The role of sport in the tourism destinations chosen by tourists visiting Spain

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In Spain, there are Four Travel Agencies [Kuoni, Julia Tour, Catai and Pullmantur] that offer more than 65% of the entire trips that Spaniards make in summer. These travel agency [Travel/Tourism] “Catalogues” are one of the main means of spreading their publicity.

Additionally, there are “Thematic Reviews” which repeat and condense some of the travel agencies’ promotion and publicity messages. From among all the “Thematic Reviews”, there is one [Viajar] whose edition is equivalent to all the other together.

This paper concentrated its analysis on the Four aforementioned Agencies’ Catalogues (Catalogues, 1996) and the Thematic Reviews (Viajar, 1996).

The tourism is an industry and a physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual experience (Marsh & Henshall, 1987). Tourist activity is composed of a lot of companies that feed the collective dreams and carries out a liberating function, in a society dominated by logic that need the legendary, the mythical (Dufour, 1977). It is the liberating myth, the great adventure for a lot of workers (Dumazedier, 1988).

The main representative of this thought is Jafari (1989), who compares the tourist travel with a “Springboard dive” that allows the tourist to be suspended for a while. In this space the daily world remains behind and the traveller becomes absorbed in another dimension.

If the tourism has its mission, the tourist advertisements fulfil it, displaying the tourist world as a place of plenitude, nature, leisure, history and paradise. Tourist publicity is a social text that reflects the process of the market and the mass consumption towards leisure (Hummon, 1988). To do it, the advertisements describe the tourist place in a way that the tourist would like to visit it (Williamson, 1978).
How does the tourist publicity present its destination in Spain? What kind of elements do the Spaniards prefer? What is the importance of Sport activities?

Following the mentioned authors, it is possible to divide the publicity messages into 15 categories and the “attractions” advertisements offer us another 15 categories.

Destinations

In Spain, the elements that the Thematic Reviews stress about tourism destinations are:

- It’s Magic (26,5%)
- Religious (24,6%)
- It’s a Dream (24,6%) and,
- Spectacular (22,3%).

However, the Four Travel Agencies emphasize more:

- Spectacular (28,5%)
- Religious (23,8%)
- A Place to Discover (22,9%) and,
- Magic (22,6%).

Certainly, all of these elements are like a gateway into another dimension, perhaps a little more in the Thematic Review that stresses the “Magic and Dreams”.

Attractions

With regards to attractions, “Nature” (78,3%) is the elements that the Thematic Review gives more points. The percentage of “Culture and Heritage” (41,2%), “Trip Itself” (39,8%), “Leisure and Sports” (39,8%), “Welcome” (28,9%) and “Comfort” (24,1%) are lower.

Whereas the Four Agencies emphasize “Nature” (82,3%) also; Culture (45,6%) and Economy (39,8%).

Furthermore, it seems that the nature that surrounds a place is essential. It is logical: if the trip supposes an Escape, the urban Spanish people wish for “Natural Sceneries”, “Virginal” and “For Discovering”.

Sports Tourism

In order to answer the question about the role of sport in tourism, the Services of 315 hotels listed in the Catalogues were analyzed. The services offered were:

- Sports, 56,42%
- Infrastructure, 31,12%
- Health, 6,46%, and
- Non-Sports Leisure, 5,49%.
These data show the great importance of sports. The hotels that lodge the Spanish tourist who chooses these “Magic” destinations for their summer holidays provide them with “Sports” as the main offering. These sports are divided as follows:

- Nautical sports, 36.84%
- Excursions and Long Walks, 31.58%
- Dances, 14.03%, and
- Other sports (e.g., tennis, golf, yoga, ball games) 17.54%.

Conclusions

Sports constitute one of the main tourist bases for Spaniards, fond of active tourism. The kind of sports shows that this offer is in accordance with the “Nature” and “Culture and Heritage” looked for in the summer destinations. Nautical sports allow a close relationship with natural sceneries; excursions and long walks bring the Spanish tourists closer to historical places, sights and landscapes; dances are a part of local culture.

Definitely, sports are an essential ingredient of tourism. In some way, they are a fundamental part of lively holidays and they are in harmony with the trends of present tourism, more active, selective and cultivated.

References