Tourist Development in Mountain Centers in the Andes of Patagonia.

TOURIST DEVELOPMENT IN MOUNTAIN CENTERS IN THE ANDES OF PATAGONIA

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Introduction

The mountain was until the XVIII century feared and avoided. It becomes fashionable in the XIX century, as a result of the appearance of an aesthetic of the grandiose, of the sublime, it is the moment in which mountain climbing is born. Mountain climbing in its beginnings was developed specially in the central Alps. Thus, until the first half of the XX century, the development of tourism in mountain areas was restricted to a limited number of communities that people visited for religious, sport, health and aesthetic reasons. The course of these first phases of tourism are an illustration of a tendency that has continued in different parts of the world. In the mountainous regions, as in another destinations, the period after World War II has been marked by the growth of massive tourism. Different mountain areas in the world have undergone undesirable transformations derived from the lack of planning of tourist developments or on other occasions, when such plans existed, there was a lack of political will, or of financial resources to put them in practice. The intensity of the changes has vary according to the regions.

In the European Alps analyzed globally, tourism at the moment exceeds the 100 million days/tourist. Every year more than 250,000 pilgrims visit the Himalayas, 25,000 trekkers and 75 mountain expeditions scale the sacred source of the river Ganges, the Gangotri Glacier, depredating the native forest for their use as firewood, overstepping the vegetation and scattering refuse. In the United States, since 1945, visits to the ten most popular National Parks in mountainous regions have increased twelve times (Derek, D. 1996).

Considering these few examples which are only the tip of the immense iceberg that constitute the processes of human intervention in mountain landscapes, and considering the consequences of this intervention in mountains described as "tourist par excellence", it is necessary to explore the possibility of finding some models of operation that are economically productive, environmentally sound and socially responsible.

In the Andes, this has been reflected in the intensive use of some Parks, for example Nahuel Huapí in Argentina and Huascarán in Peru, by the tourists as by the nearby residents. Thus the growth of alternative tourism, closely tied to the existence of a natural, and a cultural patrimony and to the local communities, generates new possibilities for the operation of mountain resources, with the corresponding generation of direct and indirect economic benefits for the populations related to this activity, inside and outside of areas protected within the Andean region.

Latin America as a tourist global mark, (that is to say as an element of differentiation for the selection of a trip), and in terms of service life of the product, is in a growth stage. For that reason the development of its tourist mountain centers has not acquired the extent and intensity of use as in the European or North American traditional centers.

The main objective of this paper has been to summarize the main results of a thesis work which emphasizes the theoretical and methodological aspects that effect the possibility of a sustainable tourist development in mountain centers. The general approach was first to understand this development as the process able to respond in an integrated manner to the economic and social needs of the populations involved, while at the same time conserving the natural and cultural patrimony of these areas. And secondly, to consider that the planning of the development implies necessarily a valorized ideological frame, a method and a process of management.

Other partial objectives were to evaluate the effectiveness of planning as a tool for tourist development in mountain centers, and to establish criteria for the commercialization of tourist mountain centers in the Andes of Patagonia, taking care of their sustainable development.
Assuming the tourist development of the centers as the axis of this study, the critical revision developed in the academic and tourist planning field has allowed to present a summary of results from different case studies.

**Spatial Configuration and Tourist Development in the Patagonian Andes**

**The Patagonian Andes**

Under the generic denomination of Patagonian Andes it is included the great snow-covered mountain range that continuously extends from Colombia to Tierra del Fuego. Thus to the south of the source of the Grande river, head of the Colorado river considered the northern frontier of the Patagonia, a zone of transition between the mountain range of the dry Andes and the Austral mountain range can be distinguished.

