



Module 713: Multi. + Tourist groups

New trends in the outdoor hospitality industry

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Abstract

In this paper, we will make an approach on the evolution of the camping sector, from the basic concepts to the newest trends in Europe, especially France, which is seen as the leader in the field. We want to recognize travelers' needs and motivations about this kind of accommodation, in order to evaluate how interesting these new trends would be for Swiss tourism.

Introduction

Campgrounds, caravan parks and other outdoor hospitality services have come out from a low-cost touristic accommodation to a real recreational experience. Camping offers customers the opportunity to interact with people from different countries, cultures and lifestyles who all have a common point: freedom and reconnect with nature.

Outdoor hospitality has remained a popular activity in Europe. As a result, the camping sector has changed in many aspects over the last 20 years, facing new types of customers with different expectations. Originally represented as a wilderness experience, an escape and inexpensive solution to spend holidays, camping is now evolving in different forms and levels of comfort.

This paper gives many informations about the tendency of camping in France as it is on the border of Switzerland and is one of the most famous countries in the camping sector.

The Camping Industry and its transitions over the years

Camping is known for still being part of the best values for vacations all around the world. Being usually inexpensive and self-catering, this form of accommodation attracts many kinds of people such as young and older couples, families, singles or groups.

Camping is also a great option for people that are of sociable and extroverted nature. Unlike in hotels, where you do not usually interact with other customers, staying in a camping area gives you the opportunity to meet new people.

One of the best things about camping is that it is not only a type of accommodation, but also a recreation. There are many different levels of accommodations starting from tenting to

caravanning and recreation vehicles. You can thus find the level of comfort and style you are looking for.

When it comes to Switzerland, Swiss campgrounds are known for being very conventional unlike other European campsites that want to attract campers by creating hip and luxury camps.

One of the main issues though is the promotion of camping as well as the attraction of young international and Swiss people. To do as such, campgrounds should focus on what services are necessary for this target group. Wireless connections are a must in camping areas as today's campers to feel more at home and feel the need to connect with the outside world. Let's take The Gryon Club as an example. The Club has invested SFr700,000 to give a more modern touch on its four sites by creating meeting rooms and cafes with wireless connections. Investing in such services helps increase the number of visitors of a campsite as nowadays, being able to connect with the outside world is very important.

It has been found that over half of all people camping in Switzerland's campsites are Swiss and the trends are starting to evolve as many people expect more and more of camping managers. Nevertheless, we will explain in the following paragraphs that it is not the case for everyone.

These last few years have seen an increase of popularity in modern camping, which corresponds to the fact that a greater number of campsites have emerged along with the number of camping managers. Yet significant changes have taken place, concerning camper behaviours, motives and cultures.

First and foremost, the primitive campsites were more isolated whereas present ones are involved with more social activities. That is to say, modern campsites are usually equipped with more sophisticated facilities, such as standard sanitation, paved roads, and even parking lots. What's more, today's campers are no longer subjected to harsh conditions with the help of systematic supervision and professional managers. Large-scale campgrounds, or those owned privately, are both under fine conditions.

Second of all, the change of campgrounds is closely related to the new emerging campers. If we compare them to the old generation, known as the "traditionalists", we can see that the expectations of nature-oriented behaviours are the same but they apply them in different ways. Nowadays campers do not simply resist social contact during outdoor camping. Campers of the

twenty-first century find it difficult to let their social life on the side but are still looking for great contact with other campers. This is however harshly judged by traditionalists according to whom camping is about exclusively interacting with nature and isolation from their professional life. These divergences have led to discussions and conflicts.

Research has shown that there is a gap between camp managers and campers. Managers tend to consider problems based on their own career training and experience thus can easily jump to conclusions about campers' motives and behaviour tendencies. Besides, campers are likely to over-exaggerate their own reactions towards undesirable acts which may lead to "bystander effect" in reality.

The camping field has undergone certain changes itself, which provides the background for the approaching new trends.

Trends in the Global Camping Industry

Nowadays, campsites even have a classification system determining their equipment and comfort level. Most countries like France, which shows a lot of interest to outdoor accommodations, use a 5 star system.

Although Campsites used to be independent businesses, many campsite channels have been growing in the last 15 years. Huttopia, Village Center and Sandaya are some examples of voluntary chains or franchises. Huttopia is one of camping pioneers using only reservation systems which prove to be very efficient as approximately 95% of bookings are done online.

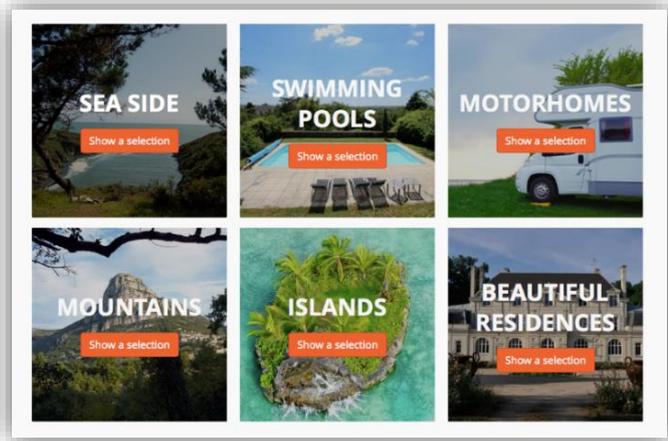
Campsites members of channels represent approximately 10% of the total number of campsites, but 40% of the turnover of this sector. It represents an interesting place to invest in, as accommodation rental is a profitable sector.

