

ENTERTAINMENT SERVICES IN THE BALANCE OF LEISURE TIME

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Abstracts: It is important to note that modern users have radically changed their thinking about the leisure time and the content of entertainments. Meanwhile, a number of entertainments report a decline in their development, due to out-of-date paradigms, which is definitely an obstacle, or rather lack of advantage in the contemporary competitive struggle. To analyze the possibilities for changing the old paradigm will attempt to identify the entertainment, leisure and consumer experience.

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The dynamics by which the world is in general developing is a sufficient prerequisite for growth and in the entertainment industry. However, of interest is the issue about the slow pace with which some industries based on consumers evolve in order to keep pace with the competitive environment and the constantly changing consumer demands. One of these industries is the entertainment industry that relates to entertainments with location away from home and for the consumption of which a tourist trip is required. This of course includes cinemas, theaters, amusement parks, family entertainment centers and other venues providing entertainment. Although they are not part of the entertainment industry, but contain element of entertainment, some mixed forms such as town entertainment centers, major shopping centers / malls / and other forms of shopping tourism, have to be included in this research. The latter is an attempt to clarify the issue of the increased importance and the change in the meaning of leisure of the

contemporary consumer of entertainments, by determining the role of income, experience, knowledge and social experience.

In recent years, the entertainment industry develops a mindset, and a number of established statements, by which most of the companies do not even consider the impact, that this attitude has on their way of rethinking the business concepts. This tendency to consider the entertainment industry as the "way, in which things have always happened" makes it extremely difficult for the industry to get out of the set limits and be competitive.

What is the basic element of this mindset or paradigm? It's the name by which the industry is called, and the totality it represents - entertainments.

Assuming, that the industry belongs to the entertainment business, many of these entertaining attractions and venues quickly desynchronize with the modern consumer and destroy the prospects for long-term success of tourism attractions.

Let's pay attention to the term entertainment. There are different definitions that generally complement one another [1].

The entertainment is an event or activity, designed to give pleasure to the audience (though as in the case of computer games "audience" can be only one person). The audience may participate passively, as for instance when watching opera, or actively, playing computer games for example.

Considering the entertainment industry in such a short period, we can conclude, that it exclusively focuses only on certain opportunities. Instead of only on the "fun", the different approach in this case, would be if the attention is focused on the use of the leisure time of consumers. This change in thinking will open for the entertainment industry new opportunities to create new experiences in greater harmony with the needs and wishes of the consumers. This means defining and apprehending the term leisure time in the context of the entertainment industry, as well as of the totality of attractions it creates.

What represents the leisure time or what is the perception of the consumers of entertainment services for it?

Leisure time is time spent at own discretion in non-compulsory activities, time spent away from cares and labor. Since vacation is exempt from mandatory activities such as work, business management, domestic cares, education, everyday stress, eating and sleeping, it is often part of the "leisure". The difference between leisure and compulsory activities is not clearly defined, because mandatory daily activities can also be done for both pleasure and long-term economic benefits.

The big difference between leisure time and entertainment is that leisure time is defined in terms of periods of users' free time, while entertainment is defined rather as an activity that they are offered. Exactly then entertainment is something basic that takes place during the leisure time. It is the only option for spending the leisure time and here entertainment misses the given option. It is limited, in its conception, to user needs, providing them pleasure.

A big part of entertainment as separate attractions or activities which the industry creates, are much more limited in their idea. Entertainment limits the thinking of consumers about what kind of experience to pursue during their free time and about what they can be offered. Semantically, the entertainment industry practically says: "We are in the entertainment industry, so we should offer only entertainment options for the tourists."

The problem with focusing on entertainment is that in most cases the consumer is looking for something more than entertainment which is both a power of attraction and a motive for taking a tourist trip to a particular destination. Consumers are looking for the maximum benefit, which they can get for spending their free time. In the modern world, for consumers with average and high income, time is their bargaining chip. The development of the widescreen high definition TVs, DVD-s and cable operators are examples of how users can gain experience through film entertainment in their homes, without the extra effort needed to visit the cinema. Cinemas are in

a competitive struggle to maintain cinema attendance by competing with domestic DVD and cable TV.

Next, there is another problem - defining themselves only as entertainment, entertainment industry is placed in competitive conditions with other opportunities for having fun, instead of with other possible options for using the consumers' leisure time or their vacation, whether at home or locally distinct places for spending their free time.

In almost all situations where consumers consider leaving their home, for the experience "vacation", which includes a number of entertainments, they are looking for something more than just entertainment. Often, the fun is not a big part of their understanding for good vacation or basic motivation for travelling. When friends or families go out together, they are often looking for social experience, ability to talk to each other or just be together. Entertainment can only be the prime cause to spend their free time together.