A singular strip, the extensive but thin strip of the country’s territory covered by the Patagonian Andes, is characterized by a tempered humid climate, abundant in precipitation (superior to 800 mm/year) and it constitutes the Sub-Antarctic Province. Its width does not surpass 75 km because precipitation diminishes towards the east, once the prevailing western winds from the Pacific exhaust their humidity. In these conditions, the climatic community is comprised of forests adapted to a winter rest. During this season, the cold determines the diminution of plant activity and water remains blocked in snow or ice, therefore only a small portion is available for the roots. In the summer, on the contrary, water melt offers adequate liquid supply for the plants which coincides with their biological reactivation. The plants most apt for these environmental circumstances are resistant coniferous, other perennial plants of small leaves and deciduous plants, that drop their frost vulnerable foliage and become dormant to bear the winter.

**Tourism Territorial Frame in the Patagonian Andes**

When a space is barely populated and settlements density and human action are poor, physical characteristics become of greater importance as factors of regional configuration. As society expands, the mesh of spatial interactions and functional aspects acquire a decisive importance in the organization of space, relinquishing a tenuous relevance to physical aspects. In Patagonia, a density of occupation that does not reach one inhabitant by square kilometer emphasizes the importance of the physical medium as an chief factor of spatial configuration.

Tourism as economic activity has had influence as an organizing factor of space. Tourism has promoted the growth of important urban centers, as it is the case of San Carlos de Bariloche, San Martín de los Andes, Junín de los Andes, El Bolsón, Lago Puelo, Esquel and El Calafate, to name some of the most important centers of the cordillera area.

Tourist localities, in most cases, have developed their economic activity in close relation with wholesale operators in Buenos Aires, who direct towards these localities national and international tourism. In this activity, the pattern of strong dependency is repeated where the different tourist destinations in the cordillera abide by the decisions and requirements of the capital of the country.

The Patagonia as tourist space has a recent history. From the gestation of the first Law of National Parks (12.103) of 1934, the intention was to create a tourist center to remove the Patagonia from its lethargy. Thus, due to the colonizing spirit imprinted in the Law of National Parks, it was envisioned to place and sketch population centers and agricultural or pastoral lands within the Parks, in locations not affected by public domain designations.

The attention was centered in the Nahuel Huapi National Park. With a similar landscape to the Alps as an attraction, it elaborated a tourist product oriented to the foreign market, as to the Argentine tourist of high income who annually made a pleasure trip to Europe. Access transportation was its first preoccupation. At that time, the railroad was the quickest and most comfortable means of transportation, therefore in 1934 it managed to prolong the laying of the rail line from the rail end in Pilcaniyeu to San Carlos de Bariloche. The second step, in 1938, was the construction of a luxury hotel adapted to the objective demand. The LLao-LLao hotel was build in the vicinity of that city in an exceptional enclave. Thus, infrastructure works undertaken by the Direction of National Parks and intense promotion, were instrumental in the arrival of 10,900 tourists towards the end of the 1930’s (R. Schlüter, 1997).

In the 1940’s, National Parks continued its effective action of valuing the attractions of the cordillera. This created, especially in the Park Nahuel Huapi and San Carlos de Bariloche areas, a channeling and
consolidation of massive use. The policy, implemented until 1955, was to take care of the needs of sectors of smaller resources. In San Carlos de Bariloche Union hotels arose and tourism subsidized by the State was stimulated. Until then, tourism had only appeared in the Patagonia region as a consequence of few marine cruises to the "Channels of Tierra del Fuego".

Analyzing the history of another main mountain center of the north Patagonia: San Martín de los Andes, it is discovered that at the beginning of century, flour milling was the main economic reference of this small town. With the arrival of the railroad in 1910 to the city of Zapala, the Humid Pampas became more economically viable for this line of product and San Martín de los Andes switched to lumber activity. At the same time, at the beginning of the century in a well-known estancia (farm) of the area, the first red deers were let loose, to promote hunting for sport. In 1937, with the creation in San Martín de los Andes of the Lanín National Park's headquarters, lumber operation decreased and tourism began to develop.

