

Specialist sources of business

In order to maximise occupancy and revenue, the hotelier needs to think in terms of what markets he can tap into - not only in terms of which markets or countries can provide sustained business, but also in terms of the *source* of business. The two main traditional sources of tourism business are holiday-making (tourist) and business. There are however a growing number of more specialist, sometimes niche, sources of business which should be looked into.

Conference

- There were over 250 international conferences in Malta in 1999.
- These often occur in the shoulder months, boost room occupancy that would often otherwise remain low.
- Malta's central position in the Mediterranean encourages more conference business.
- Conferences provide a high yield in all areas - accommodation, room hire, Food and Beverage etc.
- Stays range from a few days to more than a week, and are sometimes extended by delegates for holiday-making.

Incentive

- An incentive is an award given to the employee of a company who has performed exceptionally well, or has achieved an agreed sales target.
- Incentive travel originated in the United States, and has become popular in Europe over the last decade.
- Average stay of incentive guests is up to a week.
- Incentives are a volatile source of business: companies often have to suspend incentive programmes in difficult financial times.

Airline

This source of business is split into two types:

Passengers

- Usually transit passengers in a hub airport.
- Lead time is often very short and demand for rooms is normally heavy and at short notice.
- Due to short lead time, rates are often at rack or slightly discounted.
- Very short stays, normally no more than one night.

Crew

- Normally crew on long haul who need to rest before completing a route.
- Back-to-back bookings at heavily discounted rates (up to 60%) are usual.

Timeshare

- Timeshare is a limited ownership of a unit of accommodation.
- Timeshare has one distinct advantage for the operator: it injects funds into the business even before it starts operating.

- This specialist source now accounts for about 10% of the tourism market.
- The overwhelming majority of timeshare owners in Malta are UK residents - some 95%
- Guests in timeshare accommodation normally use Food and Beverage facilities and are also required to contribute to a maintenance fund.
- Malta is a popular exchange destination.

Casino

- With three casinos now operating on the island and within the vicinity of luxury accommodation, casino business is a very lucrative source.
- The business has the potential to attract Italians and North Africans on gambling trips.
- Gamblers tend to spend a lot of money not only in a casino, but also in fine dining and accommodation.

Weekend breaks

- Weekend breaks are becoming increasingly popular with local tourists, especially in Gozo and the Northern areas in Malta.
- Weekend rates or a special package complete with dinner and use of facilities etc. are normally offered to lure the business in.
- In Northern Europe the sudden rise in popularity of weekend breaks has helped boost room occupancy. This trend is not yet common in Southern Europe.

Diving

- Malta is a popular diving centre, partly crippled by what diving centres consider archaic regulations.
- Divers spend money in the hire of diving equipment, boat trips, etc.

Archaeology

- A niche source of business, Malta has the potential of attracting professional and amateur archaeologists on "digs" and summer courses in archaeology.
- Archaeologists or students of archaeology will often stay on the island for a period of at least two weeks and also participate in the discovery of the island's heritage.