

Be the hero...

...of your own travel

The Guérande Peninsula



Introduction

During holiday, the traveller has many ways to discover the territory he is visiting. Leisure holiday, historical visits, or out of time walks...The tourist wears multiple faces, challenging more and more the touristic destination. Indeed, those have to constantly innovate to attract these different publics, without destroying the identity of the place. The case studied here is located in the west of France, on the Atlantic coast. The Guérande Peninsula illustrates the different opportunities, for all kinds of tourists, to create their own travel. This project aims at moving the Guérande Peninsula of a static and segmented image to a more global and dynamic destination. This will distinguish the territory from other areas, through innovative and unifying actions, accompanied by surprising and offset activities. Step by step, the traveller will compose his own experience, in the style of the *Choose Your Own Adventure* books collection.

1. Analysis

A. The Guérande Peninsula and its touristic offer

The Guérande Peninsula is located in the Atlantic coast in France, just below Brittany. Between an area with a strong cultural identity - Brittany has a flourishing folklore, which the region promotes at a national and European level - and a spot that attract mostly tourists during summer - the atlantic coast is well known for its beaches and water sports facilities -, the Guérande Peninsula has some difficulties to assert its identity and to appear as a global tourism destination.



Figure 1. Location of the Guérande Peninsula in France

We can see on the map (*Figure 1.*) that the territory is nested between two areas with strong identities (Vendée and Brittany), and located next to an industrial town (Saint-Nazaire), which tends to lower the attractiveness of the area. As a consequence, it is difficult for the Guérande peninsula to find its own positioning.

However, this area contains many elements, gathered in a 20 miles area, that could attract different kinds of tourists. The touristic offer, gathered in a 18 miles radius, is very rich and varied :

- Different landscapes : countryside, coast for leisure and littoral for riding, urban leisure (casinos, shops, pubs and clubs...);
- different publics : business tourists and white-collar workers, families, international tourists (mostly from Great Britain), students and young people who enjoy water sports (surf, windsurfing, kite-surfing, sailing...);
- a good offer of accommodations : hotels, camping, labelled lodgings, flats to rent...;
- many towns which their own identity, no satellites towns around a big one. Indeed, if La Baule is the most famous town in this area, it is a small one, and it doesn't prevent the others to develop their tourism policy.

La Baule, the main town of the peninsula, is already famous for its casinos, its beach and its famous spa, but the city attracts mostly upper-class tourists that stay there for a few days and don't travel in the peninsula. This is more a residential tourism, which developed itself mostly during high season (81% attendance rate in Hotels, and only 50% in camping during high season), but managed to maintain a 51% attendance rate between January and April¹. We can note that La Baule is quoted in second position by tourists on top of mind of the summer resorts in France, just after Biarritz. A good opportunity for the Guérande Peninsula, which can enjoy the reputation of this famous city to promote the others areas.

B. Nowadays tourist

The growing power of the Internet

For a long time, tourism had a linear scheme : travel agencies and institutions were given information to the tourists without feedback from them. But today, the rules have changed, since the tourist can spread his opinion on the Internet. His words have now the same impact as the institutional message. Sharing websites (Flickr, Digg...), forums, comparative websites or social networks (Facebook, Bebo, Twitter...) enable the tourist to go further than the official speech. Personal interaction between internet users gives to their opinion credibility : they can see the face behind the speech, and consider the person speaking as their equal pair. This is not the case in the relationship between the tourist and the institution, which seems more abstract and anonymous. As a consequence, tourism management has to be very careful to the image that people have about the territory he deals with, in order to respond properly to the demand.

The quest of authenticity

With the sudden acceleration in the technology related to travel information through the media, the discovery of authenticity has been made almost impossible. For the tourist, finding authenticity is a quest, and the one who succeeds in it will feel a sense of fulfilment. According to MacCannell, when anybody living in the industrialised world decides they want to take a vacation, it is usually the case that the last thing they want is to spend their time in a place where they will be reminded of their own lives, which they likely consider boring and routine. However, for other theorists like Thrane, cultural consumption is for tourists like their consumption at home. They want to discover a new way of living, but also need to keep their comfort. By authenticity, it is more accurate to understand that tourists want to see the reality of the place they visit, without being influenced by travel agencies or tourism marketing campaigns...But actually they are.