At the beginning the 1960's, Argentina was clearly different from the rest of Latin-American countries due to its inhabitants high participation in internal tourism. Some measures taken by the government of the time determined a better standard of life for certain classes of the population. Among them, an incentive to industrialization took place, the absorption of foreign capital and the foreign operation of petroleum deposits. Thus Argentineans began to imitate the lifestyle of industrialized countries. A series of conditions occurred to enable the appearance and maturation of tourist activity in the southern area of the country. This is the product of a conjunction of factors, the most important being:

- an improvement of road and communications networks which allow faster and safer journeys from the great northern urban centers.
- a fast motorization of important sectors of the population - in 1961, 870,000 vehicles were produced (R. Schlüter, 1997).
- the activity of the Argentine Automobile Club, an institution dedicated to the promotion of internal tourism; its development of hostels, campgrounds and gasoline stations in the most remote places of the country; its informative work (maps and tour guides of the different areas), publicity and promotion.
- the natural growth of the main localities in Patagonia had already equipped them with a minimal service infrastructure
- the granting of credit for the construction of hotels, encouraged by the Provinces, who in some cases build them themselves
- although winter sports were born around the scenery of San Carlos de Bariloche, when in the 1930's the Club Andino was founded, the lack of resources arrested its growth and it was only in the 1960's that winter sports were exploited commercially. This begun a second period of tourist use of plant and facilities in the Cerro Catedral, Chapalco and El Hoyo, which until then had only had a summer use.
- a Regional Entity was created: "Tourist Patagonia", dedicated to make consistent the interchange of information, promotion and commercialization of tourist products in different destinations.

Until the end of the 1960's, skiing was a sport reserved exclusively for people of high income. Due to its high costs, it became an indicator of social prestige. Starting in the 1970's the airline Austral, through its tourist operator Sol Jet, gave a great impulse to this sport, organizing excursions within reach of people of medium spending power and making as well an intense promotion in the country and abroad. Towards the end of the decade, the Cerro Catedral, Chapelco and El Hoyo were the most important centers of the Patagonia. In that period, intense promotion began in Tierra del Fuego of a type of activity not very well-known in the country: cross-country skiing.

Skiing became an important alternative for tourist centers in the Andes. Beginning in the 1990's, great investments have been made in diverse winter centers to improve the facilities for the practice of sports (for example enclosed and faster means of elevation, machinery to make snow, among the most important), for the construction of lodging and nourishing equipment.

For the present analysis of the situation of tourism in the Patagonia, it is required in the first place to study questions related to global models of development, environmental impacts of tourism policies and the social conception of free time and recreation. This frame of reference allows to examine how the tendencies of economic and social policies are crystallized in the regional scope and, in particular, in the sector tourism. It is, therefore, necessary to make reference to the structure of the sector, its operation and its relationship to tourism on the country's scale.
At a national level, the strategy of the sector concentrates in the relaxation and liberalization of economic, legal and institutional conditions in order to attract private investments and to increase the flow of tourist currents towards the country. Simultaneously, an aggressive international campaign of commercialization and tourist promotion has been implemented. Basically Argentina is presented as a destination characterized by its natural beauty, its cultural inheritance and the urban image synthesized in the city of Buenos Aires.

Of the six macro products that integrate national supply, the tourist centers in the Patagonian Andean are located in the Forests, Lakes and Glaciers; the policies of tourist development are oriented towards the areas located in the promoted regions. The projects of private investment presented through the National Registry of Projects of Tourist Investment (Undersecretary's office of Investments, Ministry of Economy of the Nation), are in their majority lodging projects. In fact, the model of tourist development at a national level at the moment reproduces the characteristics of the current model of economic development in the country.

Although all the Argentine regions have natural resources considered valuable for potential and, even competitive, tourist attraction, the Patagonia is multiplied in a supply differentiated in each one of the provinces that comprise it and in particular in the scenic value of the varied lacustrine zones of its geography. In the Andean Patagonia sector, there are eight National Parks of the twenty-eight zonal units that comprise the system of protected areas of the Administration of National Parks. From north to south they are: Lanín, Nahuel Huapi, Arrayanes, Lago Puelo, Los Alerces, Perito Moreno, Los Glaciares and Tierra del Fuego. It is interesting to emphasize a relative geographic coincidence between the area of parks and national reserves with Chilean protected areas near the binational border, whose accessibility through projects of bi-regional tourist integration is possible, if the existing frontier passes were equipped with complementary road infrastructure, circulation conditions and better access from both sides of the border.