Furthermore, there are a number of national characteristics, connected to understanding this concept. For example, Americans have difficulty in socializing unless they are involved in some form of activity. Leisure activities are often seen as an opportunity for relaxation and rejuvenation, some time away from the daily work and stress, avoidance of routine, not always consisting of the elements of entertainment.

We have to pay attention and to the fact that a significant change in understanding how consumers with average and high income, over the world, perceive different ways of recreation. If previously they have already defined themselves, based on what material possession they have, they now define themselves based on experience and the experiences that accumulate in their free time, i.e. reduces material importance. Thus, friends, personal development and time spent alone, take priority in the system of values. This way, consumer choice of activities for leisure is becoming more important to them.

Furthermore, the importance of leisure time is increasing. In America, the quantity of free time has actually increased over the past 30 years [6]. Consumers have much more choice and

therefore want to do many more activities in their leisure time. Thus, leisure time becomes much more valuable to them. They also use their free time into smaller intervals, which means that activities should be more consciously planned. Although not exactly craving for time in the historical sense, modern users of leisure services feel the pressure of time. Time has much more value now than in the past. For many consumers, their time is more valuable than their money. They certainly do not want to spend their limited time for an activity, which proves not to be loss of money, but of time that should be invested.

According to the researcher Leaf Van Boven of the University of Colorado at Boulder we no longer live in a material, but rather in a cognitive world [7]. Through a series of studies and trials, involving more than 12 thousand people for several years, the scientist Van Boven and his fellow researcher Thomas Gilovich of Cornell University found that people from all spheres of life were happier when investing part of their income in life experiences rather than in material goods [7.8].

According to Van Boven, "familiarization" acquisitions - those made with the original intention of a certain experience or gaining life experience, make people happier than material purchases. The reasons for this are the following:

- Knowledge is much more opened to positive interpretations, because they tend to be associated more with deeper personal feelings, given that the possessions are always "out there", separate from what we are. For example, a walk in the mountains when the weather is bad probably will not be perceived as a pleasant experience here and now. Instead, it can be assumed as a challenge and be kept over time as a remembrance of the positive rather than the negative aspect of the experience. With the material belongings, such a thing can't happen because they are what they are;
- *Experiences* are the more important part of our human nature. The culture highly appreciates the accomplishment of certain goals and the challenges to them. Also, people highly value achievements. Moreover, experiences tend to be associated more with personal meanings than with possessions;

- **Knowledge** contributes more to social relationships. According to Van Boven, experiences are much more pleasant topic of conversation and are more effectively targeted to successful social relationships which are closely related to happiness. Knowledge encourages relationships, because people are willing to do things with other people, i.e. has great social aspect. Moreover, people often share stories about experiences because it is much more fun to talk about them than about the material possessions.

The author of this study found out that higher percent of women are happier with their knowledge than the men, and that people with higher incomes and better education are more likely to prefer the implementation of costs for cognitive activities. For people with lower income, material possessions are of great importance, perhaps, because it is assumed that the lower the monthly income is, the more each purchase improves quality of life. However for none of the demographic groups studied it is found that they are happy only with their material possessions.

The authors of this study summarize their findings: "The good life is better to be lived doing things rather than owning them."

The appreciable shortage of free time, the desire to do more than the available time allows and the need to plan every minute of the days, increase the cost of any decision for spending the leisure time. Contemporary culture assesses so highly the productive use of time that the tangible loss of time is considered to be fatal. The bad movie is no longer a bad movie. It represents a lost opportunity in terms of entertainment, which could have been experienced during this time. The requirements of the consumers of leisure services are increased concerning the expectations for the quality of experiences during the leisure time.

This leads to a desire for multiplication of leisure time. Why to spend time only for recreational activities, if this could be combined with dinner, dancing and socializing with family or friends at the same time?

There are already many new forms for using leisure time at places, where entertainment is combined with other form of having fun, such as cinema, where not only you can watch the premiere of a movie, but also to have a nice dinner. Instead of going to a restaurant before the movie and then go to the movie, which would take more than 3 hours, this way the both activities can be combined in only 2 hours.

The value of leisure time in Western cultures is not universal. Europeans have more leisure time than Americans and they appear to pay a high price for that, while Americans devote greater importance to earning and spending money. Americans, on average, have bigger cars, bigger houses and save more money for material goods than Europeans. In contrast, according to Mauro Guillen, a professor of management and sociology at Wharton, going on a long vacation away from home is a sign of social status in Europe [9].

Money is not everything in Europe; status does not mean just money. To have fun or be able to have fun, is also a sign of success and a source of social respect. On average the French have 7 weeks paid days off a year, the Germans have 8 and the Americans are lucky to have four weeks and often they do not use them all. Compared to the average for Europe, the Americans take only 55% of their annual leave for vacations and holidays.