¹ Statistics obtained by the Regional Observatory of Tourism in Pays de la Loire (2009)

Tourism management now looks forward to make the traveller feel special and unique. This strategy, called reverse marketing², focuses on elements considered as unusual and non-relevant for tourists in the territory, ignoring the collectively acknowledged touristic places. As a consequence, the tourist feels like an adventurer, who goes further than the “touristic masses” to discover the territory, and returns enriched with knowledge and experience.

C. What is the situation today ?

The Guérande Peninsula contains a flourish culture, as well as many different landscapes. The journey can take many different directions, and each tourist can find in this area a profusion of activities to build his own experience, his personal story. However, all the activities are not practised as much as they could be. Travellers just don't have the clues and the information to be interested in visiting other landscapes, and as a consequence, they stay often at the same place, enjoying the resources of one city, while forgetting what they could discover if they looked further. The following board (*Figure 2.*) shows the attributes of the peninsula and the opportunities that can enable this touristic destination to develop itself. The SWOT also presents the elements that might threatened the implementation of a new touristic policy, and the deficiencies noticed in area.

Strengths	Weaknesses
- A strong notoriety of La Baule in France and Europe - A set of territories strongly marked by their identity (Guerande, La Brière Regional Park, Saint-Nazaire...) - A various and rich touristic offer - Many different publics : leisure tourists, culture-core tourists, business tourism, sporty people... - A huge accomodation offer : hotels, camping, host houses...	- A territory located between two areas with a strong identity : Brittany and Atlantic coast - A desertification during low-season - No common touristic policy - A territory that seems empty except from La Baule
Opportunities	Threatens
- Shorts holidays related to a particular theme are more and more liked all year long - Visitors now want to build their own experience while travelling	- Competition with national and international destinations due to low-cost - Faithless tourists

Figure 2. SWOT of the Guérande Peninsula's touristic offer

² Brekhus, 1998

This analysis leads to questioning the strategy of the Institution. The Guérande Peninsula contains many different identities and patrimonies, which are difficult to promote, because the tourism management policy has to deal with a global territory, not an addition of many of them. But calling all these areas with the same name destroys their particularities, by hiding them with an artificial global message. On the other hand, if each city was making its own promotion, it would be difficult for the Guérande Peninsula to appear at a national and international level. How to build and promote an innovating common argument by valorising the identities of each micro-territory that constitute the Guérande Peninsula, in order to implement a global touristic destination ? In other words, how to promote a general territory without destroying the many different identities located in it ?

2. The project

A. Objectives

The objective of this touristic project is to gather the cities of the Guérande Peninsula in order to build a global touristic destination. Indeed, each part of the peninsula has its own characteristics, and attract different cultural tourists. But travellers who goes to one part of the place don't usually visit the other parts, which may interest them yet. The main goal is to attract cultural tourists during the low season, not only during summer.

To respond to the rising demand of personalisation of their holidays by tourists, it is essential for the main actors of the public and private sector to spread the same messages, in order to stay coherent.

B. Publics

Culture-core tourists

Tourists fond of culture want to return from their trip enriched with knowledge. They usually go on holiday to find specific information and places that they knew before. This public has usually no time pressure, since they look forward to finding as many cultural elements as they can. Cultural tourists visit a place often without children, they can go alone, or in couple, but want to stay independent. That is why they usually go further than the guided tours, which tend to remain superficial to them. The cultural offer must be various, but also complete, and the Institution must be able to give them all the information they need about a specific patrimony that they want to know deeply.

