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THE LANGUAGE OF GROUP TRAVEL:
AN EVALUATION OF GROUP TOURS AND GROUP TRAVEL TEXTS

by

John P. Spare, CTP

A Project submitted to the
Faculty of the School of Food, Hotel and Tourism Management
at
Rochester Institute of Technology
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree
of Master of Science

August, 1992

ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
 School of Food, Hotel and Travel Management
 Department of Graduate Studies

M.S. Hospitality-Tourism Management
Presentation of Thesis/Project Findings

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ABSTRACT

Group Travel has evolved over a century and a half since Thomas Cook first organized a temperance tour by train for over 500 participants. Various modes of transportation, from the stage coach to the motorcoach have affected the way worldwide citizens react to group travel preparations. Multiple skills have been developed and adapted to facilitate the various operator and supplier levels within the group travel industry.

Since the advent of international jetliners in the early 1960's, a wide variety of college level courses have been designed to prepare the modern day student for entrance into the tour and travel industry. Pertinent curricula has mushroomed to over 600 college campuses.

Several textbooks have been developed by industry oriented participants since President Carter deregulated the airline industry in 1978. But not enough. The tour and travel curricula has evolved from courses in airline automation, commercial recreation, and travel agency management to tourism planning, development, and marketing.

This thesis addresses whether the group travel textbooks heretofore published have created sufficient skills for today's tour and travel student to assimilate and enter the group travel market place. The language of any new discipline

requires the communicator to learn new skills by reading, observing, and imitating.

This study evaluates the secondary data from group travel textbooks and then draws conclusions from a questionnaire sent to a random sampling of over half of the industry preparatory, college, and university campuses.

The results indicated that gaps do exist in group travel curriculums. In addition, there is abundant need for new interpretation of group travel skills as seen through the eyes of both the group tour operator and supplier. Several recommendations are discussed at length.

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This project has been arduous yet fun. The deadlines have been met and now I may reflect on what the process has meant to me. But before I can turn to that exercise in self-hypnosis, some people deserve my thanks for support along the pathway.

I should like to thank Dr. Richard Marecki for suggesting this project. He knew that I was working on a manuscript for a tour industry textbook. This evaluation would be useful to publishers, he thought. Not only did he suggest the project, in addition he took an active interest in my thesis advising me at intervals, where he thought I had lost my way, suggesting alternatives for my research. Richard Pryll, a fellow masters candidate and friend, took 8 hours away from his thesis to help me with my research mailing.

Betsy Fay, professor at Niagara University and author of the third book in Chapter II, unselfishly extended herself to inform me retrospectively of a few shortcomings of her text.

Lastly, I wish to thank my associate, Terry Schmitt, who helped me to write unhampered by office pressures. She, like others, brought me back to earth from the "twilight zone," helping me to understand that my work was not in fact earth-shaking, just important to me, helpful to some, and hopefully useful for the education of future students of tourism.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Current Tour & Travel curriculums at Certificate, 2 year, and 4 year institutions lack sufficient practicum textbooks, from industry oriented authors, which assist in the training of students to appraise, to analyze, and to develop skills in the multi-level motorcoach group travel industry.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Education, by virtue of its dedicated role to learning, must continue to offer new text material for the study and advancement of various disciplines. Academic or scholarly text books, however, can never be considered to be the last word. Intelligent thought initiates a platform for further discussion, more research, and more appraisal. As discussions of the discipline evolve, certain gaps in the subject matter may be created. It is the new author's responsibility to elevate new probes for the student's lexicon.

The study of Tour and Travel has evolved in the past several decades. Initially the hospitality industry sought to train individuals for the hotel management related fields of food and beverage and hospitality management. It was a natural premise for study. The world's citizens, after all, needed a comfortable hotel with intuitive personnel in which to rest and prepare for the next day's important decisions. That students of hospitality were born and then urged the educational institutions to add hotel management to their courses of study, is no wonder.

A new field of study for travel agency personnel resulted in the early 1960's when the airlines swept international citizens into the air, away from trains and buses, in search

of new vacation destinations brought about by the jet age and the roaming camera eye of an awakening television constituency.

New air travelers required able and industrious ticketing services for their new found independence. Again a new breed of student forged to the front and brought pressure to bear on the educational institutions to offer travel training courses to become retail travel agents. This new field of employment was certainly necessary but also charismatic.

