HOSPITALITY, TOURISM, AND LIFESTYLE CONCEPTS

Implications for Quality Management and Customer Satisfaction

MAREE THYNE
ERIC LAWS EDITORS

Hospitality, Tourism, and Lifestyle Concepts: Implications for Quality Management and Customer Satisfaction

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Hospitality, Tourism, and Lifestyle Concepts: Implications for Quality Management and Customer Satisfaction

Maree Thyne
Eric Laws
Editors

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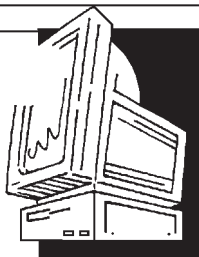
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Hospitality, Tourism, and Lifestyle Concepts: Implications for Quality Management and Customer Satisfaction

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Hospitality, Tourism, and Lifestyle Concepts: Implications for Quality Management and Customer Satisfaction

Eric Laws
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SUMMARY. This article provides an overview of the significance of the lifestyle concept for the management of service quality and customer satisfaction in the hospitality and tourism industry. It discusses aspects of its continuing evolution and outlines the contents of articles relevant to this volume, providing a brief summary of the articles collected. It concludes by identifying a number of opportunities for further research into hospitality and tourism lifestyle concepts. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <http://www.HaworthPress. com> © 2004 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]*

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INTRODUCTION

As the supply and demand of consumer services and products proliferated during the twentieth century it became increasingly clear to managers that they needed to focus product development and promotion on the specific needs (or wants) of selected groups of consumers. The undifferentiated competitive market place of early economic theory based on rational economic choice was no longer a valid model within which to structure an understanding of how people made purchasing decisions (see Duesenberry, 1949; Simon, 1976; Etzioni, 1978 and Lewis, Webley and Furnham, 1995 for discussions). Instead, as Mitchell et al. (2001) point out, the focus now is on understanding customers.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Western society was characterised by widespread enjoyment of previously unknown standards of living, including a higher disposable income allowing a wide choice of luxury goods and services, including tourism. This change in access to life choices is spreading into many societies where such freedoms were unthinkable a decade ago. (See for example Wen Pan and Laws (2001) and Zang and Hueng (2001) for a discussion of the development of the outbound Chinese tourist market.)

The demand for tourism is dependent on significant free time, knowledge of other countries and the transportation, accommodation and allied sectors of the industry facilitating leisure travel (Urry, 1990; Laws, 2003). But the demand for tourism is stimulated by individual interest in travel, and a range of activities offered at destinations which appeal to personal self-images or lifestyle concepts evoked and promoted not only by the tourism industry's advertising but by the linking of many sectors' products to various tourism locations. People have almost constant exposure to marketing and media messages combining to encourage them to adopt continually more complex and self-determined aspirations for activities and sets of possessions (Kotler and Armstrong, 1999).

At the same time, tourism has serious consequences for destination populations; it is often asserted that the traditional roots of society are under threat. Long established patterns of family life and responsibilities between the generations, adherence to the beliefs of a widely espoused (locally at least) religion and its practices, and attachment to the place where one grew up are amongst some of the key societal changes

which both affect tourism demand and are affected by tourist activity. This is not a static situation; the pace of change appears to be increasing. Therefore an analysis of lifestyle issues for tourism has to take into account both the potential to better promote tourism through lifestyle research (see for example the individual papers by Dolničar; Moscardo; and Scott and Parfitt in this volume for further discussion on this point) and the consequences of tourism for the lifestyles of the industry's stakeholders (see for example the articles by Goulding, Baum and Morrison; Simpson, Bretherton and de Vere; and Tucker and Lynch).

Implicit in the foregoing discussion is a view that tourism, and indeed contemporary society are in a constant state of evolution under pressure from a variety of factors. It is therefore evident that a lifestyle marketing analysis conducted at one period to determine new market products or segments will have to be reappraised after a period of time because of changes occurring in the target population's demand preferences, development of new target groups, and supply changes in terms of new or enhanced products and newer forms of competition. Furthermore, the attacks on America in September 2001 and the subsequent defensive measures adopted by the airline industry and government agencies have undermined the tourism industry's expectation of continuing growth as the demand for travel, whether for leisure or business, evaporated and has still not fully recovered.

MARKETING AND LIFESTYLE APPROACHES

Marketing is widely regarded as the core business function concerned with matching the organisation's skills with market demand. "The organisation's task is to determine the needs, wants and interests of target markets and to deliver the desired satisfactions more effectively and efficiently than competitors, in a way that preserves or enhances the customers' and the society's well being" (Kotler, 1994:26). The purpose of marketing is to obtain (and retain) customers by ensuring that the service offered is attractive to target groups, and by influencing their decision to purchase. The contexts include the marketplace within which the firm operates, its own competitive capabilities, and consumers' attitudes towards it.

