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Autor: Rotach, Thomas

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The main tourist organisations

The Swiss National Tourist Office (SNTO) operates in Switzerland and abroad, providing information and placing advertisements for Switzerland as a vacation land. Head office is located in Zurich and the SNTO also runs 24 offices in foreign centres. In legal terms, it is a public law entity, and its funds consists largely of federal contributions as well as contributions made by the tourist industry.

The counterpart to the Swiss National Tourist Office at national level is the *Swiss Tourist Association* whose activities may be described as follows: representing tourist industry interests in national politics, coordinating the activities of all groupings interested in tourism, providing information and promoting applied tourist research. It takes the form of an association under private law, and is mainly funded by member contributions.

The Matterhorn (in the background) is free advertising for our country. (Photo: SNTO)



Tourist-intensive industrial country

Foreign visitors to Switzerland spent Sfr. 11,500 million in 1989. This means that tourism is the third biggest industry, after the machine and the chemical industries; on the list of the top five Swiss exporting industries. If we add in day and business tourism, expenditure on sports equipment and private motoring, on holiday homes used by the owners themselves and on construction or installations prompted by tourism, we obtain a total tourist demand in Switzerland of Sfr. 32,000–34,000 million.

If we compare these figures to those for other European countries we see that Switzerland is one of the most 'tourist-intensive' countries, even if it accounts for 'only' some four percent of total overnight stays recorded in Europe. In 1989 Switzerland recorded 5.4 overnight stays by foreigners per head of its own population. If we calculate foreign exchange receipts resulting from tourism on a per capita basis, we see that Switzerland is number two behind Austria, with Sfr. 1737 being spent per head of population.

Tourism focuses on mountain and border areas

Some 290,000 people are directly or indirectly employed in tourism. This industry is Switzerland's most important employer after the metal and machine industry. In 1989, 6.4% of GDP was attributable to tourist consumption (expenditure by foreign and Swiss tourists in Switzerland).

More than two-thirds of all Swiss tourism is accounted for by the pre-alpine and alpine regions, areas whose economy is otherwise not strong. Tourism means work and income for

numerous mountain valleys, and helps to prevent migration from the land. Mountain farming may be typical for Switzerland, but its yield is poor. In many places this prime tourist attraction can only be maintained because tourism brings farmers additional income.

The future of tourism and the fate of mountain farming will be even more closely linked as Europe moves closer together.

*Elisabeth Kaufmann,
Swiss Tourist Association*

The Swiss National Tourist Office abroad

Switzerland on Display

There are 230 'ambassadors' at the Swiss National Tourist Office representing Switzerland, the 'country for travel and holiday'. Of these, 70 are based at the headquarters in Zurich while the remaining 160 are spread throughout 25 representations in 17 different countries. Their task is to put into action the commission entrusted to the SNTO by the Federal Government to provide tourist information and organise promotional activities both at home and abroad.

The origins of Swiss tourist promotion abroad are attributed to the activities of the railways, or to be more precise, to the Gotthard and the Jura–Simplon lines. The opening of the new alpine routes was also brought to the attention of people beyond the Swiss border, and contributed to the first major upswing in tourism in this country at the end of the 19th century. After the private railways were nationalised in 1902, the publicity department of the Swiss Federal Railways gradually built up a network of agencies abroad, which were later taken over and further developed by the SNTO. Although the tourist industry agreed about the necessity of a national publicity bureau al-

ready at the beginning of this century, they did not see eye to eye on matters concerning the financing of such an office. Only when the government, faced with the catastrophic effects of the First World War on the tourist trade, relented into providing financial support, did tourist promotion begin to take shape on a national scale. The 'National Association for the Promotion of Tourism', founded in 1917 under private law, was followed in 1939 by the 'Swiss Office for Tourist Publicity', which was formed as a public corporation. The name was changed to the Swiss National Tourist Office in 1955 and today comprises 450 members.



Worldwide representation

The network of the 25 SNTO offices now in operation has grown historically and the location of these offices depends primarily on the importance of the market. In principle the SNTO has its own representative on all markets which generate more than 300,000 tourist nights a year.

