

The future means quality holidays

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The future mean

The formula «Holidays = Switzerland ≠ Tourism» declares that our country is alone capable of providing holidays while leaving the business of (mass) tourism to others. This statement is much more than merely a reiteration of our new positioning campaign for Switzerland as a holiday destination. It is both the starting point and the objective of our strategy to raise the quality of holidays as a product, to improve the political environment for the whole holiday and travel industry, and to strengthen our own self-confidence as hosts. Last but not least, however, it is a crucial message to our customers: holidays offering a high level of individuality and stimulation in Switzerland instead of (mass) tourism somewhere else.

So as to clear up any possible misunderstanding right from the outset, tourists are of course welcome in Switzerland also in the future. It could just be, however, that they will never want to be tourists again after they experience the difference between holidays with us and mere tourism. Are we perhaps taking on more than we can handle here? No, since in the first place this is a task which we have taken on ourselves and, secondly, in the judgement of most of our past and potential visitors we are well up to the task: «Switzerland stands for holidays» they say. All of them – whether holiday guests, city

visitors or congress participants – express this conviction.

Holidays were invented in Switzerland.

Yes indeed, we were the ones who started it all. Around the middle of the last century we, together with the British who were our first guests, discovered holidays as a result of mountaineering. The formula could not have been simpler: foreigners arrived in the alpine regions of Switzerland in order to enjoy and learn about their natural beauty, the fascinating world of the mountains, and the lifestyle and traditions of the «mountain people». And, if only for a few days or a couple of weeks, to live a nicer, more comfortable, «posher», or simply different kind of existence. We caught on quickly. We felt honoured to be the object of such interest, and soon developed a nose for the business, provided proper transport, accommodation, and food and drink – in short, everything that our guests required for their particular comfort and enjoyment. Both parties to the deal were happy.


However, we don't want to lose ourselves here in the good old days. Instead we need to learn from them. By concentrating on our original qualities we can mobilise those forces which we need to

bring back the sparkle and glow to the holiday jewel that is Switzerland, and to get ourselves into shape for the future. And another thing: our traditional competence in providing holidays – just like the Swiss landscape, culture, prestige, security, punctuality and cleanliness – is one of the crucial raw materials from which holidays in Switzerland are fashioned. We must take care of it and foster it.

Switzerland is not suited for mass tourism.

The UBS study paper on «Swiss Tourism» produced in 1996 comes to the clear and unequivocal conclusion that «Switzerland is unsuited for mass tourism», a fact which all – both we ourselves and (fortunately) our guests – are basically aware of. The study comes to this conclusion from the point of view of quality and price: «It makes better sense for Switzerland to concentrate consistently on providing high-quality products.» And that is what we are doing. Switzerland as a brand stands for holidays which offer good value and a high level of experience; the price/performance ratio should be right in every single category.

But it's not enough simply to talk about it. Quality begins in our heads and



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Switzerland is yours.

s quality holidays.

perhaps also in our hearts. It must be fought for and monitored every day. In respect of quality assurance, the UBS study asserts that there are «considerable shortfalls in Swiss tourism». This statement makes clear what our commitment to holidays instead of tourism means in this context, a commitment which we are backing up with a significant advertising campaign: we as those proving the holiday experience must monitor, improve and underpin the quality of our product, measuring it at all times against the expectations of our guests. The quality standard which we set cannot be high enough: Switzerland, as a brand, is the absolute measure of quality in holidays. We have already taken the first step on this path by launching the Quality Label for holidays in Switzerland.

Switzerland needs a holidays policy.

If we are to reach our ambitious target, we need more than a convincing advertising campaign combined with the professional marketing of Swiss tourism and of all the providers of products under the Switzerland brand name. Switzerland as a holiday destination needs the same basis as Switzerland in its role as a financial centre. Just like every other branch of

industry in this country, it needs targeted political measures to optimise the economic, cultural, social and technical environment within which it operates. This means, in particular, that the holiday industry must ensure that it is recognised as one of the essential pillars of the Swiss economy and that it is seen and respected as such. Switzerland as a holiday destination also needs public discussion of Switzerland's role as a host country. As a matter of principle, there should be a unit called «The friendly host» as part of the basic curriculum at elementary school level, at least as a subsidiary subject.

If we are serious about our leadership role as regards the provision of holidays, it is not enough for us to twist and turn like a slalom skier in pursuit of the newest international trends in the mass tourist market. We must take an example from the inventive spirit of our pioneering years and maximise our potential to innovate. Perhaps Switzerland even needs a Holidays University; initially it could be implemented as a virtual institution on the Internet but with real «field trials». Because the world must know where it should go to experience the difference between tourism and holidays.

And one more point in conclusion. As the figures for 1997 show, business in the area of holidays is on the way up

again. So why do we need to reposition Switzerland as a brand? Why do we need an advertising campaign? And why do we need a strategy to emphasise the difference between tourism and holidays? The answer is simple. The economic environment is only half of the story. How would it have been at the beginning if we hadn't understood the signs of the time, hadn't built all those roads, hotels and viewing platforms? If we hadn't created the «hardware» for the holidays product and hadn't also trained ourselves to meet the requirements of our guests, Switzerland as a holiday destination would never have come into existence.

A question of quality.

The difference between holidays and tourism is primarily a question of quality. The word «(mass) tourism» has so many unflattering connotations, while «holidays» are always associated with happy memories. Switzerland as a holiday destination and as a brand is therefore positioning itself on the right side. We take pride in the «little» difference: others may be content to provide tourism, but we are offering holidays.