The main paradigm in theories of marketing strategy has traditionally been the managerial requirement to bring potential clients to the point where the action of purchasing a product yields satisfaction to the cus-

tomer and profit to the vendor. More recently, it has been accepted that purchases are made to gain a range of benefits from use or ownership, leading to the 'market orientation' paradigm, and it is this which underlies the managerial concern to define the conditions under which clients are more or less likely to purchase future hospitality or tourism services from a particular business. Haywood (1997) and Laws (2004) have reviewed the relevance of the marketing concept for tourism. The issue is not confined to tourism: the wider context to this situation is the growth of consumer-rights awareness (Prus, 1989; McCracken, 1990), and the 'meta-context' of scepticism about the underlying values and institutions of western societies (Hughes, 1993).

One academic response to these conditions has been the development of theories relating to lifestyle as a way of understanding how people make choices about products and services (Raaij, 1986; Lawson, Tidwell, Rainbird, Loudon and Della Bitta, 1996). Managers, too, have adopted the approach, one illustration familiar to people who watch advertising for cars is that they are now seldom overtly concerned with performance features such as speed or acceleration, instead they provide imagery, music and show people enjoying the car in specific settings such as moody empty city streets, holidays spent in high risk sport in exotic environments, romantic interludes in various settings and so on. Thus, the paradigm underpinning many advertising messages is to link the product to lifestyle concepts.

Tourism and Hospitality Lifestyles

The term 'style of life' was coined over 50 years ago by Alfred Adler to refer to the goals people shape for themselves and the ways they reach them (Lawson et al. 1996). Lazer (1963) suggests that lifestyle can be viewed as a pattern of living which influences and is reflected by consumption behaviour. Craig-Lees, Joy and Browne (1995) stress that 'lifestyle' relates to how people live, how they spend their money and how they allocate their time. Thus, 'lifestyles' can also be just as relevant to the supplier (as discussed in the articles by Goulding et al.; Simpson et al.; and Tucker and Lynch). Predominantly, however, the 'lifestyles' of the consumer have been researched chiefly to provide a detailed understanding of underlying target markets to enable the development of more effective marketing strategies (as discussed in the articles by Hede et al.; Hughes; Moscardo; and Thyne et al., in this volume).

Due to the increased understanding of the effect and influence of lifestyles on consumption, there has been a heightened emphasis on 'life-

styles' in marketing, particularly in promotion strategies. This suggests the need for more research, both to better understand the nature of such links and to gain deeper insights into how people see themselves in terms of their purchase decisions. This collection of articles summarises a variety of existing lifestyles literature and researches and addresses the business and academic rationale for undertaking it (each article will be discussed in more detail later in this Introduction).

Customer Satisfaction and Lifestyle Considerations

Consideration of the question of customer satisfaction suggests that there are a number of dynamic factors at work driving change in the tourism and hospitality marketplace, as Fuchs and Weiermair (2003) point out. Effective managers are always asking questions about what makes their service successful or unsuccessful (Zeithaml, 2000). Noe (1999: Introduction) has stated that "no greater challenge exists in the marketplace than for a business to be responsible for providing satisfactory tourist and hospitality services."

Ultimately, the individual's test of his or her tourism experience is how well it has satisfied his or her own expectations, but importantly it is the sum of all of these which underpins the organisation's reputation, and its continuing success. This reinforces Grönroos (2001) who suggests both that the organisation should be designed around good service delivery, and that its management should focus on quality issues, designing the system from the perspective of its ability to satisfy consumers. Similarly, Chisnall (1984) identified the following twin roles for marketing managers:

1. Interpretation, the analysis and interpretation of behaviour in the market place, both present and projected.
2. Integration, that is, working closely with company colleagues in other functions.

Chisnall argued that marketing is not just concerned with the obvious audiences outside the company, it has an important role to play in adapting attitudes and performance by all company members, that is 'internal selling'. Cowell (1986) has defined the concept in the following way: "internal marketing means applying the philosophy and practices of marketing to people who serve the external customers so that the best possible people can be employed and retained, and they will do the best possible work." The implications of internal selling are that the firm rec-

ognises the impact of employees' detailed job decisions on client's satisfaction. This is discussed further in terms of lifestyles and lifestyle choice in the articles by Simpson et al.; and Tucker and Lynch.