Leisure tourists

Leisure tourists are the main target of this project. By combining pedagogical activities with entertainment, this public is looking for relaxing holiday above all, without the stress of running after the main touristic places like if they had a checklist to fill. Regarding this public, the objective is to lead them to acquire knowledge about the territory naturally, by including some cultural and patrimony's elements in their trip, without preventing them from doing their daily activities. These tourists like to pick up some information, at their own rhythm. For them, holiday are "*not just a discovery of the new, but a rediscovery of the quotidian.*"³ That is the new trend in exoticism in tourism that has developed itself for the past few years.

Concretely, who are these tourists ? In the first place, families can be included in leisure tourists. Indeed, they can't see as many things as culture-core tourists, neither go as deep as

³ G. Richards, *Cultural Tourism - Global and Local Perspectives*. Haworth (2007)

these ones in knowledge, because they have children. And if children are interested in learning new things, their attention can't be maintained for hours, they also need leisure activities, such as games, sports and light activities. On the other hand, young people are also concerned by this targeting.

Business tourists

Tourism actors have noticed the impact of the crisis on Business holiday. Indeed, the crisis tends to change the ways of tourism consumption of companies. But that doesn't mean that drastic measures have been taken, they are just more vigilant and avoid useless expenses. 72% of the interrogated persons⁴ lowered down the touristic budget in their company, and the third of them now prefer to move only during the day, to avoid expensive hotel's charges. From the hotels point of view, the statement is the same. The same survey shows that 85% of Hotel owner feel that the crisis has a big impact on business trips organisation, and 74% of them already notices a lower reservation rate.

However, business tourism and leisure activities are more and more combined during this kind of trip, given the fact that 2 companies on 3 are used to associate professionals meetings to entertainment and relaxing activities. Cultural activities and gastronomy are more and more asked, because they enable professionals to enjoy their trip and bring other memories than just the ones from the work meetings.

2. Strategy and Tactics

A. Strategy

The strategy aims at giving a new dynamic to the territory, by implementing partnerships between the institution and private actors. The traveller will be advised during the 3 steps of his trip :

- Before, while planning his holidays,
- During, by facilitating daily life for him,
- After, to keep his attention and make him become a trustful tourist, as well as an opinion leader.

In order to make the tourist move and travel in the territory, holiday packs will be implemented, presenting several holidays atmospheres. In this pack will be gathered information about the activities and places that might interest our traveller, depending on which kind of trip he wants to fulfil, as well as vouchers and free tickets to activities related to the chosen atmosphere. For each pack, several levels of prices will be offered :

- Discovery (targeting singles or couples)
- Family
- Premium (targeting professionals, business tourists and upper-class)

⁴ HRS (Hotel Reservation Service) Survey realised in France in 2007

Step 1. Before the trip : make the traveller feel special

Every traveller is different... So must be every experience. To allow the tourist to build his own trip, partnerships will be implemented between the Institution and many different private actors all around the territory. Personalisation is the clue to make the tourist feel different. By choosing the kind of holiday he want to spend on the institutional website, he will naturally be directed to different packs that fits the best to his tastes. 7 different atmospheres will be offered to the tourists. Hotel or cottage, camping or flat, bed and breakfast or youth hostels...The pack will contain different kinds of accommodation, as well as vouchers or free tickets to some activities (museums, sailing, boat rent...).

1. The Urban Getaway

Around Saint-Nazaire, this pack offers the discovery of the industrial areas, as well as one of the main harbours of the atlantic coast. Tourists will discover the story of the port industry with pedagogical activities in museums and in outdoor, such as boats visits. A boat trip along the Loire will also be implemented, from Saint-Nazaire to Nantes. It will enable people to relax and learn about the river's history at the same time.

This pack fits to families, who want to enjoy the daily life's commodities of the city while discover the territory at the same time. This is mostly for people who prefer learn things in museums than in the nature directly. That enable them to manage their time between pedagogical activities and daily life.

