



“Turning Possibilities into Realities”

The Year of Togetherness....

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AFFORDABLE SEYCHELLES...

The New Deal...



Photo courtesy of Martin Constance

Anse Major, Mahé Island’s Last Virgin?

“Together let us resolve to keep her purity intact for eternity...!”

CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURES

WHAT A DEAL!!! THE PS & QS OF SELLING VALUE

by Michael Brown. Published in the Cruise and Vacation View Magazine

“Nobody really thinks that a bad product or service – or a miserable vacation – is a good value even at a low price”

Ask people on the street what they look for in a major purchase of any kind – including vacation travel – and you’ll almost certainly hear the word “value” a lot. These days it’s practically the commercial equivalent of motherhood and apple-pie. But ask what value means, and things become more complicated.

On the surface, the whole question of value amounts to whether the service or product being purchased is worth at least as much as it costs.

What complicates this seemingly simple equation is that what something is worth depends entirely on what the customer thinks it is, and the cost doesn’t only mean the money that changes hands. To the buyer, value ultimately comes down to the balance of a number of interconnected factors that run the gamut from bottom-line price to prestige.

And those factors also apply to where and from whom the consumer is buying. In fact, the retailer’s role cuts both ways: People make value judgments about where they buy, and where they buy in turn affects how they judge the value of the things they purchase. For example, the appeal and product and service expectations of customers going to a warehouse outlet store are vastly different from those of people (even the same people!) shopping in a boutique at an upscale mall or uptown.

*Selling value ultimately comes down to minding some basic Ps & Qs – **price & quantity, and perception & quality** – when dealing with customers. Let’s take a closer look:*

PRICE - Price always matters in any purchase, regardless of the means of the buyer. There may be people so rich that they don’t care about the cost of anything, but they are a rare species, indeed. **Most of the wealthy people I’ve encountered know exactly what they’re paying – and more to the point, what they’re getting in return.**

However, price is almost never the only, or even the primary, consideration. Nobody really thinks that a bad product or service – or a miserable vacation – is a good value even at a low price.

What something costs, though, is rarely only money. It’s also time and energy and risk and worry and all the other hassles that people associate particularly with travel.

*The “value added” element that a travel seller can bring to the customer takes the form of peace of mind and convenience. And, in these days of buying by telephone or even the Internet, **DEALING FACE-TO-FACE WITH A REAL PERSON ALSO HAS A SPECIAL VALUE TO MANY PEOPLE.***

It’s worth noting, too, that the rules that apply to buying everyday things don’t always apply when people are considering discretionary purchases such as vacation travel. Even the most frugal consumers – people who might scrimp on repairing the roof or buying the groceries – will frequently go all out to buy top-of-the line televisions, recreational vehicles, boats – or vacations.

QUANTITY – Consumers also frequently make a somewhat subtle but important distinction between a bargain and a value. One difference is that a bargain usually is something expendable or of minor importance bought cheaply. A value, on the other hand, is an important purchase that provides a level of satisfaction to the buyer equal to, or better yet greater than, its cost in money, time and effort.

What makes that distinction important is that price is the paramount concern when consumers are looking for bargains, and quantity – as in number of days at the resort or on the cruise or tour, for example – ranks as the other half of the equation. But when it’s value they want, quantity becomes simply a question of what the customer needs or wants. Price drops to secondary importance to another “Q” word: quality and quantity takes on the dimension of the “icing on the cake”.

A customer buying for value still wants the most, as well as the best, available for the dollar. But in this case, "most" becomes the extras that come with the deal. This is where things like on board credits, upgrades, exclusive special events, "insider" status and the other amenities that finish out the vacation package add up.

PERCEPTION – There's an old marketing maxim that says "**perception is reality.**" Nowhere is that more true than in questions of quality. The world's finest example of craftsmanship and perfection in design is nothing but a piece of junk to the person who doesn't need, want or like it – or hasn't had those qualities properly explained to him.

The perception trap makes the role of the retailer particularly important in the travel market-place, where the product usually is an experience that the customer can only know second-hand until after it's been purchased. Here it is up to the travel seller to go beyond the brochures, where everything and every place look wonderful and to direct consumers to the best choices for their tastes and interests with the best information available.

The flip side of the perception coin is the customers' perceptions of themselves and the image they want to show the world. Never underestimate the value of prestige and sex appeal to today's consumers. Those fleets of rugged-looking – and expensive – sports utility vehicles roaming the land provide a prime example of how ego drives buying decisions.