In numerous metropolises, such as New York, London, Paris, Frankfurt and Vienna, the SNTO marks the presence of Switzerland in the most prominent location, while in other places the offices are based in cheaper accommodation out of the city centre. Unfortunately the booking offices all too easily give visitors the impression that the role of the SNTO is purely to give information and distribute brochures. It is true that SNTO staff provide around 2 million enquirers with information each year and give out to the public more than 800 tons of publicity material. Enquiries are dealt with by letter or by telephone as well in person over the counter at the SNTO offices. While those received by the offices in countries overseas tend to be more superficial and concern fewer destinations, enquiries in Europe differ in every respect. How much information is given and how difficult the queries are varies tremendously from country to country. What is important in the end is that the information given meets the needs of the customer. Although the information service is important and demanding, it comprises just one of the SNTO's many activities.

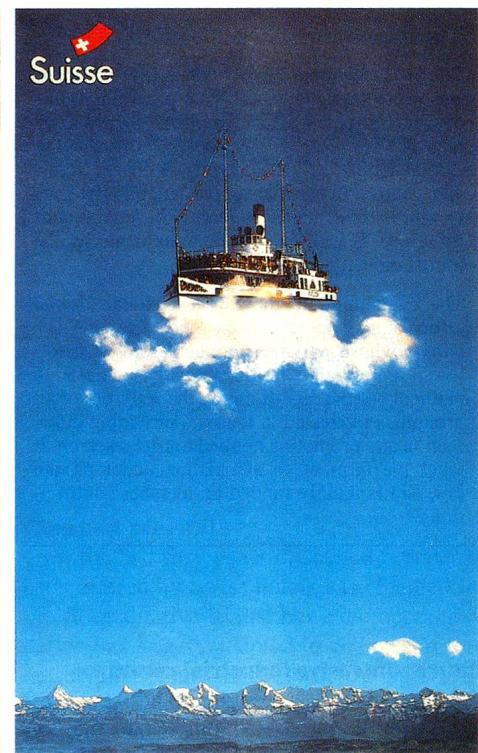
Cooperation with the media

In order to create a demand for tourist information about Switzerland, the SNTO must first of all arouse outside interest for our

country. With this aim in view each SNTO representation works closely with the media – the press, radio and television – which spread the advertising message throughout the world. The media are regularly informed about the latest offers by means of press releases, and are also kept well supplied with press articles and photographs. To enable the media to give first-hand reports, the SNTO offices, in conjunction with their colleagues from the tourist trade, organise press trips to Switzerland. As a result, in 1990 more than 900 representatives from the media visited Switzerland and through innumerable articles, radio broadcasts and television programmes conveyed their impressions of our country to the public all over the world. To mark the 700th Anniversary of the Confederation, the largest ever information campaign organised by Switzerland is currently taking place, in which 12,000 members of the editorial staff from the press, radio and television in 120 different countries are involved.

Important role as mediator

In order to ensure that Swiss tourism products find a place in the holiday programmes offered by travel agents and companies, the SNTO offices maintain regular contact with the tour operators. Here SNTO staff play the role of mediator, establishing contact between the foreign buyers and the tourist suppliers. They are also responsible for organising study trips, coordinate the participation of Swiss suppliers at trade fairs on tourism and make their whole infrastructure available for joint activities abroad. This work requires not only an extensive inside knowledge of the host country but also a



'Suisse' poster, designed for the 1990 Theme of the Year "Lakes and Rivers – Pearls of Switzerland". (Photos: SNTO)

high degree of familiarity with Swiss tourist products.

Financial Situation

Unfortunately the SNTO has not been able to afford to finance promotion in the form of advertising campaigns and radio and TV spots for several years. It is therefore forced to confine itself to a great extent to the production of publicity aids such as printed matter, posters, photos, videos and films, all of which are put into use throughout the world.

In order to carry out its various tasks, the SNTO has for the current year around Sfr. 45 million at its disposal, Sfr. 31 million of which come from the Confederation.

Financially speaking, the SNTO cannot keep pace with its other alpine competitors, even though revenues of Sfr. 12.4 billion (1990) flow into coffers of the Swiss tourist trade from foreign guests, thus making tourism the third most important export sector. How much freedom of movement the SNTO team abroad will have in future will be decided by the Swiss Parliament when they allocate the federal contribution for the period 1993/1997. The international struggle to attract visitors will in any case become greater and increasingly more difficult, irrespective of the SNTO's financial means.

Thomas Rotach



Swiss Tourist Office in Vienna's Kärntnerstrasse.