In the last years, technical and political efforts have been forwarded to make the circuits that tie Argentina with Chile a binational product on the basis of their shared tourist resources, an example are the conclusions of the Committees of Boundaries that have created since1993 a Sub-commission of Ecotourism Patagonia. This entity tries to generate a common framework between the Argentine Patagonian provinces and the IX, X, XI and XII Chilean regions to design and develop combined products for this type of tourism.

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organizations. The participation of other social actors should be extended, to ensure that decisions remain democratic.

- Changes in economic policy at national and provincial levels, of aperture, liberalization and greater flexibility, are not accompanied with a role of the State that prioritizes control and reorients the income of the sector to those regions less developed.

- The sustainability of tourist development proposals are merely declarative. The objectives that sustain the policies and strategies emphasize more and more currency captivation, generation of employment and local economic development. Such aspects as the efficient allocation of financial resources, the equitable distribution of income, the preservation of the cultural, historical and natural values, the integration and social inclusion and environmental protection, are mentioned but there are not concrete actions to assure the fulfillment of these objectives. This generates in many cases, the non-legitimation of the proposals by the involved community.

- The new forms of non-conventional tourism (adventure tourism, ecotourism, rural tourism, tourism of estancias) lack a normative frame of planning and operative orientations, to allow them to be incorporated for a structural change of the model.

- The necessities of regional demand are not sufficiently considered, diminishing the possibility of diversification of markets and segments. Because of this, tourism establishes a great dependency in the behavioral change of extra-regional tourist currents and does not accomplish a structural relationship as a sector in each one of the Patagonian provinces.

There is not effective financial support for the suitable operation of the different protected provincial areas, of the historical and cultural sites, of swimming facilities and recreational sites in urban and peri-urban areas. This has given rise to conflicts derived from the saturation of use in some cases and the depredation of tourist recreational patrimony in others.

**Conclusions**

The alternative theoretical methodological proposal for the planning of sustainable tourist development of mountain centers in the Andean-patagonic region developed in this work is centered in:

The epistemologic plane:

- Environmental rationality is an instrument to analyze the consistency of the principles and practices of an alternative position to the logic of the market to look after of the economic, social and cultural dimensions of the development.

- Contradictions between environmental rationality capitalist rationality occur through a confrontation of interests, rooted in institutional spheres and knowledge paradigms, and through legitimation processes faced by different actors and social groups.

- This alternative proposal of planning is constructed articulating and giving content to the four domains of environmental rationality: value, theory, culture and technique.

- The values on which this proposal is based are: biological diversity, cultural heterogeneity, political plurality and participating democracy.

The theoretical plane:

- The sustainable development of tourism in mountain centers in the context of a capitalist economic policy suggests a complex process, where each decision must be negotiated to satisfy the immediate needs of settlers and visitors, without jeopardizing the possibilities of future generations.

- The understanding of the organization of mountain spaces, is based on a precise interpretation of the dialectic process between the shapes, structures and functions of its landscape throughout time.

- Tourist space as productive space is non-continuous, tourist activities that are generated from tourist attractions consume space but the resource is not consumed. Its conservation or degradation depends on its type of management. This conditioner forces to take in consideration the characteristics of its components, their level of fragility and the degrading factors when producing tourist space for its economic exploitation.
- The individual perception of the landscape and its components is conditioned by cultural factors. The landscape is interpreted as a dynamic code of symbols, whose decoding in any case is bound to the culture that produces them.

- The participation of the tourist is important when defining sustainability. The perception that the different segments of the market have of mountain centers constructs their image as tourist destinations. The image that tourists have of these spaces is a critical variable to understand their necessities and to be able to generate products that respond to them in coordination with local and conservation needs.