It is worth emphasising the effect on tourists' satisfaction of their interactions with the staff of an airline, airport, hotel and other companies supplying facilities for their holiday. This concern with service encounters reflects other writers' views. "Since service encounters are the consumer's main source of information for conclusions regarding quality and service differentiation, no marketer can afford to leave the service encounter to chance" (Shostack, 1985). These interactive aspects of service encounters are significant at a more fundamental level when considered in the context of lifestyle research: interactions with other people are basic human activities, and occupy a large part of our time. Poor service encounter experiences affects the quality of every day life, and staff may spend their entire working day in repeated service encounters with customers who may already be dissatisfied by some incident which occurred earlier. Thus stressing the point that it is important that tourism operators are closely matched (psychologically and in terms of lifestyles) to their visitors and their visitors' expectations (reiterated in the article by Tucker and Lynch). Thus, lifestyle approaches can help conceptualise why people choose to work in the tourism and hospitality sectors, and why they choose particular places to live and work as discussed in the articles by Goulding et al. and Simpson et al. Lifestyle approaches may also be of assistance in providing a framework to analyse the effects of subsequent experiences on their chosen lifestyle self-images and this appears to the Editors to be an area ripe for further conceptual and methodological development.

Lifestyle Research Presented in This Special Edition

Collectively the articles cover four main areas of lifestyles research and its link to quality management and customer satisfaction. Two articles focus on the match between the tourism provider and the guest/tourist. Tucker and Lynch look at this in terms of the B&B market in both New Zealand and Scotland. They suggest that tourism boards and other bodies in charge of tourism promotion and marketing could conduct psychological profiling of homestay hosts, to enable potential guests to match themselves with compatible hosts. Simpson, Bretherton and de Vere investigate the nature of buyer/seller relationships which evolve in a wine tourism setting (in New Zealand) to again analyse a potential match between the two.

Goulding, Baum and Morrison analyse a similar concept; however, they focus solely on the tourism business operator/supplier. Specifically they discuss tourism businesses (within the United Kingdom) which are being chosen as lifestyle enterprises, providing a range of benefits, some of which occur due to the businesses operating on a seasonal basis. This article advocates that policies focusing on extending the seasonality of the tourism industry need to consider the lifestyle aspirations of the operators.

Another topic area covered in this special edition includes articles which utilise and describe various types of lifestyle segmentation studies undertaken to provide more detailed information on specific markets. Hede, Jago and Deery discuss the link between personal values and attending special events (specifically a major block-buster musical in Australia). Hughes discusses and analyses commonly held views about the gay market and their value to the tourism industry and he evaluates the lifestyle marketing opportunities of this segment. Moscardo describes the lifestyle segmentation of Rainforest visitors in North Eastern Australia based on travel interests, activities and desired rainforest based tourism experiences. The article links the segments uncovered with management frameworks for the specific tourism destination. Thyne, Davies and Nash outline a lifestyle segmentation study of the backpacker market in Scotland, determining that although often viewed as one target market, it actually consists of a number of underlying segments with quite distinct interests, attitudes and motivations.

The final area of lifestyle research covered in this special edition relates to methodological issues. Dolničar and Leisch compare *a priori* geographic segmentation and *a posteriori* behaviour segmentation on an Austrian visitor survey data set, providing recommendations for destination management. Scott and Parfitt compare and evaluate three case studies which have implemented three different methods of lifestyle segmentation (Roy Morgan Values Segments; brand and domain specific segmentation; and AIO segmentation). Dolničar evaluates two data-driven segmentation solutions (behaviour and benefit segmentation) which are constructed independently from the same data set (Australian surfers). All of these three studies stress the importance of matching the right lifestyle segmentation methodology with the context, aim and objectives of the research.

Taken together, the Editors expect that the articles will contribute to a better understanding of the significance of lifestyle concepts in two ways. First, the articles bring together and summarise a wide range of theoretical insights while providing description and analysis through

case studies of recent application of lifestyle concepts in a variety of sectors and cultural settings. Second, the collection of articles acts as a benchmark of current knowledge, with the hope of stimulating further research into the concepts and practices of 'lifestyles.'

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The assumptions underlying traditional marketing are that marketing activity has the primary purpose of attracting new customers and that the market consists of a large number of potential customers. In this simplified approach to marketing, the needs of all customers were regarded as very similar, and it was thought to be easy to replace any who desert with new customers so there was little concern with methods of retaining existing customers. In contrast, service marketing and contemporary approaches to marketing in other sectors emphasise the importance of developing long term relationships with their customers (Bergen and Nasr, 1998; Bloemer, de Ruyter and Wetzels, 1999; Edvardson and Standvik, 2000; Leong and Han, 2002; Raffii and Kampas, 2002).