Gamping

Another new trend called Gamping has emerged in the camping sector, which is similar to the AirBnB concept. The name "gamping" is composed of two words: garden & camping. The idea is to camp directly in individuals' garden.

Gamping community websites have blossomed over the past few years, such as gamping.fr in France. Over 500 addresses are now available on the French territory, and also offer propositions of areas in foreign countries such as Canada or Spain.

The principle is simple: the garden's owners register on the gamping community website for free, indicate the number of places available, if they have electricity and sanitation. For now, this camping type is not subject to any special legislation.



For a small fee, tourists can camp for a few nights in their host's garden.

Gamping offers many advantages comparing to traditional campsites. First of all, the price is more competitive. Travelers also have the great opportunity to meet local people and avoid overcrowded campsites. Furthermore, with this more intimate solution, gampers are usually given access to special infrastructures such as swimming pools or bathrooms proposed by the host.

Glamping

Beyond the combination of two words, the first syllable of the word Glamour and the second one of the word Camping, glamping is a new trend in outdoor tourism that combines luxury and nature, comfort and respect for the environment, and provides exclusivity and uniqueness in offering an accommodation "outside the box", both literally and figuratively.

This new trend, which emerged in 2007 in the UK, was launched in France by institutions that do not necessarily profited of a very attractive location - seaside is the most eloquent illustration. They have been trying to develop an innovative niche segment to attract a new clientele that is wealthy, demanding and willing to pay a certain price for luxury accommodation, as well as other activities related to the well-being and gastronomy. According to Moreno Volpi, Head of Communications of the TCS, rustic and low-cost are less popular than before. Travellers do not choose to go camping because it is not cheap anymore. They are

looking to go mid-way between the simplicity of camping and the standard of the traditional hospitality.

"Glamping" attracts customers who would not choose traditional camping as a mean of accommodation. It is a clientele who initially frequented hotels and rather charming cottages.

The trend is no longer to purchase equipment. Guests are now looking for facilities that are already equipped. Holidaying on campgrounds may be a financial choice, but it is by far not the only motivation. Social choice as to meet new people or enjoy a wilderness experience is equally important. More campers look for the combination of luxury and comfort with sustainable initiatives during their experience in nature.

New camping trends in Switzerland - Conclusion

Elisabeth Ottiger, product manager of the Touring Club Suisse, which is an association regrouping 28 campsites over Switzerland, going camping is still a type of accommodation that is considered being very familial.

The tendency shows that people do not want to buy equipment but are looking for entirely equipped installations. Campers are trying to mix luxury and comfort with sustainable initiatives and trends such as Glamping.



TCS Campings is the biggest group of Switzerland and have recently put « Pods » on the market in the region of Valais. The concept comes from Norway and has become more and more famous in France and Great Britain over the last few years. This kind of accommodation are ecological cabins that are planted into the nature. They are exclusively made of sustainable construction materials and isolation.

The other new trend of "Gamping" is also starting to take a bigger place in France. Switzerland could then also be an option for "gampers", with its beautiful and unique landscapes. Nevertheless, seasonality might be an issue as standard tents are not the best accommodation in winter, which could keep people from wanting to come gamping in Switzerland. Glamping, on the other hand, could very possibly be a good option and could start being a more frequent way of camping in Switzerland.

Switzerland counted 2,864,076 overnight stays in 2013 in all camping areas, the region of Tessin being in first position with 723,032 overnight stays followed by the canton of Valais counting 405,918. Over half of the campers staying in Swiss campsites are national travellers. The Federal Office of Statistics show that in 2013 there are 1,699,182 Swiss people camping in Switzerland, followed by 435,067 Germans and 316,812 Dutch.

Even though the so-called “traditionalists” wish for camping to stay the old and original way, changes in trends should not be taken for granted in the industry of tourism as every sector needs to evolve at some point. It is very important for managers to be aware of that and to keep up-to-date in such a competitive industry that is tourism.

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Appendix

Infographic

Camping new trends & evolution

Camping was originally an unexpensive way to spend holiday and interact with people and nature. But in the recent years, new trends have emerged in the outdoor hospitality sector.

Changes in campers behavior:

Traditionalists ⚡ New campers

Gamping
 Camping
 Glamping

New trends

new customers segments different levels of comfort

sophisticated facilities new managing models: **camping chains** campsite classification systems

Independent campsites (90%)
 Camping chain (10%)

*trench numbers

Switzerland

Main camping destinations: Ticino & Valais
2,864,076 overnight stay in 2013

People want entirely equipped installations → Try to mix luxury and comfort with sustainable initiatives

TCS campings

PODS: Ecological cabine planted into the nature

CH

Mainly national travellers