- Mountain centers, equipped with natural and cultural values par excellence, must encourage more human development formats, appealling to the application of policies that allow for conserving them without overdeveloping them. For this, it is important that different sectors of society go from the theory, to the application of negotiation proposals based on the pragmatic knowledge of the actors that take part in the process and their interests.

- The situational planning recognizes the existence of conflicting opponents, for this reason it is essential to generate spaces for the transaction between the parties involved in the process of tourist intervention. This spiral conception of the process allows going from a general level of perception or agreement, to a level of execution with clear and specific agreements and treaties between the actors of tourist mountain centers.

- The acceptance of the existence of development limits determines that, from the beginning of the planning process, it is accepted that growth involves definitions on a local scale. The plan and its products (specific projects) constitute thus a "system guiding" the implementation of the community vision regarding the desired growth. The great challenge of this premise lies in conciliating the different value systems to the desired conditions.

- This proposal of integral planning of mountain destinations is locally centered, considering the global scene. This position implies the need to ensure that decision making with respect to tourism, must occur without losing view of the regional scale. The configuration of the patagonian space, with immense empty spaces and relatively small concentrations of population, forces the rethinking of the regional scene from a virtual conception, to give value to these marginal spaces, starting from their identity, and the advantages derived from the complementary nature of their tourist destinations.

- The concept of total quality applied to mountain destinations must be understood not only by the change of internal practices in each company, but also understanding the systemic condition of tourist centers, in which the success of aspired quality standards will only be a product of the group's synergy.

- Tourism development policies in the Protected Areas should be articulated with national, regional and provincial tourism policies. Inter-institutional management in each territorial scale should assist in acquiring more economic resources for public use.

The Methodology or instrumental plane:

- The auto-management of each community's resources, to satisfy its fundamental needs and aspirations of development, is seen as a valid route. It gives significance to economic and social practices, framing them in each community's system of social representations. Tourist development implies strong changes in mountain communities. Changes in land use, the value of land, tertiarization of their economies, migrations and changes in social and value models.

- The proposed approach of planning as adapted for sustainable tourist development is of a strategic nature; therefore the concept of planning is tied to the concept of marketing. Therefore and from the methodology point of view, it is considered proper that the diagnoses are synthesized in matrices of the S.W.O.T. type.

- The type of management of tourist attractions is as important as the question of number of visitors who seasonally use them. The definition of its capacity of welcome must be made individually for each one of them.

- The definition of standards for the practice of tourist activities in mountain centers is a function of a series variables tied to the type of attraction, market characteristics and the type of management.

- Enterprise operation must be centered in the search for internal efficiency in the processes used, to be able to guarantee quality in terms of clients' perception of these tourist destinations. One of the variables qualified to provide a service that makes “the experience” significant is the personal care of clients. The scale of the enterprises of the area in study in general, allows their owners or administrators the possibility of making clients feel “at home”.

In those tourist mountain centers, where the main attractions are located within National Parks, mechanisms should be implemented so that the operators and companies that benefit with the volume of visitors to these areas, support them financially to improve the management of tourism and to contribute to the economic success of the sector.

The instruction of human resources would allow industrialist and civil employees to recognize the need to study the market better, to change management style, to adopt new guidelines of service and commercial policy and to obtain a greater specialization of tourist operators.

For the development of sustainable tourism, the planners would have to act in a way that allows each one of the main actors in the process to play his role:

- Government: the role of the State to balance strategies of tourism territory as productive space is of vital importance to resist or solve distortions between private interests and the needs and well being of all. The creation of policies, specific laws, the exercise of policing power to control the norms, the generation of incentives and the articulation of education conducing to a better insertion of local manual labor, constitute missions not to be delegated to other actors in the process.
- The tourists: encourage them to use the patrimony appropriately, avoiding destructive and polluting use, making them contributors of the considerations regarding the care of the environment and controlling their satisfaction.
- The local communities: create a conscience of the value of defending their land and culture, promoting a commitment to respect it and preserve it.

According to the arguments presented, it can be asserted that the possibility of sustainable tourist development in mountain centers in the Patagonian Andes depends on the possibility of a good articulation of public policies and private sector policies and on understanding the complexity of the tourist system as a productive sector.

