

# SWISS TOURISM MARKETING NEEDS TO CHANGE



Like the human cargo of a cruise ship giant over Venice, displeasure over mass tourism is waking up in Switzerland as well. “You can barely ride the bicycle along the Zytgloggen, because the hordes of tourists run around with their selfie sticks,” a Bern citizen said. “I am no longer comfortable with the Chinese in my home town,” says a woman from Lucerne. “In my birthplace, I feel like in an amusement park,” people from Zurich complain.

There is no question that these complaints come from the heart. However, the situation with Swiss tourism is not as critical as in Venice. In the Italian city, 130 thousand tourists meet 55 thousand inhabitants on peak days. **Thus said, even during busy days in Lucerne, the conditions are still serene.** When the tourist season is over, Bern citizens share their bowers again mainly with officials without time for selfies. Only on Zurich’s Bahnhofstrasse, English remains a major language of conversation. But not because of the tourists, but because of the expats in the banks and computer companies.

Besides, the real problem of Switzerland as a tourist country is not too much but too little tourism. Even the growth in number of overnight stays does not change this, because the tame recovery takes place in cities, rather than traditional resorts. The Alps, the cradle and support of Swiss tourism, are increasingly being shunned by the public. Since the hotel industry is already beginning to die.

Neither the strong Frank nor the snowy winter are at fault. They merely speed up a change that has many other causes. First and foremost – the fragmented, often still small, commercial structure of the industry. Originally created by pioneers and grown historically, it can barely compete with foreign competitors.

Swiss people do not travel much, because it is cheaper to go skiing to Vorarlberg. They receive better offer for their needs: linked winter sport areas with a common ski pass, smooth, comfortable transport, consistently modernized hotels with all comforts. And most of all, in an ideal case, all providers are pulling the same knit. Every hotelier and railway operator knows that he can only win together with everyone else.

## **Economic Factor of Tourism**

This is the problem in Switzerland. Last week, in the Glarner canton parliament, a travel agent complained that the owners of the mountain railways cannot agree on a join ticket in the canton. The

most consistent is the fact that an investor from Egypt is showing us how to convert a dying tourist region like Andermatt, with conviction and financial risk, into an all-round wellness destination for international holidaymakers.

To refine the product is one thing, to make the right marketing is another. Experts believe that tourism marketing will become unnecessary because the ever-increasing number of guests from the Asian middle class would make oral propaganda anyway. This is precisely the way to mass tourism, which threatens to escape the control.

Not less, but more advertising. This is what the Swiss tourism industry needs to draw the crowds. **Right now, as mass tourism is gaining more and more criticism, targeted propaganda can lure travel enthusiasts to areas away from intercontinental trails.** If a single blogger can lure thousands to the Verzasca Valley, Swiss tourism will be able to achieve more with its advertising budget – for areas that have been built for tourists.

But tourism marketing is also needed within the country. Switzerland spends 16 billion francs on tourism per year. 170 thousand full-time jobs depend directly. Anyone who knows this will more easily endure Chinese tourists with selfie sticks. And will welcome them.

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