



MODULE_3 MARKETING

Lesson_1_ *TOURIST BEHAVIOUR*

CONTENT OVERVIEW

How does a tourist choose the destination of his holidays?

What is the mental process that leads him to choose?

What are the constraints limiting his choices?

Choosing the destination for your holidays is a rather complex mental process that has long been studied by psychologists, sociologists and economists. A similar process is followed by any consumer in deciding what to buy, with the difference that very often the purchases of non-tourist products and services (for example food products) take place automatically, almost unconsciously.

A tourist can choose among so many alternative destinations that studying and understanding the way by which any tourist takes a decision is a necessary condition for setting up an effective marketing strategy and plan.

The purchasing behavior of a tourist can generally be divided into five stages:

1. recognition of need
2. information seeking
3. alternatives assessment
4. purchasing decision
5. post-purchase behavior.

However, studying the purchasing behavior of a tourist would be useless if we did not consider that the choices are strongly influenced by the following factors:

- personal (for example: age of the tourist or family composition)
- socio-cultural (for example: amount of disposable income, qualification, lifestyle, kind of work etc.)
- psychological (for example: motivations, attitudes etc.)

Let's analyze the typical purchasing behavior of a tourist.

1. Recognition of need

The starting point of the purchasing process is the recognition of the need / want to go on vacation. Based on the factors listed above, the **motivation** for going on vacation can be very different according to people: for example a group of young friends will be motivated

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by the desire to spend a few days at the seaside having fun both on the beach and on the evening; a couple of middle-aged teachers may prefer to visit a city of art or rest in a not too crowded or noisy seaside resort. In slide no. 14 of the video lesson an example of the reasons for a vacation in Osaka, Japan. Ultimately they are the motivations that make you opt for one of the several types of travel: cultural, relaxing, adventurous, religious, sports, etc.

2. Information seeking

Having recognized the need / want to take a trip, and the reasons behind the choice of the type of travel, the tourist starts looking for the information necessary to transform the motivation into a purchasing decision. Sources and types of tourist information are almost infinite: for example, may check the catalogues (on paper and online) of a tour operator, go to a travel agency, read travel magazines or watch television programs dedicated to travel, be enchanted by some captivating advertising of this or that other destination, remember a positive experience made in the past, follow a travel blogger, listen to the suggestions of friends and relatives etc. The slide no. 17 of the video lesson shows a short passage, taken from Wikipedia, which describes how much the importance of one of the "traveler bible", i.e. Lonely Planet, has grown over the years, while in slide 18 there are two of the most influential travel blogger, that is Nataly and Murad Osmani. Getting into the "graces" of these tourist information operators can significantly increase the number of travelers to a destination.

3. Alternatives assessment

After collecting the information based on the motivations for the trip, the tourist identifies a limited series of alternatives that seem to better respond to the initial need.

The selection of alternatives is an "elimination" selection: usually we start from 5/7 choices considered equally sound (the so-called "perceived opportunities set") that must be put in a descending order on the basis of the tourist constraints, which can be both of economic and organizational type (eg the duration of the holiday, the number of participants), or what is called the "attainable opportunities set".

Let's examine the example made in slide 22 of the video lesson. Our imaginary tourist has chosen to spend a holiday by the sea: the alternatives he assesses (y-axis) go from the beach closest to home until French Polynesia, passing through other seaside resorts in the same country or in some other European country. The only constraint taken into consideration in the example concerns the available budget: obviously with a limited budget he will choose the closest place, if instead it was sharply higher he may consider the possibility of making a trip to Tahiti

Organisational constraints could also play an important role: for example, a travel to French Polynesia would last much longer than a trip to a nearby seaside resort and if the people

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with whom our imaginary tourist will make the trip, for example, do not have enough days leave for such a long journey more likely the choice will be for a closer location.

4. Purchasing decision

Once the preferable alternative has been identified, our imaginary tourist makes the reservation, the action that binds him to pay the travel price. The final decision may also be influenced by factors such as the possibility of paying in installments, of moving the departure date without paying penalties, of receiving discounts in case of advance reservations, etc. It is a task of tourism companies to make available offers containing proposals and solutions able of overcoming the obstacle that covering in a single payment a very high price makes many people desist from the purchase.

The booking can be made through many tools which will be illustrated in detail in the video lesson no. 6 of this Module.

5. Consumer experience and post-purchase behavior

The final opinion, positive or negative, on a travel depends heavily on the interaction of factors that can be classified into three categories:

- the physical environment where the tourist experience is lived (for example the quality and atmosphere of the accommodation, the punctuality of transport etc.);
- the staff with whom the tourist comes into contact directly (eg the restaurant waiter or the hotel concierge) or indirectly (eg the chambermaid who cleans the room);
- the relationship with other tourists (eg the level of crowding on the beaches, the noise of children, etc.).

The tourist will be satisfied if all (or at least most) of those factors have fulfilled his expectations and, probably, he will feel obliged to express a positive comment on the experience through a review. Otherwise he will almost certainly express a very negative comment and will use every tool to talk about it badly (and marketing experts know that it is more likely to speak of a negative experience than a positive one).

In conclusion:

- the secret of every successful tourism company is to have the satisfaction of its customers at heart: a satisfied customer is a precious ally to increase its reputation;
- no strategy, no marketing plan will have hope of success without a thorough knowledge of the needs and wants of tourists and how they choose their destinations

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