As this field mixed into the curriculum other needs took route. The great transformation began in 1978 when President Carter signed into law the deregulation of the airline industry. The educational field was frenzied to retool for this momentous occasion. Vocational schools, Community Colleges, and Universities jockeyed for position. Travel curriculums began to develop a multitude of industry related courses. Like the field of Television Communication, the travel industry attracted many new sub strata for curricula fulfillment.

Two years later, Greyhound achieved "good samaritan" status and a heightened national recognition by saving the transportation debacle at the 1980 Winter Olympics. The winning transportation bidder did not have sufficient buses to transport the hordes of spectators arriving in the small

Adirondack town of Lake Placid.

For Greyhound it was the biggest coup since the 1936 Chicago Worlds Fair when they achieved record sales from a Worlds Fair package composed of hotels, sightseeing, and transport to and from Chicago from home towns all across the nation aboard their scheduled bus lines.

In 1982 the intercity bus industry followed suit with its own deregulation. Tourism by bus or motorcoach (as practitioners prefer to name this style of transportation) developed widely.

By now Group Tour Motorcoach Operators were developing a glossary considerably amplified from the more prominent escorted group tours normally thought of in the European arena and related to the international airline.

In 1983, the first important text treatment for the group travel field emerged. Entitled "Group Travel: Operating Procedures" and written by Ralph G. Phillips and Susan Webster, it sought to inform the travel agent field not the motorcoach field of this profitable realm of group tours. Campuses persisted in training students to fill retail travel agent positions, which up to now had not declared group travel as a viable source of revenue. Ignorance creates fear.

Two years later in 1985, Martha Sarbey de Souto, CTC, sought to further define group travel with her text, "Group

Travel Operations Manual." Gaps that had developed with the first text now cried for simplification. Still the emphasis was on the retail travel agent to incorporate group tours with the airlines. Ms. De Souto did achieve a greater understanding for the group travel field. And educational institutions and their students profited by this newer text. In it she promoted the separate elements (as had Phillips and Webster). Yet her treatment clarified the elements needed to properly negotiate and attend to the needs of the group's travel decision makers.

Concurrently, the group tour industry mushroomed with the entry of many new and inexperienced tour operators. Validation by license ceased to be a recognized requirement. New businesses opened offering group tour itineraries and "professional" supervision. Through it all, competition caused inexperienced tour operators to adopt irregular practices and customs which in the long term proved to alienate the group tour customer.

Many two-year and four-year institutions introduced new curricula for students of tour and travel. Initially designed to train travel agency employees, many of these programs have now been broadened to provide a liberal arts foundation to travel and tourism.

In 1992 yet a new text was published to relate the elements of group tours as they particularly related to motor-

coach tourism. Ms. Betsy Fay, in her text book entitled "Essentials of Tour Management," laid claim to the initial phase of motorcoach tourism training much the same as Phillips and Webster did in 1983 to achieve group travel understanding for the international market.

These three text books have made a good foundation for those to follow. What this author chooses to do in Chapter Two is to evaluate these three efforts in light of six considerations. They are as follows:

- 1) Perception of each author's educational travel philosophy.
- 2) Approach to design, preparation, and planning of group tours.
- 3) Proposals for Training Personnel.
- 4) Proposition for entry into the tour industry marketplace.
- 5) Insight towards a tour's operation.
- 6) Perception of gaps that result by virtue of their texts.

In Chapter Three, a statement of the methodology is made of a random sample survey of the 660 campuses of certificate, two-year and four-year institutions that presently offer tour and travel curriculums.

In Chapter Four, Results and Findings, this author will analyze the results of the questionnaire mailed during the

CHAPTER II

AN EVALUATION OF "Group Travel - Operating Procedures" by Ralph G. Phillips and Susan Webster.

1) What is the authors educational travel philosophy?

Approximately one decade ago after the embers of airline deregulation had cooled there was tremendous interest in developing new resources for travel agency economies. The market place began to swell with competition. The neighborhood travel agency was forced to seek new opportunities for income. Group Travel possessed a fortuitous aura for volume producing business.

Yet those smaller agencies, for the most part, were afraid of the internal administration of operations that were needed for such movements. During these times, vibrant inflation and a stalling recession acted without restraint bringing comprehensive pressures upon the "Mom & Pop" agencies. These travel agents needed new markets. To be frank, the customer needed new bargains. No doubt, this book was created to initiate a rudimentary training for the group travel marketplace.

