



- Grupo Futuropa is a market oriented private sector organization dedicated to the promotion of Costa Rica (and increasingly Central America) in Europe
- Fundación Futuropa (1996-2000): response to image crisis → Tourism & Press Office in Cologne, Germany
- Asociación Grupo Futuropa (since 2000): a systematically developed, market-oriented promotion model, focusing on primary and secondary European source markets according to market conditions
- Continuous market observation and extremely high interrelatedness with European tourism industry lead to specific, well focused activities – very flexible and responsive model

Grupo Futuropa: Objectives

- Promotion of Costa Rica and members' services in Europe
- Concerted action of private sector
- Coordination private / public sector
- Macro-Promotion – create proper framework
- Facilitation (negotiations)
- Create the conditions in the destination to comply with demand of wholesalers and consumers (in terms of quality, prices, sustainability, safety, cultural aspects)

Stakeholders

INTERNAL:

- 12 Incoming Agencies specializing on the European market – the middle part of the “sandwich”
- 54 Providers (Hotels, rent a cars, one-day tour operators, language institutes ...)

EXTERNAL:

- Costa Rican Tourism Board
- Tourism chambers, associations, airlines, press, European tour operators, embassies, trade fair organizers
- Implementation of promotional activities involves internal stakeholders (members) as well tourism board on a permanent basis while cooperations with other external stakeholders tends to be more on a case-by-case basis, according to specific market conditions or requirements in the destination

Grupo Futuropa: Challenges

- “Sales Paradigm” versus “Promotion Paradigm”
- Individualism of providers, tough competition
- Complexity of European markets – languages, cultures, travel patterns, distribution channels
- Long term financing in a short term culture
- Regional differences in Central American context

Key Indicators

EXTERNAL:

- Arrivals: 21.6 % increase 2003 versus 2002
- 1996: 129,478 - 2003: 192,099 European tourists (+48.36%)
- Average Length of stay: ~ 15 days (versus ~ 9 days US market)
- Daily expenditure of Europeans in C.R.: ~ 120 US\$
- Foreign currency: Europe 25 % of total
- # Airlines, # flights connections, direct/non-stop flights
- # Companies benefitted, particularly in rural areas
- Image: Press Monitoring Service (German-speaking market)

INTERNAL:

- Membership
- Fidelity of members
- Strategic alliances, cooperations, role within private sector

Achievements / Activities

- Lobbying → Costa Rica Tourism Board → Proper Framework
- Multilingual web page
- “Costa Rica Destination Newsletter” → 600 tour operators in Europe
- Numerous high profile press projects reaching millions of consumers
- Local tourism fair “European Travel Mart” - 2x/year
- Training seminars in Costa Rica
- Destination seminars in Europe / Destination manual for travel agents
- Market investigation
- Regionalization (Grupo Futuropa Nicaragua 2003)

LESSONS LEARNED:

- Involve qualified stakeholders on a national level
- Criteria: Transparency, participative approach, business ethics, long term vision, quality, sustainability
- → Successful self-determined tourism development that takes small and medium enterprises into consideration

Conclusion

- The private sector must proactively combine “Micro-Marketing” with “Macro-Marketing” (Destination Marketing)
- Synergistically create the proper conditions in close coordination with the public sector, in order to link the promotion of the destination with the promotion of individual services
- There is a worldwide oversupply of tourism services. The consumer faces a bewildering array of choices. All resources in a destination must be concentrated in order to create a tangible impact in international source markets. If the destination doesn't sell, individual marketing efforts simply will not be effective
- If a mixed private/public sector approach to destination promotion is to be successful, it has to be integral & systematic and institutionalized in a market oriented structure (association such as Grupo Futuropa), involving qualified stakeholders