

## Emerging Trends for 2012 and Beyond

**1. Increased gen Y demand for adventure experiences ::** Baby boomers have long been the target of adventure companies that offer "soft" adventures and more luxurious experiences. But generation Y - a.k.a. the "Millennials" are getting all grown up (most are in their 20s now) and are reaching financial independence. They want "hard" adventures and true authentic experiences (and are a great fit for your "beta" adventures - see #7).

**2. More specialized products/experiences ::** People used to be excited about going to a resort and doing 56 different things while on vacation. Now, travellers want to do more of just one thing because they can get a deeper, more profound, more meaningful, experience out of it. They want an epic adventure so they can brag about it to all their friends (it's hard to brag about something that everyone else has done - see #8).

**3. Travellers will "collect" experiences (like frequent buyers stamps) ::** People collect air miles, points, passport stamps, etc. and now they want to collect experiences. This represents an incredible opportunity for you to grow sales by focusing on repeat customers. Instead of offering package A, B, or C, develop your packages as a theme where your customers can purchase various portions of a series to complete which, once completed, provides a bigger, more meaningful experience. This will generate an increased interest for your clients to come

back to "collect" all the pieces of your big epic experience.

**4. Adventure businesses will need to be more professionals (less lifestyle-based) ::** To stay competitive, adventure tourism businesses will need to be more strategic and demonstrate savvy online skills. While it is perfectly acceptable to wear many hats, you can't possibly excel at everything. Don't try to do it all; play your strengths and hire the expertise you don't have (either full-time, part-time, or on short term assignments). No one has built a great company by himself/herself. It always has been and always will be a group effort.

**5. End-to-end manufactured experiences ::** When buying a computer, you can purchase all the parts yourself to assemble your own system. This gives you the ability to pick and choose specifically what you want. But to do that, you need a fair amount of knowledge, time, and experience and still, you risk to make costly mistakes or end up with a less than optimal machine. On the flip side, you can opt to choose a pre-assembled computer that's been designed by engineers with parts that have been maximized to work together with the user in mind (e.g. Apple products). When it comes to buying a trip, travellers are faced with the same choices: build their own or buy an all-in-one solution that has been well designed and thought out from beginning to end. People want authentic experiences (see #6) and they're too busy and inexperienced to piece it all together on their own. Give them the exact all-in-one solution they are looking for (see #8).

**6. More authentic experiences ::** We'll see an increased number of travellers looking for more "real", more authentic experiences. The concept of authenticity isn't new but it's going mainstream. People are increasingly choosing who they are going to buy from based on how "real" or authentic they perceive the experience to be. Focus on creating "real", authentic experiences (can authentic experiences be manufactured?) BUT don't say your experiences are authentic because they'll be perceived as "inauthentic".

**7. More exploratory trips (first time running the trip) ::** It should come to no surprise that travellers are increasingly interested in exploratory trips, given their heightened interest in authenticity (see #6). There is something very real about being the guinea pig of an untested experiment. But isn't contradictory to their interest in end-to-end manufactured experiences (see #5)? The thing is, travellers want that feeling of being an explorer, they just don't want the uncertainty that comes with it. It's like they want to feel lost but know that they will still arrive at their destination at the end of the day. So go right ahead, invite your clients on new exploratory trips. They won't mind that you haven't ironed all the kinks out, in fact they'll find it that much more authentic and exhilarating (just make sure you have the basics covered!).

**8. Mass customization ::** Whether you want it or not, you are now expected to provide a unique experience (real or perceived) for each and everyone of your clients. From your customer's point of view, it's no longer acceptable to live the same experience as the people that came before them. They may be rafting the same river, with the same guide, and using the same raft as the previous customer but your customer wants, and expects a truly unique experience that has been specifically designed just for him/her. So figure out ways to make it unique to everyone.

**9. Bonus ::** Add your own trend (comments section)

As you can see those trends are very much inter-connected and contradictory at times. The big take away from all of this is to not get too comfortable with anything that you're currently doing

because the rules are being re-written everyday. Now, stop for a second and tell me: What are you doing differently this year?

I hope you find this information useful. If you have any questions about any of this, drop them in the comments section. I will be following up with a post shortly.

Cheers!

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