That self-image, of course, may have only a distant relationship to everyday reality. This is the stuff of imagination, the starring roles people play in the movies of their dreams. And what better time than a vacation to live a little of that exotic life full of romance and adventure that you can tell your friends and co-workers about the rest of the year?



QUALITY – People who are in the market for something important or lasting – whether it's a car, a computer or a vacation – will almost always choose the very best that they can possibly afford,

given the choice and the information they need to make the distinction. What they consider the best, however, depends on their tastes and their personalities.

An intensive week of diet, exercise and meditation at a top-flight health spa might be the essence of a quality vacation experience for one person, while another might shun such a regimen in favour of a week of self-indulgence and non-stop nightlife. But each will aspire to the best that they can get of the kind of vacation they want.

For many people, quality also equates with feeling secure about the purchase. A "brand name" product, for example, appeals to people in part because they have confidence in its ability to deliver what it promises and to be there if there is a problem. In the same way, a guarantee of satisfaction also helps to add to the comfort zone that consumers want in a major purchase.

A similar desire for security adds to the value of all-inclusive vacations such as cruises, tours and all-inclusive resorts.

The quality of the buying experience itself also enters into the mix. Most people, for instance, tend to attach some of the qualities of the salesperson serving them to what they are buying.

Think about it: Don't you feel better about the product or service you're buying when you deal with a sincere, friendly, helpful person?

The value that people attach to where they buy also relates to the level of service and personal attention they enjoy. **Anything less than the basics of good service – prompt attention, knowledgeable sales people, an appreciative attitude, among other things – amounts to a negative value that can cost the retailer the customer as well as the sale.**

Pluses begin with convenience – making it easy for the customer to select and buy what he wants. Add to that having the resources and information to provide the answers customers need to make a buying decision that satisfies their 'comfort zone..!'

Some of the best value enhancements come in the form of those little extras – showing the itinerary of a map, suggesting a good guide book, anticipating and taking care of details like arranging local transportation or attendance at special events. These are things an agent can do to make a customer's vacation truly priceless.

The Affordable Seychelles Campaign

On 30th January 2009, Mr Alain St Ange, the Vice Chairman of STB stated in a Regar newspaper article entitled 'Developing and Promoting an Affordable Seychelles Campaign' and I quote.

"We shall be pushing forward that Seychelles remains not a dream destination but becomes a real option for **every holiday maker**, as we put every effort into developing the Affordable Seychelles Campaign" unquote.

Our Contribution to the New Deal...

Sustainable tourism – the importance of the “word of mouth” for repeat business

In response, TESS is of the view that we must also come to grips with the fact, that in this day and age when **perception is indeed considered reality**, whereby there is the need to treat each and every visitor to our shores as VIPs, the provision of **services over and above expectation**, may be the only feature that can differentiate one establishment from its competitor, and one island destination from a similar other.

It is therefore both critical and necessary for us to continuously enhance further the training culture, whereby providing more quality training to our young workforce but equally important to re-skill existing employees on a continuous basis.

Indeed over the past three months or so, realising the value of training for their properties and companies and that of the Seychelles Islands in general, a number of tourism players have availed themselves of the services provided by TESS, in particular, the provision of training pertaining to **Etiquette, Protocol and Public Relations**.

Through such processes the participants have been able to refine their skills, acquire a better knowledge and understanding of the many cultures/nationalities visiting our Islands and on how to respond appropriately to their specific needs and wishes...

Through the Rules of Engagement, they have learned that there is a certain way to behave in the workplace, that is not the same as we behave in the playground, the beach, or even our homes. And last but not least, they have come to recognise that body language, tone of voice, demeanour and dress all have to be altered to suit each environment...

We do hope that other players in the industry will avail themselves of such services for beyond the benefit to individual companies or properties lies a larger benefit. And when training is honoured as a “good” and assigned both fiscal and performance related value, the Seychelles Islands hospitality industry as a whole benefits.

To conclude let us all accept the fact that employee happiness can and should occur when managers take action consistent with meeting organisational goals and objectives. An emphasis on training, written procedures, job instructions and continuous improvement is vital to the achievement of our customers' expectations and necessary to create Repeat Business through the effective use of the “word of mouth” for the Sustainability of the Industry and our Livelihood...!

And **TOGETHER, “YES WE CAN...!”**

Marc MRM Marengo
Ambassador
Secretary General of TESS