same time, and the main recommendation for vacation in this region.

Undoubtedly the most suitable way, for promotion as well as for the realization of the project is the web portal, because it is universal and available to all. It enables interaction, two-way communication with the visitors and a quick, efficient and cheap exchange of information. With the multimedia (written word, photography, video material), as one of the main advantages, web portal of the project Holiday Wizard gets all the necessary elements for the successful realization of the set goal.

The complete content of the portal is divided into two parts – informative (databases) and active (configurator) which allows the potential guests to create their own vacation.

Informative part of the portal is a database about Vojvodina and its geographical, cultural, historical, and other facts, or in other words, all the tourist destinations and the adjacent programs and content which can be attractive to different consumers.

On the first pages of the web portal, with a brief introduction of the project and welcome note, there are detail information about the geographical location of Vojvodina with a map, climate, history, culture, inhabitants, customs and other general characteristics. There are also the information about all the options of transport to a wanted place, road maps, timetables, etc.

With this content there is also the daily updated information which lead the consumer to the parts of the offer which are popular at the date, week or month of the visit.

Databases are grouped by areas of interest, and contain the recommendations (with the general information) for specific content. Databases are updated regularly, so that every change is immediately available to the consumer, and are divided in the following wholes:

a) **Board** (hotels, motels, camps, private accommodations, farms, etc.)
b) **Food** (region's gastronomy, recommended restaurants, reservations, menus, organic food as an alternative offer);
c) **Happenings/Manifestations** (recommendations for visit to some of the manifestations for the manifestation calendar, content and program of the manifestations, tourist programs tied to that manifestation, etc.);
d) **Daily excursions** (development of the individual offers for specific locations, precise program, e.g. farms, castle Fantast, lake Ludas, forests of Kelebija, etc.)
e) **Customs** (folklore school, straw-craftsmanship workshop, ethno workshop, ceramics and pottery workshop, painting, etc.)
f) **Culture** (museums, theatres, galleries, etc.);
g) **Sport and recreation** (walks, bicycle rides, tennis, sailing, wind sailing, horse riding school, etc.)
h) **Hunting and fishing**;
i) **Children's programs** (ZOO, creative workshops, etc.)
j) **Healing, rehabilitation and wellness content**;
k) **Congress tourism**.

The main parts of the active part of the web portal are the configurators which allow the consumers to determine their vacation in Vojvodina online. Different levels of the configurators allow the basic selection of guests. On the first level, consumer chooses one of the following options:

a) Individual
b) Family vacation
c) Groups

After this choice, the configurator will point the consumer to the content which is suitable for individual, family or possibly group vacations (congress tourism).

In the most complex part of the web portal, the consumer can plan every hour of his stay in Vojvodina with the help of the configurator, with many recommendations for optimal spending of time (e.g. time necessary for the visit of a museum or time necessary for going from one place to another). When the content of the vacation is configured, the consumer sends an email, and the administrator of the web portal passes that information to a tourist agency which is responsible for the consumer's stay according to his requests.

The most complex part of the preparation of the project is the creation of the database, because no detail is too much in order to have a quality personalization. Time planned for collection, processing and entering this information in the database is about six months. Out of that, at least one month will be spent on the translation to English, and one more language from the more frequent European countries. The cooperation of all subjects who are involved in the content of the web portal is the most significant segment of the project realization, because the entering, as much and as accurately illustrated information (text, photographs, video material), is the key advantage in this way of promotion of such a tourist offer.

The potential weak spots of the actual realization of the personalized offer are the still unequal standards of the quality of the tourist offer of different subjects of the project, and the fact that this is a new and a very different organization way of all the subjects taking part in the tourist offer. However, with appropriate education, which is devised as a series of presentations of the possibility of the web portal and the creation of direct links to tourist providers, the advantages of the MC concept will gradually surpass the initial problems and create the possibility that the

brand Holiday Wizard becomes a trademark of the personalized vacation in Vojvodina.

4. CONCLUSION

The tourism business is changing. More specialized, flexible network configurations and further consumer integration into internal business process will lead to smart market places, integrating all stakeholders. The underlying IT scenario, enabling as well as enforcing this development, shows that tourism is an interesting field of application. But it also demonstrated that this industry poses hard challenges, which offer interesting research opportunities.

5. REFERENCES

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