

Niche Tourism in Germany

**Illustrative example:
Holidays in the dead spot**

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Team Germany

htw saar The logo for htw saar, featuring the letters 'htw' in a colorful, overlapping font. The 'h' is orange, the 't' is blue, and the 'w' is pink. The letters are stacked and overlap each other.

Pretask 2: Case study in your country

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Abstract

The essay shows the establishment of a special niche product in tourism and as a result the satisfaction of individual needs in our society. The product is about “holidays in the dead spot” and addresses a specific class, which wants to refrain from excessive phone consumption during holidays. The main idea is to escape the pressure of mobile overstimulation and to focus on the essential things in life. This current trend towards alternative holidays presents a new niche segment. The potentials are demonstrated on two case studies about “Hofgut Hafnerleiten” and “The Digital Detox”. Both cases aim at reducing, especially, the use of mobile devices with its negative impacts. This particular niche marketing is starting to reach an increasing number of people consequently serving as a solution for a new demand.

Introduction

Is it appropriate to assume that everyone belongs to the mass, with regard to vacation preferences? No, it is not. That is why the topic of this year's Acept project week "New Forms of Segmentation: Targeting Niche Markets in Tourism" is very important and up to date. The world consists of roughly seven billion individuals. No one is the same, and it is obvious that a package tour is not everybody's taste. A niche market is a small market within a large market or an industry. Niches aim at becoming a big fish in a small pond and being extremely important for a specific target group (Wila-Arbeitsmarkt 2014).

Finding the niche

The main task was to find a tourism product in Germany where additional income has been successfully generated by changing an existing attraction to address a new target group. The best solution was "Holidays in the dead spot". So what is this topic about and why does it play such an increasingly significant role in today's society?

In the beginning, it is important to understand the term "dead spot". To simplify the meaning, the term deals with a spot without mobile receipt. Why should this be attractive to anyone, according to the raising number of hotels which offer free WIFI. In our daily life, people have to deal with a lot of electronic equipment, no matter if this has a professional or social background. Our jobs require us to be always available on call, not just during official working hours (Welt 2014). Even on vacation, the phone as a travel companion has become indispensable. In fact a smartphone make our life more comfortable and easier to manage. It helps finding the way to the hotel or to the next pharmacy. It takes pictures of breathtaking sights, which can be immediately transmitted to our friends at home. We wake up and fall asleep with our phone in the hands. The result is pretty obvious- the largest part of the body is under permanent tension and will not find real recovery. (Meedia 2015)

Facts & Effects

The excessive use of smartphones, produces many problems, starting with social problems up to health damages.

As a result of a survey in the journal "Stern" one person out of four is stressed because of their smartphone (University of Mannheim 2015). This comes from the feeling that

you have to be constantly reachable. Fuerg Media Company found out that on average every person sends 1000 messages and receives 2000 messages on the instant messaging service Whats-App (Fuerg Media 2015). According to the Humbolt University in Berlin each person uses a mobile phone every 18 minutes, 63 times a day for around three minutes (BZ-Berlin 2014). The University of Derby observed that already 13% of the phone using population is addicted and every 10th is also on the line to addiction (The Daily Mail 2015).

In the last few years there has been a huge increase in 39,29 million smartphone owners in Germany. In 2016 the number of smartphone users will probably rise to two billion worldwide (Heise Regioconcept 2015).

Although, the numbers may look attractive, the risks are not. The mostly observed health damages are postural deformity and headache. Constant looking at the smartphone display causes back pain and visual disturbance. Eye disease and tendonitis on thumbs and fingers are no individual cases (Spiegel online 2014).

Further negative effects can be disruption of your sleep rhythm and concentration. According to Dr.Wolf (PAL-Verlag 2015), a graduate psychologist, more and more people are affected by depression and other psychological issues. Accessibility makes people nervous and stressed all the time, which could have consequences for their cardiovascular system. A study published in Global Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies, radiations of phones contribute to abnormalities in heart function (Singh & Yadav 2015).

This is the bitter truth you probably do not find on your daily life app. And it is one of the reasons why some people desire to refrain from work and pressures in their vacation. It is like a way of escaping the dictates of permanent availability. After all, you want to relax during your holiday and get away from it all – so why not take this motto literally? Having the impression to be constantly flooded with information by digital products, people are increasingly seeking for silence and a rather slow movement. (Interview Mr. Rueckerl 2015)

Niche Marketing

Exploring this new niche segment further, it is necessary to analyze which would be the most successful marketing strategy for this specific tourism product. The marketing-mix after Jerome McCarthy comprises four basic elements: the four P's. *Product* means the

actual product or service, designed according to the customer's needs. The *Price* should be set in the optimum level so that the maximum willingness to pay can be skimmed. The *Promotion* for a product has to convey all advantages and reach the target market. *Place* represents the distribution channels, market coverage and availability. This is a very effective and easy combination of instruments to construct and implement any plans for marketing. But for a niche market it is also characteristic to be in a special segment. It is possible to define a segment as factual, temporal, spatial, after special needs, interests or occasions. For the product "Holidays in the dead spot" the segmentation considering the special need of getting a distance to the digital world is the most appropriate. Thus, this information can help companies in the tourism sector to define their goal, how to reach them and to control success. (Holloway 2004)

Case study

Hofgut Hafnerleiten

There are some interesting places or organizations compatible with the topic. Due to the help of telephone interviews with the managers it was possible to get further information. One of the places is the resort "Hofgut Hafnerleiten".