McCarthy (1960: 288-289) commented "a firm can through long term relationships with customers get access to detailed and useful knowledge about the customer . . . develop a core of satisfied committed customers. . . . Service firms have started to identify their customers, which enables them to be more focused in their marketing." As this collection of articles demonstrates, lifestyle research, particularly when linked to the study of quality management and customer satisfaction, contributes to better understanding customers, developing long term relationships and improving the efficiency of marketing. Taken together, these articles also provide an accessible and comprehensive review of major themes in the literature and extensive bibliographies on which, the Editors hope, the study of lifestyles will be taken further by the next generation of research into tourism and hospitality.

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Host-Guest Dating:
The Potential
of Improving the Customer Experience
Through Host-Guest
Psychographic Matching

Hazel Tucker
Paul Lynch

SUMMARY. This article argues for the potential use of lifestyle segmentation in order to achieve psychographic matching between hosts and guests in Bed and Breakfast and homestay accommodation. The discussion draws on research conducted in home-hosted accommodation in New Zealand and Scotland that highlighted the central role that the host-guest interaction plays in guest experience and satisfaction. The idea is then developed as to the potential for tourism boards and other promotional bodies to conduct psychographic profiling on homestay hosts so that potential guests might match themselves for potential com-

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patibility with hosts. Whilst points of caution are noted, it is argued that such profiling could increase the possibilities of successful host-guest interaction and thus the quality of experience of both guests and hosts. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <http://www.HaworthPress.com> © 2004 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]*

KEYWORDS. Homestay, lifestyle segmentation, psychographics, host-guest interactions

INTRODUCTION

This article discusses the potential use of lifestyle segmentation in order to achieve psychographic matching between hosts and guests in small accommodation enterprises in which a home dimension is a common feature. The discussion focuses specifically on the cases of New Zealand and Scotland, looking comparatively at the nature of small tourist accommodation businesses in those contexts. The comparative discussion is based on separate studies investigating B&B and homestay accommodation conducted in New Zealand and Scotland by the authors.

The term 'homestay' accommodation is inevitably a term with specific cultural associations. For instance, in New Zealand, along with Australia, the term is associated with farmhouse accommodation, and B&B type accommodation within private homes (Ogilvie, 1989; Craig-Smith et al., 1993; Tucker, forthcoming). In a study conducted in Scotland, Lynch (2003) collectively referred to as 'homestay' or commercial home accommodation the following accommodation types: host families, cultural stays, bed and breakfasts, farmhouse stays, self-catering accommodation, guest houses, and small hotels.

The term 'lifestyle business' is often associated with such accommodation enterprises (Morrison, 2002; Dewhurst and Thomas, 2003; Shaw and Williams, forthcoming). The term refers to owner-managers' pursuit of both social as well as economic goals and is suggestive of the highly individual approach taken to running such enterprises. One discourse associated with this type of accommodation is of a negative nature and tends to revolve the idiosyncratic behaviour and rules of the hosts. This is seen most notably in Stringer (1981) and Wood (1994), and is in respect of issues pertaining to the quality of the guest experi-

ence (Bywater, 1998) and the level of social control afforded to the hosts because of the intense social exchange occurring (Tucker, forthcoming). As Heal has noted on the obligatory position of the guest, the guest is obliged 'to accept the customary parameters of his hosts' establishment, functioning as a passive recipient of goods and services defined by the latter as part of his hospitality' (1990:192).

It is argued in this article that because the host-guest relationship is central to the product experience in these types of accommodation, a psychographic matching between hosts and guests would inevitably enhance the quality of the experience of both guests and hosts. Whilst lifestyle and psychographic segmentation is usually conducted on the potential market, or in this case, the 'guests', in this article the suggested use is aimed at gaining a profile of the hosts in order that empowered guests can more fully anticipate how their homestay experience will be.

It should be noted that the authors have not conducted psychographic profiling of homestay hosts or guests themselves, but rather have conducted ethnographic-style research focusing on the nature and quality of guest and host experience within this small accommodation context. Reflection on such experiences has led to the view that the lifestyles concept would be of potential use to enhance the guest experience of this product. The discussion is therefore intended as conceptual in nature but grounded in the findings of field research.

CASE STUDIES

As a starting point in this discussion, relevant aspects of the two case studies informing the comparative discussion will now be described. This will be followed by a review of psychographics and the Values and Lifestyles adaptations. Then, the article will highlight the importance of the guests' relationship with the hosts and thus the centrality of the host in product construction. The argument will then be developed as to the potential use of lifestyle segmentation in order to achieve psychographic matching of hosts and guests.

