



Rural Tourism and Marketing Strategies “Consuming the countryside...”



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Theoretical lesson: Consuming the countryside: Marketing for rural tourism



Roberts L., Hall D. (2003), Consuming the countryside: marketing for rural tourism. Journal of Vacation Marketing 10(3): 253–263

Abstract: rural tourism as a wide range of terms such as “green”, “nature”, “eco”.... Niche marketing? The labels used influence perceptions that shape the nature of policy issues and management process

Aims: among others... “highlight the potential dangers, for businesses and for the environment, of continuing to label tourism in rural areas as a niche market”

Background: Change of reality and context “former social division such as class and gender and distinctions such as work and leisure and urban and rural, are no longer meaningful in the ways they once were”

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Background: Popular images of rural

Escapist experience



BUT

“Use of the term “niche” suggests the existence of qualities that may be more apparent than real, and it is important to recognise that rural tourism is not a small scale, low-impact phenomenon and that it does not constitute a “niche” within tourism markets”

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Challenging modernist marketing theory:

“The marketing concept holds that the key to an organisation’s success is through determination of the needs of its target markets — and this must be done more effectively and efficiently than by its competitors”

Easy? No! because: changing behaviour patterns and lifestyles, demographic shifts and increasing consumer choice.... > fragmentation!

The importance of subject/person and his/her experience

Market orientation (Narver e Slater): customer orientation, competitor orientation, interfunctional coordination

The marketer must treat each marketing situation as unique

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The emergence of the niche market: 2 approaches:

Dalgic and Leeuw describe niche markets as:

- of sufficient size to be potentially profitable
- having no real competitors
- having growth potential
- demonstrating sufficient purchasing ability
- having a need for special treatment
- possessing customer goodwill
- presenting opportunities for an entrance company to exercise its superior competence.



According to Davidson: answers to three questions, the responses to which must be positive if a niche exists in terms of commercial reality.

- Is the niche recognised by consumers and distributors or a figment of the imagination?
- Is the niche product distinctive, and does it appeal to identified groups of consumers?
- Is the product priced at a premium giving an above-average profit margin?



