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TRAVEL MULTI TASKING

The Reign of Terroir Tourism

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14 JUL 2014: The study of travel psychographics reveals the all-important “Why” when you’re trying to understand the reasons for people to imagine travel dreams, develop travel passions, embark on travel niche markets and in general, justify the very act of travel and discovery.

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And one of those revelations is that today's travellers embrace TMT—Travel Multi-Tasking-- not only as their modus operandi (the way they travel) but as the very motivation and theme for their travels. And while travellers have often combined different interests, for example touring in Italy and appreciating the cuisine, shopping and art galleries, today's travellers tend to add a whole new dimension to the travel equation. Enter, the Reign of Terroir.

Now notice in my title that I didn't say 'the reign of terror'. Terroir is a French word, often pronounced as "terr-wa". The concept of 'terroir' is most often associated with viticulture, wine tourism and wine tasting, but in the travel sense it refers to the sense of place; the human history of each city, town, countryside, mountain, waterfall etc that one can include on an itinerary. It incorporates geology, geography, climate and most fundamentally, the feel of the land. Locals don't always use the term 'terroir' because they live it every day of their lives: The farmer in Cappadocia, the villager in Lampang, the shopkeeper in Douz,

the monk in Lhasa and the porter in Cuzco.

But the concept of terroir is a powerful force for all generations who seek to engage in travel in a more in-depth way. This is your classic niche market audience, yearning to 'connect' with the land and with the people, culture, food, festivals, forests, deserts, mountains and lakes. Ecotourism, voluntourism, adventure tourism, experiential travel and getting off the beaten path—even if it's just for an afternoon bicycle ride—all of these are expressions of what we might refer to as 'terroir tourism'. All generations of traveller are trending toward this higher ground.

Some lump all the divergent interests represented by 'terroir tourism' into a larger category that they refer to as Travel Multi-Tasking and in order to truly understand your clients' motivations (remember those psychographics to which I referred to above), then you have to get away from your Travel 101 training where travellers tend to be categorized into nice, convenient labels.

They love all-inclusives, or they love climbing mountains, or they love shopping or they want to hike through villages.

All these travellers may indeed love to participate in the named activities but when you qualify them further by digging deeper, asking questions that better reflect your professional engagement with the client (as opposed to only asking those standard sales open and closed questions) then you'll discover that for every one wish mentioned about travel, there are 5-10 hidden wishes that the traveller would love to do. They may not even know that there are answers to "what else?" or "can we go further"?

Uncovering these multi-task wishes is one strong way to a) fulfill the value that the client is seeking b) keep the client loyal to you and c) have these clients refer their friends and relatives to you.

A young couple looking to honeymoon in Malaysia may have 'luxury' on their mind, but digging deeper, they may very well have that famous luxury slogan in their thoughts: "Take me out and thrill me but get me home for dinner".

In other words, during the day I want to get dirty and sweaty and take in adventure and culture and try new foods and converse with the locals...but I want to be back at my five star hotel in the evening for my hot shower, my cocktail and my Egyptian cotton sheets.

Multi-tasking in this case may mean that the couple revels in hiking, trekking, swimming, biking, 4-wheel off-roading, horseback riding and more, as well as shopping, dining, going to art galleries and collecting Hard Rock T-shirts, ceramics and crystal figurines.

Psychographics teaches us that the concept of relaxing on holiday has long been subjected to the stereotype of sleeping-in, having a late breakfast, lying on the beach, dancing under the stars and then retiring for the evening. Relaxation is in the mind of the client and it's the task of the travel consultant to get into that head space. They may find that relaxation for some is not having a spare (or what the client would refer to as a 'wasted') moment all day. They want the tour guide to pick them up at 7:00 am, not 9:00 am. They want to see and experience as much as possible. They want to be able to return from their holiday and wow their

friends about all the amazing things with which they connected and all the amazing people they were able to meet along the way.

And of course, when we speak about connecting, it is not only between the traveller and the terroir. It is also, literally with social media networks that complement travel multi-tasking. This could be anything from Pinterest, Instagram and Google Glass to Twitter, Facebook, texting or standard emails.

Travel today is a platform for show and tell ... 21st century style. It's the selfie age where the traveller's connection-ability best showcases their enthusiasm and energy and not only affirms the value of their travel experience but lays it out, bite by bite for their friends and colleagues to see.

The comedienne Lily Tomlin once said cynically, "sometimes I feel like a figment of my own imagination". But when you think of it, that is exactly what many travellers want these days and the travel professional is in the ideal position to draw this out. Travellers imagine themselves doing, acting, seeing, experiencing, feeling, tasting. Not all are able to realize these fleeting thoughts but for those fortunate to have a travel consultant on their side, who can turn imaginative-figments into experience-realities, the value of travel is enhanced and each travel episode becomes more meaningful, thrilling, enticing, fulfilling and relaxing.

You can do it. It's your career calling.



Steve Gillick

A tireless promoter of "infectious enthusiasm about travel", Steve delivers his wisdom once a month in his column *The Travel Coach*.

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