

5.3 LTU Touristik: Inviting Customer Feedback on Environmental Issues



Description of Good Practice

LTU Touristik, a German tour operator that specialises in package tours to all continents, invites its customers to provide feedback on environmental issues, in particular problems encountered, positive and negative impressions, and suggestions on how to improve the environment in the visited destinations. The company has received more than 1,000 letters and e-mails from customers in the last five years. Some customers only want to give information, others need explanations, and many ask questions, either prior to their holidays to help them make informed decisions, or after their holidays to better understand their experiences. The number of the communications varies with the season; in general, more feedback is received in summer than in winter.

Implementation

A request for feedback (see Box 1) is placed in every brochure for LTU brands, inviting customers to send their comments in written form by mail or e-mail. The same request is posted on the company's website. This invitation reaches an estimated 4.5 million people, the total number of tourists who travelled with the company in 2001/2002. In some cases, questions also come from people who are not LTU customers.

The process of responding to requests is handled by the Environmental Department, with an average investment of up to 10 working hours per week. Every customer who sends a message receives a personal reply providing background information and indicating if action has been taken to resolve the issue that the client has highlighted.

Using the customer feedback system, LTU can inform hoteliers, excursion providers and local authorities about the customers' perspective and, in particular, of problematic areas that could affect demand for a specific destination in the long term (see Box 2). This communication helps destination stakeholders set priorities and identify mitigation measures to solve problems highlighted by the customers. In certain cases, LTU's Environmental Department makes on-site visits to ensure the problems are solved or to bring various people together to jointly solve the problem in the long run. Past successes have included hotel water-saving and waste-management measures, beach and walkway clean-ups and animal protection.

Benefits

There have been a number of benefits for LTU's Environmental Department and the entire company from this feedback programme, including:

- Requesting customer feedback gives LTU's Environmental Department the chance to

Box 1: Invitation for Feedback in LTU-Touristik Brand Brochures

'Dialogue for a better environment'

Environmental protection is an important concern for your holidays. A pristine environment will enhance your vacation and increase the long-term quality of your holiday destination. We would appreciate hearing your observations and opinions: Regarding your destination, have you noticed anything special concerning the environment? Any information we should know? Please be so kind as to write a letter or an e-mail! You can find information about us and our work at www.rewe.de, keyword: tourism-environment. We are conscious of our social, cultural and ecological responsibility for people, the environment and our common future. Because of this, we keep an eye on natural resources, respect the cultural traditions in our holiday destinations and aim to improve the quality of life for our customers, the local people and also our staff. We would like to achieve this target in an open dialogue with the responsible destination managers, our tourism partners and customers, as well as tourism and environment organisations. We face the challenge to design a future for tourism that is both environmentally and socially responsible.

receive a great amount of information about the state of the environment in its destinations, which can be used to identify the most effective initiatives to support environmental protection in destinations.

- The feedback gives valuable insight into what is important to customers, their views on environmental issues and their expectations for LTU's environmental performance.
- Using this knowledge, the company can increase customer satisfaction and the environmental quality of its products, whilst at the same time helping to protect the environment in its destinations.

The programme also helps raise the environmental awareness of LTU's customers and their attention to environmental and social problems.

Comments

The company has found that raising awareness among communities and providing information and educational assistance helps them to improve their environmental practices, often in a very short time period (for example, ending the use of insecticides in public areas at a popular destination in the Mediterranean region).

Although the information gathered through customer feedback has not yet been systematically collected or filed, the company plans to create a database of all customer feedback and make this information available in an environmental newsletter.

Im Dialog für eine bessere Umwelt



Umweltschutz ist auch im Urlaub ein Thema. Eine intakte Umwelt im Urlaubsziel erhöht Ihren Urlaubsgenuss und sichert die Qualität Ihres Ferienzels langfristig.

Wir legen Wert auf Ihre Beobachtung und Ihre Meinung: Ist Ihnen zum Thema Umwelt im Urlaub etwas Besonderes aufgefallen? Haben Sie eine Idee, die Sie uns mitteilen möchten? Schreiben Sie uns oder schicken Sie uns eine E-mail! Informationen über uns erhalten Sie unter dem Stichwort „Touristik-Umwelt“ unter www.rewe.de.

Wir von ITS Reisen setzen uns für die Schonung der natürlichen Ressourcen ein, achten die kulturellen Traditionen in den Gastgeberländern und streben die Verbesserung der Lebensqualität unserer Gäste, der Bevölkerung im Gastland und unserer Mitarbeiter an. Dieses Ziel möchten wir im offenen Dialog mit den Verantwortlichen in den Urlaubsregionen, mit unseren Touristikpartnern, Kunden sowie Tourismus- und Umweltorganisationen verwirklichen. Wir stellen uns der Herausforderung, einen zukunftsfähigen, umwelt- und sozialverträglichen Tourismus mitzugestalten.

Einen schönen Urlaub wünscht Ihnen
Ihr Umwelt-Team von ITS Reisen, 51170 Köln
umwelt@ltu-touristik.com

OFFER TO CLIENTS TO CONTACT LTU'S
ENVIRONMENTAL DEPARTMENT

Box 2: Examples of Customer Feedback

Dear Sirs and Madams,

You emphasize the importance of environmental conservation in your two catalogues, ITS and Tjaereborg 'Fernreisen'. I would be very interested to receive detailed environmental information for the hotels Ceysands in Bentota, Sri Lanka (ITS catalogue) and Coral Gardens in Hikkaduwa, Sri Lanka (Tjaereborg-catalogue), as I could not find more environmental information about the two hotels in your catalogues. Unfortunately, as a tourist you are often not involved personally in the environmental measures of the hotels. Therefore I would appreciate knowing which measures have been already taken up to contribute to a better environment in my holiday destination.

I look forward to your co-operation!

Thanks very much,
J.C., 2002

Dear Sirs and Madams,

We recently made our seventh visit to Greece (this year with ITS in Acharavi at Korfu). Unfortunately, the Greek people destroy their splendid country by throwing their waste on the streets. Along the streets, you can find bottles, cans, etc., even in holiday centres. Some cans are bleached, which gives you an idea how long it has been since the streets were cleaned. In the villages, there are a lot of construction ruins or buildings that were started but seem to have been abandoned for several years now. These ruins are a safety hazard and there is a very high risk of accidents, especially for children.

With kind regards,
K.M., 2002