It is more a "how to do" book than an academic treatment of group ethics, practices, and principles. Even historical data plays no role in its text. Rather it is a systems

approach to preparing for the group travel environs. Any systems approach, though, depends on a classroom interpreter to enhance the message.

Phillips and Webster must have collaborated because they recognized the subject to be so large. An immensity of terms existed. The striking difference of this text, particularly given that it was one of the first, if not "the first" group travel textbook, is that there is no attempt at presenting a glossary of terms.

Their educational travel philosophy must have been to inform, however superficially, and hope that the case study examples they offered would serve to act as a suitable platform for further inquiry.

2) What is the author's approach to design, preparation, and planning of group travel?

Nearly one half of the book is composed of letters, graphs, and examples of tally sheets used by the group travel operations' department of Adams & Associates of Vienna, VA in conjunction with the Hula Association, which is to have its annual meeting in Honolulu, Hawaii. That this text chooses to use an association meeting as its principle example, the reader must soon realize that group travel operations to these authors means meeting planning and not group travel operations as it would tend to indicate in the market of the

90's.

Indeed, a strong point of this text is its single case study approach for every conceivable stage of initial group planning. It takes for granted, however, that a travel agent already knows how to approach a wholesale tour operator, from whom a package may be purchased, and redistributed to the members of a group. The authors exhibit the ingredients and then magically place them in sequence to create the group travel operation.

3) Proposals for training personnel.

The book assumes that the clerical skills of a travel agency will be well developed. Sales in the early 80's were largely dependent upon the use of 3 x 5 cards on which the agent could assign "file numbers, running passenger lists, individual addresses, registration fees, and additional passenger data" (Phillips & Webster, 1983, p. 71).

At this same time, Airline reservation systems, namely American's SABRE and United's Apollo and Trans World's PARS were being introduced to many agencies. Either rented or owned outright these systems gradually replaced the 3 x 5 cards because any data could be stored in the computer's mainframe memory as a PNR, universally known as a Passenger Name Record, with unlimited storage capabilities. It's conceivable that this text suffered immediate competition from

the computer age. No one expected CRT's (Cathode Ray Tubes) to have such nationwide appeal so quickly.

Wide acceptance of these space age systems meant that forms once copied by hand for reinforcement could be stored in an agent's personal SABRE or APOLLO CRT. Today this compilation of data would be handled by an additional Personal computer or PC on hard discs or diskettes to hold safe the information.

Since the text is created to inform there is little consideration given relative to the monitoring of personnel's performance. In many cases the skill implementation suggested would probably be handled by the manager of the agency since new concepts are often handled on a managerial level.

4) Proposition for Entry into the Tour Industry Marketplace.

Many authors are quite strong in the sales category, for it is their perceptive understanding of the tour industry that gives them the needed confidence to write a text book containing useful guidelines either for students or those from within the industry wishing to reach and convert group travel customers. Such is the case with the book written by Phillips & Webster.

In their Chapter #3 on Sales Approach, they have correctly named the two most obvious group travel customers.

They are group sponsors (today's nomenclature would be group leaders) and the individual who may purchase a seat or seat(s) in order to become part of a larger group.

Their prescription for group contact is carefully laid out from Phase I of the initial letter, phone call, and personal meeting to a detailed proposal and subsequent promotion to the members. Since the focus of this book is on group meetings, the authors have designated the travel agency to assume the role of group leader in order to produce promotion rather than the more current "modus operandi" of today which has an agency's operations director relying on a group leader to do the membership promotion.

The clerical skill of filing 3 x 5 cards would be a waste of time given the use of computers in today's marketplace, though such information gathering would be useful at travel fairs where computer application is more difficult.

The authors also denote the use of wholesaler's itineraries to block part of a departure rather than run the risk of penalty for having to cancel an entire departure. The commission is smaller but the ease of operations is less strenuous.

5) The author's insight towards a tour's administrative operations

Given that the texture of this book is woven in the tapestry of group meeting planning, one would have to give Phillips & Webster good marks for manipulation of staff time and its program for paper chasing that creates a suitable environment for tour operations.

An objection to their sequence of events could be raised. Their sequence of information seems irregular for the treatment of Hotels, Airlines, and Ground Operators. Relationships with the foregoing entities is addressed after the processing of reservations and invoicing. More agents would be less confused if these experiential ingredients were defined at the outset before the client is even considered. Again the authors are taking for granted that the travel agent already has a keen understanding of the background needed to initiate the extra revenue of group business.