New Zealand

In New Zealand, Bed and Breakfast (B&Bs), homestays and farm-stays represent a rapidly growing sector of the tourism industry, providing tourists with a variety of accommodation choices (Ombler, 1997). Under the general label of Bed and Breakfast, both the *New Zealand Bed and Break-*

fast (2001) guidebook and the *Charming Bed and Breakfast in New Zealand* (2002) guidebook include homestays, farm-stays, lodges, inns, and boutique accommodation. Yet, the distinctions between those establishments labelled a B&B and those as a homestay are often unclear. On average such establishments have three rooms offering mostly double accommodation. All establishments offer breakfast, usually in a shared dining area, and some also offer evening dinner, usually accompanying the hosts at the dining table.

Fieldwork conducted by Tucker in 2001-2002 investigated the host-guest relationship in Bed and Breakfast and home and farm-stay accommodation businesses in rural New Zealand. The study aimed at identifying the ways in which the experience of commercial hospitality in home-hosted accommodation is mutually satisfactory to both hosts and guests, and at identifying any areas of mismatch between the experiences of hosts and guests. This research was based principally on participant observation and in-depth interviews conducted with the hosts and guests at 30 Bed and Breakfast and homestay establishments in rural parts of the south island of New Zealand. Simultaneous to qualitative interviewing methods, participant observation was employed to focus on the interactions between hosts and guests in the accommodation businesses. Participation observation is recognised as the most appropriate method to obtain significant data on interactions and relationships as it allows the recording of behaviour, conversation and experience 'in situ' (Maanen, 1995).

The data from the participant observation and interviews was analysed by drawing out the key themes and variables relating to the host-guest relationship. The themes that emerged included: the meanings surrounding the concepts of 'host', 'guest' and 'hospitality' among tourist visitors and hosts; comparisons between the expectations and experiences of domestic tourists and international visitors; the extension of hospitality in the form of guiding and interpretation of the local area; levels and foci of satisfaction in hosts' and guests' experiences; levels and foci of dissatisfaction in hosts' and guests' experiences; potential areas of 'balance' between the experiences of commercialised hospitality. Part of the participant observation process involved the researcher staying for one night or more in the participating establishments and keeping a research diary during the stays. As with Lynch's study described below, this also afforded the researcher a guests' view of staying in the establishments and interacting with hosts and other guests in a guest role (albeit a declared guest-researcher role).

The study found that both hosts and guests see home-hosted accommodation as the buying and selling of more than 'just a bed'. In relation

to the hosts, Tucker's study found that home-hosting is usually a life-style choice. Very infrequently did hosts cite income as the primary motivation for operating a business, but rather they talked about the social benefits such as the opportunity to meet people from a wide range of backgrounds and nationalities and to exchange knowledge and develop potentially long lasting friendships. One host noted that by offering B&B as their children were growing up, their children were exposed to ideas and cultures that they would not normally have had experience of. Hosts also frequently mentioned how good it made them feel to have been able to make a positive difference to someone's holiday in New Zealand by offering the 'personal touch'.

These findings were mirrored in the interviews with the guests. Whilst the reasons guests gave for staying in B&Bs often included wanting the accommodation to be in beautiful settings, to be peaceful, 'homely', and 'unique', the overriding reason they gave was 'to have a relationship with local people', 'to have the opportunity to talk with them', 'to get to know the lifestyle of New Zealanders' and 'to learn about their culture'. Thus, adding value to home-hosted accommodation is the way in which it allows tourists backstage into the lives of 'real' New Zealanders, as represented by homestay hosts.

However, the level to which guests can enter into this 'real life' is dictated largely by the hosts, and depends on the extent to which the hosts are prepared to interact with their guests. Moreover, the ties of obligation are impressed upon the guests throughout their stay. As the guests are in the hosts' space, as well as abiding by the general social rules that ensure the interaction will run smoothly, they are also expected to respect and submit to their hosts' way of doing things. As one host explained, 'they are aware that they are in our situation at the time so they are wanting to be like us, or accept the way we do things'. Similarly, guests are fully aware of the relationship they have entered into by staying in a homestay situation, as seen in the following interview extract: 'In someone's home you feel more conscientious about tidying up after yourself, and you have to hang around longer–you can't up and leave like in a hotel.'

As a basis for the present article, therefore, Tucker's research highlighted the pivotal role that the hosts and the politics of identity play in home-hosted accommodation. Moreover, by letting 'strangers' stay in their home, B&B hosts are taking a variety of risks and must therefore take certain measures to ensure that their guests will understand and play by the rules. The ways in which they do so strongly impacts on the guests' experience. In this regard, Tucker identified a range of host 'personality' types and the implications of