As a conclusion, it can be asserted that tourism as an economic activity is a powerful tool of positive change in mountain areas, since if tourism is well managed and administered, it permits the reiterated use of resources without depleting them, as is the case with other productive activities, for example, the use of the forest resource.

Sustainable tourist development in the Patagonian Andes is not imaginable without the explicit creation of a policy that counts with regional consensus, and that is promoted at national level. This policy should start off recognizing sub-regional and micro-regional particularities, considering inter-jurisdictional aspects; which are constant elements, sometimes due to physical territorial configurations, and in other occasions because it is necessary to optimize resources and to rationalize efforts. Thus, the patagonian tourist space would have the possibility of competing, making its marginal location in the confines of America, the trigger of its advantaged position in a global market.

Once these basic conditions to remain in the market are established, the creation of environmental operational guidelines for the activity that allow a sustainable use of the patrimony through time, is the exclusive responsibility of their direct participants.

As a synthesis, one considers an analysis of strengths and weaknesses to identify the opportunities and dangers of the environment in which tourism in mountain centers of the Patagonian Andes takes place.

**Strengths**

- Tourist attractions unique at a worldwide and continental scale.
- Eight National Parks.
- Tourist products integrated with Chile.
- Environmental conservation of the area in good condition.
- The Mercosur favors Argentine-Chilean integration.
- Tourist centers with strong positioning in the market that they act as hooks to generate visits to other patagonian Andean centers.
- Incipient development of integrated spaces for local and micro-regional commercialization.
- Diversity of topics for the development of environmental interpretation.
Socio-cultural conditions apt for the generation of models of alternative tourism: rural tourism, agro-tourism, among others.

Weaknesses

- High cost of air travel from the main market centers.
- Bureaucratic problems that affect the ease of tourist traffic between Argentina and Chile. Relative isolation of some tourist centers due to deficient terrestrial accessibility.
- Lack of competent frameworks to take care of the administration and production of Tourist services.
- Strong influence of Buenos Aires wholesale tourist operators about development strategies of these patagonian Andean spaces.
- High level of indebtedness of a great number of providers of tourist services.
- Erratic communication actions go against the consolidation of "trademark images" of tourist destinations in the market.
- Lack of informative bases for strategic decision making.
- Lack of coherence between operation objectives and control practices of tourist attractions in protected areas.
- Strong seasonality of tourist activities generates labor instability.
- Highly fragile ecosystems.
- High vulnerability of the economies of many mountain centers by their almost exclusive dependency on tourist activity.
- Stagnation and recession of the area’s regional economy.
- The demand for alternative tourism increases more and more regarding the relationship price/quality.
- Lack, in most of the tourist municipalities, of tourist information bureaus with knowledgeable personnel and precise information on things to do, services and prices.

Recommendations

A series of criteria and general strategies of management and commercialization of the area’s tourist products are considered as follows.

- That mountain centers are recognized as cities or tourist villages and are assumed as territorial systems, whose function defines this role, generating management instruments to allow them to operate as such.
- That the national government in coordination with provincial ones, and the government of Chile assure the accomplishment in the medium term of road paving projects and improvement of certain routes whose importance is historically recognized because they would make possible a better articulation of the centers in tourist circuits, interprovincial and binational, making possible, for example, tourist integration of the lake region and of the Austral Andean Patagonia.
- That different area destinations adopt positions of cooperation with other mountain destinations of Argentina and Chile, or with other Patagonia marine centers, with which they can be combined to obtain competitive price advantages, programs or quality of tourist attractions. These alliances whose objective is to cooperate or to obtain economies of scale, are constituted in true "virtual tourist spaces"; which would augment their complementarities through different products, especially for the incoming market.
- That a policy is advanced to promote the financing of the evolution of small air travel companies than have begun to operate in the Patagonia in the last years. The design of the routes should be a function of the strategy of the chosen virtual tourist space as adapted for a better competition in the distant markets.
- To promote, beyond the design of these air routes, that these flights enter in Amadeus and other reservations systems, since this would enable sales through travel agents of distant markets, having schedules, availability and price on their computer screens.
To promote management and planning measures that include the consideration of a final size for mountain destinations to take into account their ecological and scenery limits, the image that positions them in the market, the characteristics of their product-market and their abilities of administration and operation.