Since a multitude of forms has been carefully placed in each chapter, one would have to give credit to the author's insistence on their way of doing things. Consumption and comprehension of the written material will lead to the reader and/or practitioner's use of the office concepts and guidelines.

At the book's conclusion a reconciliation of group operators' paperwork is demonstrated to uncover the process which enables the group practitioner to have a successful outcome.

6) What gaps are created by this textbook's information?

It is not unusual for many gaps to exist after the entrance of a first textbook in a field such as group travel, particularly when the first one is so specialized, in this case, towards resort group meetings.

What alarms me, however, is the lack of historical background for group travel so that a student, yeah even an industry practitioner will be able to relate to the reasons for this new and important knowledge. An initial chapter could have related at what point group operations became a viable alternative. For instance, Thomas Cook chartered his first group movement by rail in England for a Temperance Society Excursion in 1841. A group travel textbook one hundred forty years later should relate this kind of data.

A principle drawback to this text is that it is unilateral in its scope. It looks to the operator's point of view rather than both the operator and supplier. How can a travel industry person relate to the big picture if both sides of the topic are not presented.

Equal surprise strikes me that some academic research relating to group dynamics was not offered. The reader could receive some prurient information relative to group size and psychological needs. Then, a travel student or a professional could be prepared to pursue the right kind of tour management

position.

There is a chapter for escorting. While some of the characteristics are pertinent, it is painfully clear that policy statements regarding group safety, health, and accident reporting should have been included.

Another weak spot is a lack of group meeting association information that existed at the time of publication of this text but was not included.

Given that Phillips & Webster were the first to write a group travel textbook they should be commended on breaking the ground for others to follow.

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AN EVALUATION OF
"Group Travel Operations Manual"
by Martha Sarbey de Souto, CTC

1) What is the author's educational travel philosophy?

Ms. de Souto's text initiates the discussion with an accurate appraisal of the group travel market of the 1980's. It is not enough for her discussion to begin her thesis around the workings of a travel agency, rather it is her need to identify the marketplace in which group travel is an ongoing viable business.

By acquainting the student with the multitude of possibilities for developing group business as well as hinting at sales techniques in the first chapter she entices the student to read on for further training and clarification.

Ms. de Souto assumes nothing. It becomes apparent early in the initial chapters that she intends her reader to make careful preparations when entering the group travel business experience. Items such as liability and errors and omission insurance are explained within the first twenty pages. Additionally, office procedures, accounting, and financing are discussed with pertinent advise to create a structure in which the group travel agency may enter the marketplace without looking over its shoulder in fear of the normal business cycle budget constraints.

2) What is the author's approach to design, preparation, and planning of group travel?

As de Souto sets the stage with amazing clarity to details, the student is allowed to begin to dream about the destinations and itineraries that are so important for the successful outcome of group travel marketing.

Each level of the booking process is explained in depth. The author gives both advantages and disadvantages to each step. Consequently, the student begins to develop an awareness for the details he needs to build a tour. The point is

made that neophytes of group travel may encounter less risk by choosing to book a cruise as it is a "preexisting floating tour package."

Still the object of her thesis is to encourage the student towards developing group travel in partnership with the airline. She is careful to endoctrinate the student into some of the key areas of airline negotiation, in particular, the point that "An agency can negotiate almost anything. But bear in mind that the agency representative will probably be going up against experienced airline personnel who are much more sophisticated at negotiating with many travel agents. Therefore, . . . it is important to be familiar with some of the terms and concepts of group travel."

Hotel and receptive operators are discussed next as a means of introduction to group planning. Likewise the advantages and disadvantages are identified.

Finally there is a very good chapter on costing and pricing a tour. The reader learns that internal operations may have to use the "pad and pray" method (adding 15% to the present cost to cover unknown prices when promotion for a tour must commence even before all costing details are complete.)

As she explains, "the purpose of a tour is to make money!" One might assume this to be true but the "go and no go" of group operations can be a quagmire of indecision when

the registration/sign-up is borderline. At this point both the costing and pricing surveillance is put to the test.

If a tour has been costed on twenty, and 17 have enrolled, don't make an emotional decision to operate or cancel. Go back to the drawing board and reconstruct the tour price from scratch using 17 passengers as the break even point.

Such practical suggestions make for useful instruction making this text prove worthwhile in the first 100 pages.

3) Proposals for training personnel.