2. Go Green !

In the Natural Regional Park of La Brière, nature amateurs will find a quiet place to discover wildlife, alone or in family. Several levels of hiking will be advised in the brochure, to enable people to choose the one they prefer. The territory contains a great diversity of accommodations : hotels, labelled houses, cottages... In winter as in summer, the peaceful landscapes will appeal the youngest and the oldest travellers. Furthermore, many roads and paths enable walkers from all horizons to discover the territory step by step.

This pack fits to nature lovers and those who mostly want to discover the territory by themselves during their holidays. It will particularly be appreciated by people who feel concerned by the environment, who enjoy holiday far from the stress of the city, or to rejuvenate in the middle of green landscapes.

3. Tonic Water

Above 50 beaches, from La Baule to Pénestin, offer to every taste the opportunity to spend sporty and sunny holidays. The prolific nautical activity of the Guérande Peninsula (150 yacht-races every year, more than 56 miles of coast, a great offer of activities such as windsurfing, derbies, kite-surfing...), labelled sea spot since 2005, attracts sporty people from all the country, but can also fits to beginners who don't want to spend their whole holiday lying on their towel on the beach...

Children, young or sporty people will be delighted to see the number of activities they can practise all along the peninsula. In a vivifying tonic atmosphere, people who like to try new activities during their holiday will find the opportunity to meet new people and raise challenges. This public is young (20 to 30 years old) and enjoy leisure and entertainment during holiday.

4. Shaded Paths and Wild Coast

Along the coast or inside the territory, the Guérande Peninsula has a great diversity of different walks. For those who want to feel the wind and smell the iodine, the coast is the perfect place, with its 50 beaches and its typical landscapes. A brochure will be given to the walkers,

advising them on the best trajectory depending on their taste for walking and their level (sporty walk, discovery walk or light walk for example).

The main target of this pack concerns people who want above all to have some rest during their holiday, and are more likely to plan their daily activities by themselves. Indeed, walks give a liberty in the way of managing ones holiday, compared to tours which require a precise organisation.

5. Art and History

Little historical villages, labelled for their authenticity, are located in the territory, welcoming every traveller who want to discover the patrimony of the peninsula. Le Croisic, Guérande, Piriac-sur-Mer...In several cities, culture-core tourists will visit the churches, monuments or typical houses that gives its identity to the territory.

This kind of holiday concerns obviously culture-core tourists, who want to discover the patrimony of the area where they stay above all. For these people, holiday is a way to acquire knowledge about a territory they don't know. But this pack is also made for inhabitants of the Guérande Peninsula, or who live around this place and want to rediscover their local life.

6. Wonders of the sea

The salted swamp in Guérande, the sea museum in Batz-sur-mer, or the possibility to discover fishing, are some aspects of life that give to the peninsula its main identity. A lot of tourists already come to see this part of the territory (Guérande salt is known at a national level), but the pack goes further. Indeed, it offers the possibility to have a guide, that will explain the wildlife to visitors, who can after that try to go fishing with professionals.

For families with children, or over 60 years old, this activity combines knowledge and leisure. This pack is both pedagogical and naturalist, and will interest those who want to learn something during their holiday.

7. Live at Night

La Baule and other cities in the Peninsula (Pornichet, Le Croisic, Pénestin) have a large offer of entertainment activities, such as 3 casinos, night-clubs and other leisure activities such as bowling. Water leisure are also famous in this area, they are mostly used by upper-class. These activities are mostly located on the coast of the Guérande Peninsula.

This tourism fits to people that are mainly looking for urban activities. Young or Senior (over 60), this public sees the holiday as a way to have fun and to meet people. For inhabitants of cities close to the peninsula (Nantes, Saint-Nazaire), these activities are a way to end their day or their week by discovering the nocturnal life of the territory.

Besides, the institutional website will gather all the parts of the Guérande Peninsula together, in order to appear as one single territory with many different faces. To find the pack that would fits him the best, the user will have the possibility to fill a quick quiz, choosing the activities he likes the most, or the atmosphere he wants to find during his holidays. The result of this quiz will lead him to a pack (for example : "You like to use your feet to discover the world ! The *Shaded paths and wild coast* travel seems to fit you the best." Of course, the quiz will not choose once and for all which pack the tourist has to order, he will still be able to look at the other offers.

