

## ACEEPT Project Week 2018: Pre-tasks

# “Same same, but different” Product Development in Tourism

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The term “*same same, but different*” is a famous expression from Thai English (Tinglishi), which means similar, but different in some ways (Kravanja, 2011). If you have the opportunity to visit South East Asian countries, like Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam, you cannot escape from hearing street vendors loudly proclaiming “same same, but different” in an attempt to convince tourists that their products are different from the next stall.

Like the Thai street vendor, one of the global tourism industry’s main challenges is to **develop tourism products<sup>1</sup> that are different in some way**: Porter (1985), the father of the *competitive advantage*, defined three main strategies to differentiate a company from its competitors: “*Cost Leadership*” (no frills), “***Differentiation***” (creating uniquely desirable products and services) and “*Focus*” (offering a specialized service in a niche market).

In his Theory of Monopolistic Competition Edward Chamberlin (1962) proposed the **concept of differentiation**, defined as the process of distinguishing a product or service from others, to make it more attractive to a particular target market respectively target group (Kotler & Keller, 2012). In tourism, *product differentiation* is a strategy in which tourism companies or destinations attempt to create and exploit differences between their products and those offered by competitors. These differences may lead to *competitive advantage* if customers perceive the difference and have a preference for it (Yang, 2010).

A **differentiation strategy** is based on persuading customers that a tourism product or service is superior in some way to that offered by competitors (Evans et al., 2003; Riege & Perry, 2000). To develop competitive products is the inevitable course for tourism companies or destinations to solve the problem of product homogenization and to create tourism products or services, different from the habitual by means of unique consumer benefits, supply, organization and the human resource involved. Therefore, *differentiation* is directly linked with other terms such as “*product development*” and “*product diversification*”.

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<sup>1</sup> In the following, “tourism product” is meant in a broader sense that also includes tourism services.

Ansoff (1965) distinguished a company's existing products from new products and markets by proposing two **product policy strategies**: "**Product Development**" (developing new products or improved versions of an existing product to offer to an existing market) and "**Diversification**" (entering new markets with new products).

- "**Product development**" includes "**Innovation**" (new products) and "**Modification**" (different or new variants of existing products). *Innovation* is the introduction of a product or service that is "new" to the company or destination or it can be new to the market or customer with respect to its intended uses, characteristics or customer benefits. *Modification* is to offer different or new product variants of an existing product or service. Improvement of customer quality and value-added services are examples of *product modification*.
- Unlike *product development*, where the products are offered only to the existing markets, "**diversification**" allows a company or destination to enter additional lines of business that are different from the current products, services and markets and are not connected with the company's core business (Kenny, 2009; Konstantinova, 2016). The *diversification strategy* implies the simultaneous development of new tourist products and of the new markets (e.g., a hotel company can enlarge its mix of products by offering also catering services in external venues or by starting its own car rental business). Today, *diversification* of services is one of the instruments of the tourist enterprise's growth strategy, due to which it can extend its services and spheres of activity. Nevertheless, *diversification* is the most risky strategy because both market and product development is required.

Note that these *differentiation strategies* (*innovation, modification and diversification*) are often difficult to distinguish as the transition point from one product or market to another is not clear and they are usually complementary to one another. Most important here is that tourism companies and destinations may only survive in the market if they can demonstrate the unique aspects of their product or service and create a sense of value. The value-added service and fine sentiments service are the embodiment of the "exclusive" element in the market competition. Market demand is changing all the time. Consequently, products should be constantly revitalized to ensure competitiveness and differentiation. Besides this, quality assurance, good marketing practices, and customer and employee satisfaction are among the most important areas or fields for product innovation and differentiation (Yang, 2010).

Ultimately, *product differentiation* is an attempt to develop an alternative product or service, and at the same time, it is a tribute to a creative thinking. *Same same, but different!*

## References

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## **PRE-TASK I: Introduction of your national team**

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***Content:***

All national teams will present their members, university and region and explain their main motivation in attending this year's ACEEPT Project Week:

1. Introduce your national team (students and teachers)
2. Introduce your university and region
3. Explain your motivation for taking part in this project week.

