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"The Bernese Oberland – Our Future is the Family"

In 1987–88, a specially commissioned 'marketing concept study group' drew up new guidelines for market handling and product image in the Bernese Oberland holiday region.

The initial phase ascertained the actual state of supply and demand in the region. A profile of strengths and weaknesses was compiled, and target markets and groups were examined and divided into segments. As the work progressed, one segment very quickly became dominant: it was clear that more attention should be paid to The Family, in terms of a diversified long-term relationship. Two family sociologists from the Sociological Institute at Berne University were brought in to assess the chances and dangers of adopting this new 'Families' marketing approach. The most recent evaluation of TOMAS (Tourist Market Research Switzerland) corroborated the findings of the working group in a striking way. Objectives and rules of conduct were derived from the new-found knowledge. The new Bernese Oberland marketing concept should now set new standards of performance in a highly competitive market.

Technological Environment

The expansion of the public transport network is essential if our region is to be able to retain its holiday character. Electronic communication tools help to save time, which can be better spent on closer contact with our guests and a higher degree of personal care.

Concentration on the Family

Even in the tourist trade it is impossible to please everyone. Every tourist region has to concentrate on looking after those guests to whom it has always been able to offer that little bit more than other regions. In the Bernese Oberland these are mostly families. The strengths and weaknesses show that *on the whole* the future of the Bernese Oberland lies neither in cheap nor in luxury tourism. The infrastructure of the area is, however, particularly suitable for better meeting the needs of all kinds of families, from the young couple to the extended family. The objectives are first and foremost directed towards this guest segment. On 14 June 1989 the delegates' conference of the Bernese Oberland Tourist Association authorised a new marketing model. It commits the bodies of the Associa-



Rambling is not only an ideal sport for the whole family but also a valuable contribution towards 'active relaxation'. (Photo: SNTO)

tion to promoting the Bernese Oberland both at home and abroad as an ideal holiday region for families. The model does not define how this large community project of the Association and all those involved in tourism should be carried out. But the principles of governing product presentation, selling points and methods of communication give an indication of where the focal point will lie in the future. Tourist enterprises which attract guests other than families will continue to ensure the area's diversity in the future. The Bernese Oberland Tourist Association certainly does not see the family as the only type of guest.

Ecological Environment

We support our mountain farmers. Without their work the Bernese Oberland would lose more than just its character. Within a short period of time, its natural roots would also be destroyed.

But it will increasingly concentrate its restricted personnel and financial resources on this guest segment. The Association would welcome any lively public discussion which might result from this model, particularly on the part of interested and involved circles. As the umbrella organisation for the region, it ex-

Social Environment

The labour market will always be a problem for us. As a traditional industry we cannot offer the dream salaries or the leisure perks and generous holiday allowances which the new top professions provide. That is why the way we live together with the people who work in our region is so important. Young people are not attracted to our profession by a dynamic style of management. Only human warmth, high esteem of one's employees and respect for our foreign colleagues will stop the market from drying out. Partnership is payment which costs nothing but is very valuable.

pects its members to bring their concepts into line with the objectives stipulated. Together, the tourist organisations of the region will not just hold their own against competition, but also attract new guests.

Service before Advertising!

An essential principle behind this definition of the tourism market in the '90s is that "our guests will be even more enthusiastic about staying with us because they are happy in the Bernese Oberland because we are happy". The Bernese Oberland Tourist Association and (hopefully) all its partners wish to orientate their future activities towards this maxim. We are fully aware of the fact that guests come to us over and over again because they feel at home here, because they feel that this is home.

There is however still much to be done here. In keeping with the principle 'Service before Advertising' we must first determine what can actually be promoted under the heading of 'family services'. We must decide what products clearly deserve this seal of quality. Up until now the Bernese Oberland Tourist Association has been required to act according to environmental principles. This new concept contains additional social components. The main focus centres on our guests with their overnight stays and daily expenditure, as well as – at the same level – on ourselves, the local inhabitants. After all, our guests come to us because they are happy because we are happy.

Walter Twerenbold, Director
Bernese Oberland Tourist Association