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WATER WATER EVERYWHERE

Celebrating travel liquidity

Steve Gillick

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31 MAY 2013: Shortly after leaving the blustery winter weather in Toronto, I found myself blissfully snorkelling in the Caribbean Sea near Cancun. I started to wonder why I felt so relaxed and at peace with myself, a feeling shared by others in

our group and I'm sure, millions of travellers around the globe.



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What's the big attraction of water?

The comedian Jackie Mason has a routine in which he talks about hotel rooms. "They charge you \$100.00 for a room. But if you can see the water, they charge you another \$100.00. You can swim for free, but if you want to look at the water, it costs \$100.00".

Water is something we take for granted. Many travellers consider it to be the essential component of a holiday. You've got to be near the water, on the beach, on a cruise ship, snorkelling or scuba diving under the water. You can swim in freshwater or seawater, float on dead sea water, dive off cliffs into deep pools of water, splash under waterfalls and in water parks, as well as paddle, peddle, canoe, kayak, yacht, catamaran, dingy, zodiac, banana boat, jet ski, water ski, surf, lounge and sail your way into vacation ecstasy.

In Canada we certainly have enough water, whether it's a glacial lake, a Great Lake, a seaway, or an ocean, river, cove, peninsula, panhandle, island, stream or backyard pool. But as soon as vacation time comes along, many Canadians look for a destination with  water!

Water has always symbolized the unknown, the horizon, the mystery of 'what lies beyond'. To the ancients the seas were dangerous portals of winds, waves, storms and mystical creatures. To the moderns these same waters represent escape, freedom, tropical dreams, vacations, adventures, excitement, nature, exercise, elation, relaxation, contentment and reflection.

The magazine Psychology Today posits the idea that water is associated with stress reduction and pain relief, especially in spas with hot tub, steam and sauna-based treatments. It's no wonder that spas represent an ever-expanding travel niche (and some would also say, lifestyle) market.

The magazine talks about the soothing sounds of water, in real-time by listening to waves crashing against the shore or through listening to artificial "white noise" machines, where, from a Zen point of view, the songs of the river can be heard. They cite Hermann Hesse's novel Siddhartha, where "the title character, while meditating upon the sound of a river and its 'many-voiced song', has a life-changing experience, whereupon he ceases to fight against his destiny and thus achieves [enlightenment](#)".

It would be interesting to discover how many baby boomers who, like me, studied Siddhartha in high school and carried away with us these subliminal

yearnings for tranquility and composure.

We talk about the psychographics of travel - the reason 'why' people want to travel. The client tells you that s/he wants an all-inclusive island beach holiday and we figure that our research into client motivation is complete. After all, a beach is a beach and water is water ♦right?

Well not so fast! Clients can have many different 'vacation-visions' in their minds, even when they attempt to define their vacation strategy. They may fall into one of these areas of 'vacation liquidity':

Water Runners: These are the clients who would grow gills and fins if they could. They are hard-core water aficionados who want to celebrate water activities, try new things and take risks when necessary, (knowing that it's necessary to take risks). They don't care about the accommodation too much as they spend very little time in their room. It's a go-go water world existence. Their motto, borrowed from the Nike Corporation, is '**Just Do It**'. Travel agents need to know resort facilities like the back of their hand, as well as the factors that differentiate one resort from another, as well as the choice snorkelling and scuba areas, the type of fish that can be caught, the quality of the reefs, boat rental opportunities, the details of surf and sailing conditions, and more.

Water Teasers: These are travellers who love to interact with water, as long as they don't have to spend too much time in it. These are the ones who will rent a self-propelled paddle boat, sign up for the glass-bottom boat ride, enjoy a harbour cruise or wade into the water up to their waste. Their motto leans in the direction that '**seeing is**

believing'. As long as the water is somewhere nearby, underneath or just plain visible, then they are extremely content. The quality of the accommodation plays more of a role for these travellers, as they tend to spend more time enjoying the 'land' amenities of the resort or hotel.

Water Whisperers: These are the clients who take a more Zen-like, attitude toward travel and becoming 'one' with the powers of nature. They can reflect on the sounds of soothing, lapping water as it caresses the shore. They are more apt to rent a canoe or kayak than a yacht or motor boat, so they can clear their mind of noise, regular routine and the hustle and bustle of their hectic lives. They want the daydream quality of the water to take them even further than the destination they have chosen and to create a cocoon of escape, if only for a short while. Their motto, taken from the Beatles, is "**picture yourself in a boat on a river**♦" The Whisperers tend to enjoy small, quiet resorts and hotels where they are not tied into a meal plan and can basically chart their own holiday experience.

Water Drinkers: No vacation would be complete without the party-hardy crowd. They want the swim-up bar; they need the swim-up bar --as that is more than just a vacation gimmick♦it is the centre of their social existence. As the bar is by the pool, the quality of the beach or the availability of water activities is of little or no concern. Their motto, borrowed from Jimmy Buffet, is "**Wasting away in Margaritaville**". The quality of accommodation is not of great concern to these travellers as long as the walk from the bar to the room is not too taxing. All-inclusives are de rigueur, and it follows that upscale all-inclusives (that carry premium brands of alcohol) are

attractive and therefore up-selling to these clients is a definite possibility.

Water Ya-Talkin' About: These are the travel agent's target-market dream-come-true. These are the laissez-faire types ♦ whatever happens, happens. Hang Loose, No Problem, Hakuna Matata. They just want to get away from it all with friends, or family, or by themselves, and relax in and out of the water. There are no hidden agendas here. **“Just put me on a flight and transfer me to the beach”**. Their motto is taken from the song “Take it Easy”, made famous by the Eagles. Most often an all-inclusive will be their choice accommodation. No fuss, no bother. Three (or more) meals a day, drinks by the pool or the beach. Not a care in the world.

So all in all, water matters. Savvy travel advisers interview their clients to determine ‘needs’ and are then able to offer suggestions and counsel as to what would give these clients the best bang for their buck (or in water terms, ‘the best splash for their cash’). The goal, of course, is to provide the most value for the vacation, exceed the clients’ expectations and ultimately have a positive and powerful impact on the clients’ travel liquidity.





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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