That the State readapts to exert its competency to control the negative effects generated by the companies in its search to improve competitive conditions, which follow a logic of benefit internalization and cost externalization.

That the State manages to retain instructed human resources within its technical and policy establishment to exercise efficiently its role of controller. If this does not happen, reality will continue in a parallel course to planning and integrated management, and of course the environmental patrimony of tourist space will continue to degrade.

That different spheres work together to obtain an institutional and legislative articulation between Tourism and Environmental Management, to encourage the development of consensual legal instruments that promote the conservation of the environmental patrimony, beyond jurisdictions.

That more effective ways of generating systems of management, operation, evaluation and control of the tourist environmental patrimony of the Patagonian Andes are promoted, creating "Codes of Conduct and Practice Agreements" between the main actors in charge of the operation of the sector on a national, regional and local scale.

That tourist mountain centers and rural spaces of the Andean region that offer the best conditions to present socio-cultural differences, harness their individualities; through their ability of individual management and the strategic alliances that they establish according to market objectives. So that within a certain zone (for example: Andean region), each tourist center (Lago Puelo) is a sub-trademark or model of the main trademark, consequently they would have to participate in common programs to endorse the trademark, without resigning their freedom to undertake particular actions to increase their sales to the maximum and therefore their gains.

That the supply is conditioned to develop products "to size" that harness a more rational and satisfactory use of the tourist patrimony available. For this to be possible, the businesses would have to sharpen the imagination to generate cost alternatives that are adapted to the necessities and possibilities of the different “target” market segments.

Those agreements to obtain necessary financing are promoted, so that the institutions in charge of management and operation of tourist attractions can address projects to improve their use, counting on technical assistance for designing the facilities needed.

That messages about the comparative advantages and singularities of the region are centered in target market segments, so that patagonian mountain destinations can be distinguished from the competition and be positioned as eco-tourist destinations. This messages should emphasize aspects such as the existence of protected areas minimally disrupted, rough landscapes, glaciers of spectacular size (Perito Moreno), the existence of forests unique in the world (Bosque de Arrayanes) or the millenarian presence of trees like the araucarias and the larches.

That mountain centers in the short and medium term, concentrate their strategies of marketing to generate offers especially for the summer and intermediate seasons. Therefore, the option should be a positioning strategy based on the differentiating elements of spring and autumn landscapes. During these seasons in this region, changes in color extend the variety of landscape hues, offering an ideal scenery for the programming of recreational activities in the natural space.

That the competitive advantages derived from differentiated seasonal landscapes are promoted. These advantages appear as especially apt to extend the participation of incoming tourism in the global demand of patagonian mountain centers, and to improve the yield of the installed capacity; since the present predominance of internal tourism, and its noticeable seasonality severely limits the economy of the region’s businesses.

That a policy of adjustment of lodging supply is promoted, through remodeling and construction projects, whose location and design, consider the tastes of these consumers. All these product actions should be completed with a revision of price policies, to adapt them to those of the competition. This task could bring about a crisis of businesses operation, but it is known that operational costs of the tourist sector in
Argentina in general and in the Patagonia in particular, are absolutely amplified and act as a pillow that compensates in many cases the inefficiency in the companies’ global management.

- That the supply of winter products is reviewed, to include alternative recreations beyond the alpine skiing product. This recommendation is based on having alternatives of "things to do" when there is no snow, a critical aspect during the 1996 season in most of the destinations of the studied area; and on believing advisable to promote tourist use of mountains in winter through other activities that allow recreation in these spaces, for example hikes, trekking, trips in special vehicles (all terrain, snowmobiles), and cross-country skiing.