***Goal:***

Getting to know all the team members and partner universities attending this year's project week.

***Formatting and timing:***

A 5-minute oral presentation per team to be given on Monday, November 26th, 2018

***Requested material:***

Open to everyone's imagination. But please notice that promotional videos of your university and region are not welcome! Be creative instead! Be different!

## PRE-TASK II: Best practice in your country

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### **Content:**

- a) With the main idea of “*Same same, but different*”, choose a **natural attraction** in your own country which you would define as ‘best practice’ in terms of **product development** and **differentiation**.<sup>2</sup>

Present the attraction. Show what has been done to commercialize its natural offer (e.g., infrastructures, services, events) and to make it a marketable “*tourism product*”. Give an insight into further marketing decisions (price, place, promotion) to market the product. Explain its “uniqueness” and which target group is attracted by it. In what way does it help to increase economic added-value in the region?

Develop a “**new**” **idea** for a *tourism product or service* associated with the chosen natural attraction. Your idea should improve the visitors benefit, respectively attract new target groups or markets – and thereby increase the regional added-value. Classify your idea into the appropriate **product policy strategy** (*innovation, modification or diversification*).

- b) Present an example of a **National Park Gate** or a **Visitor Center** - preferably in a National Park or a similar protected area - in your country which you would define as ‘best practice’ in visitor experience or consumer benefit. Explain why you have chosen that example.

### **Goal:**

Benchmarking the different countries’ way of developing unique tourism products by commercializing its natural attractions in order to generate regional added-value.

### **Formatting and timing:**

A 10 to 15-minute oral presentation per team to be given on Monday, November 26th, 2018. Be aware of “German punctuality”: You will present Pre-tasks I and II in a row. Your presentation will be interrupted after 20 minutes (5+15 minutes)!

### **Requested material:**

A Power Point (or similar digital software) presentation per team.

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<sup>2</sup> In the following, “tourism product” is meant in a broader sense that also includes tourism services.

## PRE-TASK III:

**Get to know and evaluate the potential of the “theme” for the Saarland Region which you are about to visit.**

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### **Content:**

Inform yourself about the Saarland Region. Point out potentials and strengths in developing tourism products<sup>3</sup> in the following rural areas:

- a) The **Saar Bow** (“Saarschleife”) is the best-known landmark of the Saarland region. Over millions of years the river Saar has dug itself deep into the bedrock and thereby created a natural attraction.
  - Present a *tourism product or service* that has been developed to commercialize the “Saar Bow” that could be the most attractive to visitors coming from your home country.
  - Characterize the target group (age, sex, phase of life, lifestyle, interests, individual/package tour) and explain why you think it is attractive for them.
  - Explain how the consumer benefit for those travelers could be improved.

*Tip: even if information is not available in English try to find out more about “Saarschleife” and “Cloef” viewpoint and its surrounding area in Orscholz. Maybe the following websites can be helpful:*

- <https://www.visitsaarland.co.uk/>
- <https://www.tourist-info.mettlach.de/de/>
- <http://cloef-atrium.de>
- <https://www.baumwipfelpfad-saarschleife.de/saarschleife-en/>
- <https://goo.gl/maps/JJR1rwjH9fn>
- <http://www.tripadvisor.com>

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- b) The **Celtic Park in Otzenhausen** (*“Keltenpark”*) is a replica of a Celtic village, close to the Celtic *“Hunnenring”* circular stone wall. It is one of three *National Park Gates* to the newly founded *National Park Hunsrück-Hochwald* (and the only one in the Saarland region). Therefore the *Celtic Park* has to be developed as the focal point of future visitors of the National Park and the encircling *National Park Region*, especially in the district *“Sankt Wendeler Land”*.
- Describe the tourism potential of Celtic culture (especially in Germany) for a target market of your country.
  - Present a “tourism product” associated with Celtic culture (not necessarily in Saarland) which you would define as ‘best practice’. It could be an event, a themed route, but also something else. Discuss to what extent it could be adapted to the *Celtic Park* in Otzenhausen.
  - Recommend a “new” product or service that could increase economic added-value in the region of the National Park Gate in Sankt Wendeler Land.