According to Christian Schneider, manager of a multinational group for research and consultancy Wharton Center for Human Resources, the European managers often use all their vacation time, while this is not valid for America. In Europe there is a tendency to real relax, to shaking off from work. In contrast, when an American family takes a few days for a vacation per year, they seem to be in constant contact with the office [10].

Despite the differences between western cultures, the high standard of living shifts the focus from the pursuit of a meaningful life to the pursuit of leisure time. People no longer pose the question "what I bought this weekend? ", but rather "What have I done this weekend? ". Today, the majority of consumers with average and high income largely possess the things they

previously wanted to acquire, and instead of focusing on what they want to buy, they think of the experience that will make their life happier, richer and more rewarding.

Money does not provide the way for possessing material things, but it is rather a means of getting an experience in the leisure time. This is the new paradigm, the paradigm of experience, which supplants the old consumer paradigm.

Although some forms of the entertainment industry will continue to exist, as plays, concerts and performances, other forms will have to evolve as experiences, offered to consumers for spending leisure time. According to some forecasts, entertainment will cease to be the focus, and will rather become a part of the much wider understanding of spending leisure time.

This trend may be seen in many venues that combine dinner with entertainment, offering a much richer and more meaningful spending of the leisure time. When the dinner is added, consumers are not only offered different ways to spend your vacation, but also rich social experience. The success of the rapidly evolving concepts of entertainment is an evidence of this. The young market for adults, began with Dave & Buster's, many years ago and now has evolved into another combination of dinners and entertainments, such as *ESPN Zone* and the new *GameWorks Sports Bar & Grill* and bowling places as *Lucky Strike*, *Pin-up Bowl* and even *Noland Busnell's new uWink Bistro*.

For younger children, *Chuck E. Cheese's*, with its food and games, continues to be a successful model. New concept for entertainment (food and fun), which is aimed at younger children and their parents is developing, including educational centers for children and home mom play cafés, that the company offers to its customers. And concerning families, the concepts for entertainment are rapidly replacing the traditional formula of entertainment centers. The Pizza and Games concept as *Peter Piper Pizza* and *Shakey's Pizza* continue to gain popularity. Maybe, "the hottest" idea of family leisure is the family pizza buffet-entertainment center. The sales per square meter are double, triple or even more than that of a traditional family entertainment center. *John's Incredible Pizza* in California and *Gatti-towns* are the pioneers in this field. Other

brands continue to emerge throughout the country, including *American's Incredible Pizza* and *IT'Z*, as well as some of higher class as *StoneFire Pizza Co* in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

It is also interesting that consumers do not classify spending their free time, the same way as entertainment companies that offer leisure experiences do it - formulating them into categories of entertainment. Consumers think in the direction of "Let's go to a place where we can have a good time" or "Let's find a place where we can meet our friends." Consumers think about, what leisure means for them in a different direction.

Concerning going out for dinner, for example, consumers do not classify it the same way as the restaurant industry does it - with descriptions such as fast food, fast casual, white tablecloth, and others. A thoroughly study of Coca-Cola Company in 2005 found that the consumers' decision making process is more complex than just a simple choice between the options of full-service and fast service. It rather shows that consumers group the restaurants in five categories, which in the study are named:

- *Home Comfort*
- *Entertain 'n Unwind*
- *Breads Abound*
- *Pizza and*
- *Quick Service*

After that, these five categories are divided into 18 subgroups, which determine the identity of the restaurant in the mind of consumers. For example, Entertain n 'Unwind is divided into Themed, Fun First, Food' n Fun, Mexican Grill, Social Comfort and Food Focus.

In addition, in order to categorize service options, the industry found out that consumers make their choice for a restaurant, based on three main types of circumstances - quickly, social, family. They are divided into 16 specific, distinct and separate types of circumstances. Some of these subcategories are: Adult Night Out, Dine & Linger Duo, Dining Solo, Impulse Fuel to Go, Just for Kids, Morning Meal and Mature Date.

Similar to the study of Coca-Cola, when it comes to visiting the restaurant, the user sees it from the perspective of obtaining a particular pleasure, that he may be offered. They do not perceive it only as a place to go out to eat. Consumers see visiting these places "for fun" just like going out for fun. Consumers understand their free time in a completely different aspect, compared to the way, entertainment companies see it. Companies are trying to create destination experiences.

To thrive in the future, many types of traditional entertainment destinations will have to rethink their business concepts and to focus on being enjoyable leisure destinations. At the same time, new forms of places for spending the leisure time will appear. They are necessary for meeting the continually changing needs of modern consumers.

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