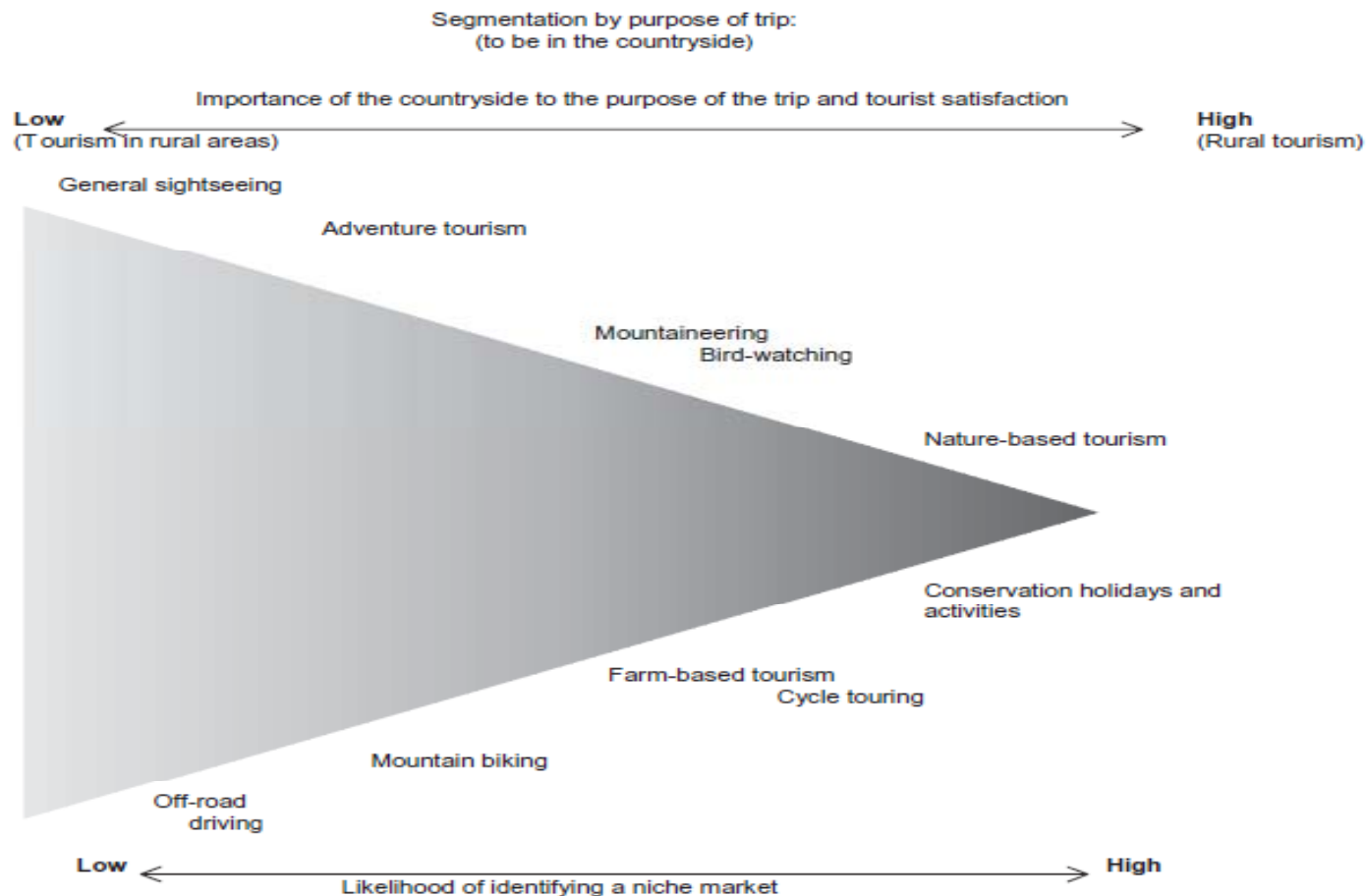
May be applied to market segments, thus....

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Have niche markets a place in the “rural tourism” context?

Measuring the relative importance of the countryside to the consumption of tourism in rural areas



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Niches and the small rural tourism provider

“An attempt to price at a premium a product that is, in reality, exposed to the demands of an undifferentiated market will fail — a critical fact in an industry traditionally represented as offering low-value-added products”

“Traditional marketing is a deliberate and planned process that proceeds carefully from an identification of markets and market needs, whereas small businesses tend to work informally and in unplanned ways that emanate from the intuition and energy often of one person. It is perhaps therefore unsurprising that owners of micro and small businesses generally appear to give marketing a low priority compared with other business functions, regarding it as the preserve of larger concerns.⁷¹ In practice, therefore, if not in theory, many of the dimensions of a traditional marketing orientation may not be applicable in the small business sector”

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Where this leaves tourism developers and marketers?

Better use of marketing can reduce the isolation of small rural businesses and enable them to use resources more effectively

Where niche marketing of rural visitor experiences is appropriate, therefore, small businesses may be in a better position than larger providers to respond to market demand.

Marketing research is an ongoing operation, however, and it is therefore capable of recognising and adapting to future needs. It is anticipated that more human-oriented research methodologies, such as ethnography, will be employed to understand emerging consumer issues, not as a replacement for traditional quantitative techniques, but as a supplement

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Pine and Gilmore: Experience Economy (1998, 1999)

Recognition of experience as a distinct economic offering!

“The purchase of an experience, on the other hand, buys time enjoying a series of memorable events that engage the consumer in a personal way. The term ‘mass customisation’ is well understood in goods markets where standard goods are produced that are later modified to meet the individual needs of a consumer.

Standard services, too, can be customised to meet particular needs.

But true customisation should provide more than consumer choice. It should be customer-specific, designed to meet specific needs, and singular in its purpose — that is, to be exactly what the customer wants”