The manager Erwin Ruckerl emerged "Hofgut Hafnerleiten" in 2001 from a former cooking school. Since 2005 they have developed a new concept with the principle of a place without electronic distraction.

The resort is located right in the center of Lower Bavaria. But far from the hustle and bustle there, you will not find any disturbance at the resort. Looking out of a window you can see fields in a hilly landscape and some isolated farms around there. You can stay in some extraordinary theme houses such as a tree house, a water house, a boat house or a garden house. During your stay at the "Hofgut Hafnerleiten" you have a large range of options of how to spend your holidays without your mobile phone.

The hotel advertises on its website with the slogan "offline without electro smog – dead spot Hofgut Hafnerleiten!". They promise that people can spend their holidays free of radiation, without TV and mobile receipt, so that concentrating on the essentials is the priority. The price for a night in one of the theme houses is between 165€ and 215€ including half-board.

Many local and national newspapers report on the theme of "holidays in the dead spot" and usually make references to the resort as an exemplary case. In addition to the

reports a PR agency has also been contracted for advertising and increasing public awareness.

The target group consists of a wide range of private persons and business travelers who are coming in hope to find recovery and silence. According to the manager the hotel receives a positive feedback but nevertheless he admitted, that there are also critical times. In the beginning of their stay people feel always frustrated when they cannot be mobile and always up to date. But after a few days, they start to feel more comfortable with the new situation (Interview Rueckerl 2015).

The Digital Detox

There is also a company named “THE DIGITAL DETOX®” which offers camps, seminars and lectures on the topic of switching technology off.

It is the latest trend from Silicon Valley which has nothing to do with smartphones or apps, but rather with the abdication of it. The OXFORD DICTIONARY defines digital detox as “a period of time during which a person refrains from using electronic devices such as smartphones or computers, regarded as an opportunity to reduce stress or focus on social interaction in the physical world” (Oxford Dictionary 2015).

The founder and director of “THE DIGITAL DETOX®” is Ulrike Stoeckle, a business economist with over 20 years of professional experience in marketing and communication. In 2009 she established her PR-agency for sustainable communication.

On the basis of academic achievements, Ms. Stoeckle shows how our digital behavior is changing and influences our complete private and professional life. As a Digital Detox Coach she teaches in seminars, lectures and camps and develops different projects for different target-groups: companies and private persons who are in the need of “digital-detox”!

With specific seminars and workshops between two and six months, the employees of a company or a department can learn how to effectively handle the problem of permanent availability and how to work out strategies to bring more flow, productivity and satisfaction into the working process.

Companies which worked with the team of “THE DIGITAL DETOX®” said that the strategies were practiced later on and that they had a time saving of between one and two hours daily.

Private persons can participate in seminars and experience a real digital timeout in the Digital Detox Camps where no devices with access to internet are allowed.

In these camps one can learn clever strategies to find the right balance between real and digital life and raise awareness of sustainable communication. In this way senseless surfing and internet addiction should be prevented. For the right camp-feeling there are items on the agenda like yoga, campfire, meditation and culinary walking tours. Participants of the camp said that they had realized the problem and wanted to switch off their phones more regularly. Furthermore they were full of positive energy and wanted to continue the approaches, but for a long term success one needs more than just an impulse.

The fact that the digital overflow is a relevant topic at the moment results in the fact that Ms. Stoeckle receives a lot of interview requests for television, radio, internet and newspaper (even from Korea). So if someone searches for an article containing information about digital weaning off, he or she is highly likely to end with Ms. Stoeckle and “THE DIGITAL DETOX®”. Thus the project is already in media without any direct advertising.

On the well-designed website one can find a lot of information and also the dates for the next camp. There is a cooperation with the Brand-Academy in Hamburg which designs posters for them, that are shown at bus stops and in underground railway stations around Hamburg.

For a 4-days camp including accommodation, catering, workshop and seminar each person has to pay between 599 and 699€ (Interview Stoeckle 2015).

Result

Both case studies use the internet to promote their special products which are segmented according to a special need. The products are also only distributed via the internet.

The prices for both are quite high because after all “Hofgut Hafnerleiten” and “THE DIGITAL DETOX®” are just niche products which do not appeal to the masses. As it is well-known supply and demand determines the market and its prices.

To measure the success of the operators, the feedback and the occupancy rate serve as a controlling process.

The demand for this special niche segment is increasing, as a result of people needs for silence and recovery in our overstimulated world. Also the success of our both case studies proves that it is important to develop such niche products to satisfy the changing needs in our society.

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