Step 2 : Facilitate tourist's daily life during his trip

To enjoy the many activities offered in the territory, tourists don't want to be bothered with daily life needs, such as spending hours to find a place to eat or to park their car. In the pack will be furnished an address book, with the best restaurants for all budgets. This guide will be created in partnership with local inhabitants (who can give advises about their favourite places) and with private actors. This is no advertising, since everybody will be represented at least one time in the 7 different packs. In this leaflet, the traveller will also find some tips about the better hours to go fishing, the best places to park his car easily,

The pack will also include a smartcard. If this concept is now more and more used by touristic destinations, this one is more than a discount card. The card will offer free or discount access to the activities related to one of the 7 themes chosen by travellers, but will also work as a identification card. Indeed, interactive terminals will be settled in the key areas of the territory and in tourism centres, so that one, by entering the smartcard (equipped with a barcode) in the machine, will have the possibility to know which activities can be done around this area.



Figure 3. Some examples of the Smartcard



Figure 4. Example of a terminal installation in La Baule

Step 3 : After the trip : improve tourist' loyalty

The traveller must feel exceptional, even after his trip. The strategy aims at make him come back in the Guérande Peninsula, but also appear as an opinion leader for prospects. More than just expect from him to talk to his social network about the place he has just visited, he will be able to share all his memories and feelings online, via a sharing platform. Online social networks are numerous enough, and asking the customer to subscribe to another one would not be efficient. That is why, the project is to use the already existing platforms and to gather them in one single space, so that the prospects can have access to it directly from the institutional website of the Guérande Peninsula. The traveller will have the possibility to use several platforms to share his photos, his stories, his good addresses in the same place, with a personal relationship to the territory, since it will appear on the website. This personal space will enable to create a community around the Guérande Peninsula, which will mix local inhabitants and tourists, so that those can feel a part of the territory's identity.

Which social tools will be used ?

- **Facebook** : Probably the most famous social network on the web, this website is also well-known for the influential power of its users towards their social environment. An application will be created, that enables people to share only a part of their information (they probably don't want their whole life published on the institutional website), such as little stories, feelings, advises to other people on Facebook... On this website, when one uses an application, it appears on the homepage of all ones friends (called "live feed"), so that everybody can know what everyone else is doing. With this application, people will be curious to know what is the territory that their friend enjoyed so much that he wants to share it. Facebook is the place where the tourist can appear the most as an opinion leader.

- **Flickr** : This sharing platform works like a database, where people can register and share their pictures. The Institution will have its own account, where people will have the possibility to put their pictures, and also share them in their own personal profile.

- **Google Maps** : People can already share information on Google maps, by settling some flags on the areas they want, in order to write something about it. By using Google Maps on the Guérande Peninsula website, it will be easier for tourists to see a personal map, with a lot of memories and personal opinions. The Institution and the private actors (hotels, restaurants, shops...) will also be a part of this, by enlightening some spots and giving information about the location.

- **Digg or Delicious** : This will be used by tourists to share links related to the Guérande Peninsula, like the website of a restaurant they liked, or the one of one particular activity they enjoyed.