- That the conception of total quality on a tourist center scale is based on the redesign of processes of service production or their optimization from the point of view of consumer satisfaction. The relative importance of different variable parameters in terms of the functions of the competitiveness model, should be established on the basis of the end users.

- That the public sector and private activity are professionalized with the objective of fomenting a real development that benefits the present tourism actors. The program should be oriented in two senses, on the one hand to take care of the need to create change consciousness, since they are one of the main social actors of change; and on the other hand to organize practical courses, that approach subjects of administration of small service companies, operation and training of personnel, dealing with the client, productivity criteria, and knowledge of service marketing.

- That programs of tourist awareness in the different tourist centers of the Andean region are promoted. The purpose of this promotion would be to circulate ideas such as: 1) providing service is not degrading for people, 2) the future of each tourist center is tied to the form in which its population administers that destination, 3) authorities, local leadership and the providers of services are the people responsible for the economic yield of the tourist destination as productive spaces, 4) daily actions and decisions for the sector’s operation affect the use of the environmental patrimony, 5) the state of conservation of tourist attractions is everybody’s problem, since this attractions are the main reason for the trip that tourists lodged in the center make.

- That a reconstruction of curricular approaches of middle schools is promoted and that the abilities and professional profiles of the tertiary and university centers tied to the sector are redefined, so that they better prepare personnel based on the needs of the region’s tourist centers.

- That the different projects are generated from a plan of regional, provincial or local development, having the public sector the role of promoter of integrated enterprises that, even when belonging to different proprietors, respond to a basic need of some of the defined segments as an objective for the zone (an example of integrated project could be: construction of a assembly of cabins, purchase of a vehicle for excursions, qualification of vaqueano (local guides) and purchase of boats for fishing tours. Thus municipalities management of the administration and control of tourist projects has a fundamental importance in the development of control, avoiding the generation of asymmetric interchange relations, as is the case of a single company in charge of developments, which have proven to be barely effective and efficient in fulfilling the needs requested.

- That a statistical common base for the measurement of the main variables of the tourist sector in the different patagonian provinces is created to generate information that allows strategic decisions for the destinations as a whole. It is essential to promote the generation of common criteria at the tourist municipality level, since minimum gathered data stems from them, and to tend to a methodological homogenization for obtaining the information.

- That lines of credit oriented to maintain and to finance new tourist PYMES (small and medium companies) are implemented, considering the reality that medium and small companies constitute the spine of the sector in the patagonian mountain destinations. The necessity to support many small and micro companies run by families is recognized, since they are in a critical state due to accumulated debts or because due to the shortage of soft credit, they have not found the means to improve the conditions of comfort of their establishments, to renew very old furniture, to landscape and to take care of the look of their immediate surroundings and - in the best of cases- to extend the size of their business. The political content of this type of projects would also be to privilege the creation of local companies.
That the alluded to financing considers the concept of "Integrated Projects"; awarding a global number for a certain center or tourist zone; the awarding would only be made if the presented projects are integrated, through commitments of permanent commercial involvement on the basis of certain qualities, during at least, the period of loan payment.

That offices of investor counseling are created, whose purpose would be to offer technical support about projects variables such as: type of project, location, size, amount of investment, demand objective, tariffs and prices according to standard of quality, internal rate of return, architectural design and scenery.

That "institutionalized spaces of discussion" by tourist zone are promoted, (for example: Corredor de Los Lagos, Austral Patagonia) in the space of the Patagonian Andes, to discuss action strategies to confront common problems of the different economic domains of the region’s tourist centers, considering strategies of work distribution for these Andean spaces nationally and internationally.

That research development in the field of the economic effects derived from tourism is promoted. If it is possible to demonstrate the economic importance associated to this activity, it will be more feasible for decision makers to take development measures to maximize benefits. This would allow to dispose of financing for evaluating its potential in a systematic manner.

That the PARTICIPATION OF THOSE INVOLVED IN TOURIST DEVELOPMENT PLANNING is considered a strategic factor, since it should be the basis for the definition of the conditions of space occupation where the tourist activities are located, taking into account the environmental conditions of the receiving medium.

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