*Tip: even if information is not available in English try to find out more about “Keltenpark”, “Hunnenring”, “Nationalpark Hunsrück-Hochwald” and its surrounding area “Nationalparkregion Hunsrück Hochwald” and “Sankt Wendeler Land”. Maybe the following websites can be helpful:*

- <https://www.nationalpark-hunsrueck-hochwald.de/en/visitors/information-about-the-national-park/national-park-gates.html>
- <http://www.keltenpark-otzenhausen.de/en/virtual-circuit/celtic-settlement.html>
- <https://www.nationalparkregion-hunsrueck-hochwald.de>
- <https://goo.gl/maps/9xUZHFDS9VH2>
- <https://www.bostalsee.de/en/>

**Additional standard questions:**

- Put your perception of the Saarland Region (after your research) on the following scales.  
If your team cannot agree on a common vote you may calculate the mean value of the individual ratings.

Young	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7)	Old
Welcoming	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7)	Refusing
Cheap	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7)	Expensive
Dangerous	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7)	Safe
Low Quality	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7)	High Quality
Cold	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7)	Warm
Masculine	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7)	Feminine
Traditional	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7)	Modern
German	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7)	French
Small	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7)	Big
Digital	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7)	Analog
Fast Food	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7)	Gourmet
Conservative	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7)	Innovative
Active	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7)	Passive
Green	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7)	Gray
Boring	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7)	Stimulating
Approachable	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7)	Aloof

- Complete the sentence: *“The Saarland is an attractive tourist destination because ...”*
- Discuss in your team: *“If the Saarland was an animal, what would it be?”* ;- ) Answer the question and give a brief explanation.

**Goals:**

Getting well-informed about the destination you will be visiting. Evaluate how well you can identify specific tourism resources in a foreign region and how these regions are perceived abroad.

**Formatting and timing:**

A synthesis of the results will be presented by a lecturer of the Business School. The report will be published on the ACEEPT website. No presentation, only a written paper. Text formatting: Margins: 2.5 cm (1 inch) (top, bottom, left, right); Font: Times 12; Paragraph space: 1.5 lines.

**Requested material:**

A written and well-structured/ referenced report of maximum 6 pages of text. Plus 1 extra page for the additional standard questions that should be put into the annex. You can complement your report with tables, graphs, etc. Send the document as a .docx and a PDF file by email to [aceept2018@htwsaar.de](mailto:aceept2018@htwsaar.de) by Friday, November 9rd.

## **PRE-TASK IV:**

### **Organise your stand at the ACEEPT's International Fair**

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***Content:***

This fair will be in a similar format to a tourism exhibition. You will be given a stand/table to present your team, university and region to your international colleagues. Your stand should also provide some kind of “intercultural activity”. Make sure everyone enjoys the best of your region and also that you get to know and taste the best of all the other ACEEPT regions.

***Goal:***

Allowing every participant to learn about and enjoy the best of each country/region represented in the ACEEPT network. Encourage the visitors to talk, share and have fun together!

***Format and timing:***

The fair will take place in the Faculty building (appropriate behavior is expected!) and will last approximately 2 hours. More information on logistical details will be given later.

***Requested material:***

Be creative! Bring whatever you consider an asset of your region – local delicacies, brochures, decoration items.... Show the “uniqueness” of your home country.

To turn the international fair into an international party, please send us a list of 3-5 songs that are typical of or popular in your region. Send the list via email to [accept2018@htwsaar.de](mailto:accept2018@htwsaar.de) by

*Friday, November 9th.*