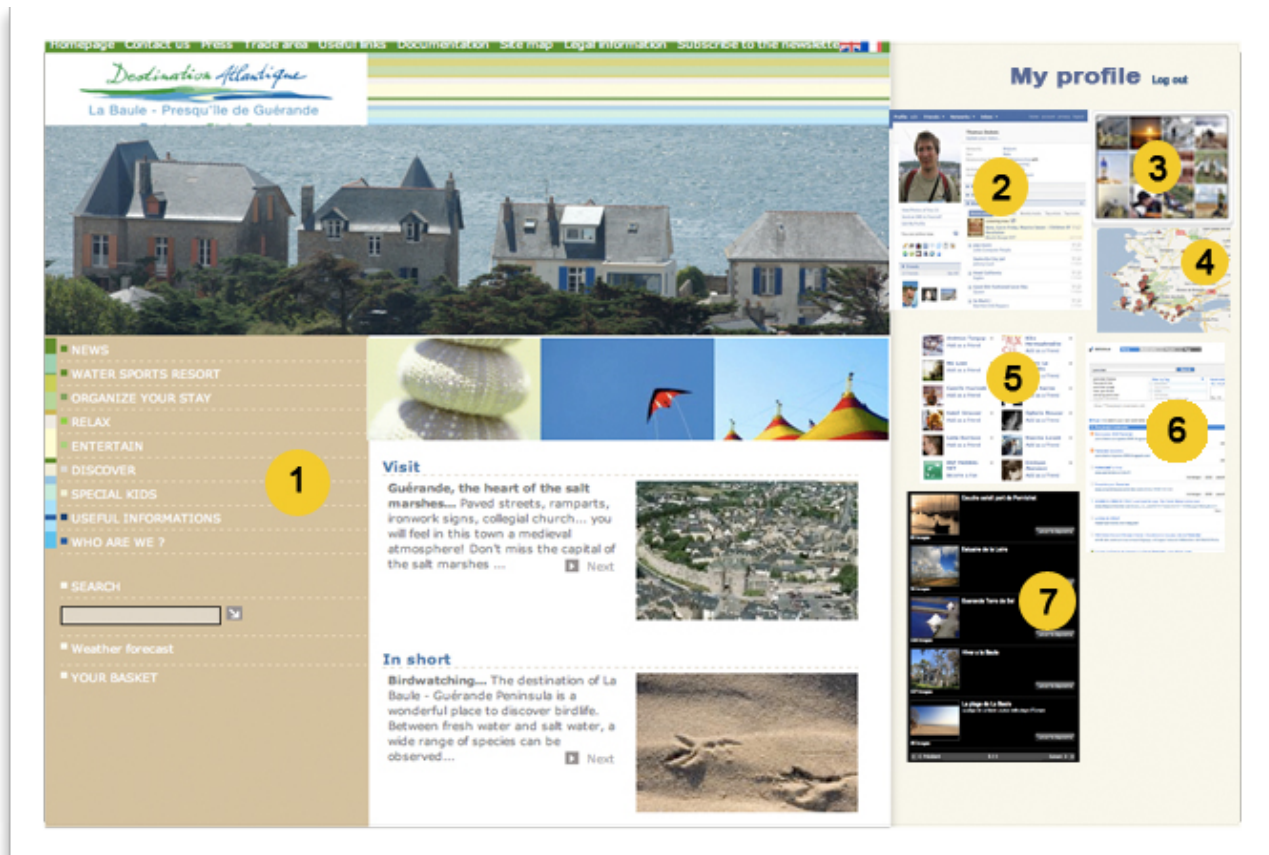


Figure 3. The new website, including the personal profile of the tourist

1. The Institutional website will not change a lot.
2. The Facebook profile will be visible if the tourist registers. Otherwise, this area will present some random profiles, and pictures taken by other members, which will bring him registering.
3. The personal Flickr Gallery
4. The Google Maps widget, accessible to everyone.
5. In the style of "People you may know", on Facebook, people will be able to see who was on holiday at the same place than them, and in the same moment, or people who liked the same places than he did.
6. Delicious : to share useful links.
7. The best albums among the members of the community, accessible to everyone.

Conclusion

Today's tourists aspirations are deeply influence by a desire for freedom and adventure. The need to cut with the daily life and its standards to live a new experience is more and more urging. In the Guérande Peninsula, the new urban nomad will have the choice to compose his own story, his personal adventure. Based on the principle of the book collection *Choose your own adventure*, the holiday that the traveller can choose can take many different directions. The goal of the touristic policy in the Guérande Peninsula is to make the territory appear as a prism, lined with several facets. Innovation and Interactivity will serve the reassessment of the many identities located in the peninsula, in order to bring the tourist wanting to learn more and be a part of this territory.

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