This textbook also assumes that personnel have been trained for the tasks as needed. Detail orientation and task completion is promoted within the agency by a method which is described as "calendaring." Review dates are posted for all to see so that an entire agency staff may trouble shoot for each other. More clerical staff will be hired, as needed, to complete the review dates.

Well trained personnel is looked upon as those persons who complete various tasks punctually. In-house operations thereby achieve success.

Case studies are not this author's forte. But needed skills may be developed with a series of examples related to letters of tour proposal, follow-up, registration confirma-

tion, and final invoicing. These well written examples are excellent tools which help the student with skill implementation.

The author invokes steps for training by interweaving pertinent examples for various internal operations throughout the text. Personnel training in real life is an ongoing proposition which requires constant vigilance. This author substantiates her thesis constantly with appropriate exhibits.

What makes here text so useful is her orientation to the detail of internal operations. A whole chapter is devoted to preparation for hiring and training of the tour manager on whom the agency will depend for representation and fulfillment of the tour passenger's contract.

4) Proposition for Entry into the Tour Industry Marketplace.

Ms. de Souto has taken one third of her textbook to prepare the student for the tour brochure. By obtaining a clear appraisal of the preliminary planning, booking negotiations, and costing, the student can adapt himself to the important decisions of market preparation.

Many neophytes of tour and travel rush headlong into the print phase of marketing when they should have taken the time described by this author to prepare for the structure of tour development.

The tour brochure is the agency's manifesto of trust. "Clients are entitled to more than just vague promises, more than just a hastily thrown-together itinerary and responsibility clause, more than pretty pictures of glamorous hotels. They are entitled to a complete, clearly written, no-nonsense brochure (Sarbey de Souto, 1985, p. 100).

Tour brochures can be complicated or simplified. What makes this text important is that the chief ingredients, i.e., layout, artwork, maps, covers, itinerary, registration forms, mechanicals, and printer's bids are outlined precisely without confusing the reader. An advertising course taken as an elective along with a group travel course could be of direct assistance.

A natural progression is presented in which a tour literature piece is announced by a press release to certain target markets which may produce selective groups and then attachment with the prospective group leaders. Such a forecast is possible but too superficial to be a common occurrence. Selling comes more from selective patterns of sales and grass roots prospecting. This reader gets the impression that groups for this author have grown on trees and all she had to do was pluck them. At times the reader has the impression that conventions and meeting planning business is presumed as the primary source of group business.

In any case, import is made of the special handling needed to nurture a client. In this regard, service for the client is a key ingredient to any group travel operation and Ms. de Souto takes ample space to create a client service model. The details of registration confirmation and invoicing are included which help the reader to understand the necessity of such operations. So many agencies can take the client for granted in group situations, this text does much to allay the fear of loopholes in client supervision. Even the art of wait lists is explained.

5) This author's insight towards a tour's operation

Like Phillips and Webster, Sarbey de Souto has laid out the necessary steps from her experience to create good supplier/operator relationships. As aforementioned in section #3 the use of calendaring is made to create the image of agency efficiency.

Also explained earlier in reference to the training application, Sarbey de Souto depends a great deal on the choice of the tour manager, for his collaboration aids tremendously successful group tour operation in the overseas markets. Domestically, tour escorts may achieve some status but may never achieve the star status of their global counterparts.

In this realm, tour managers can be as important as the

president of the company, for it is in this capacity that tour manager must tend to react in order that the customer is achieving a high degree of service. Thinking of your customer as would a company president is pretty heady stuff.

The tour manager's leadership, therefore, becomes an integral part of a company's posture in the marketplace. The finesse that the tour manager exhibits will often be a reflection on the tour company. How he follows through. How she handles situations needing tact and diplomacy.

Also the author relates to the home office's capability of preplanning as being a definite influence on the total tour's operation. So much of what is perceived as a good relationship with the tour passenger has been nurtured and coddled by what has gone on behind the scenes, back in the home office.

6) What gaps does the author leave to explore?

Martha Sarbey de Souto has created a better text for any generation of student than her colleagues, Phillips and Webster. However, like them her weak spots lay in the realm of history performance. Additionally Sarbey de Souto creates gaps in tour planning by non-attention to the importance of geography and the approach needed to sell the group tour to the various levels of group tour proliferation.

History becomes more important as an infant curricula gains respect and use. It is surprising that, as instructive as her book is, there is no mention of Thomas Cook and the importance of his ground-breaking at the international level of group travel, where her topic is discussed at such length.

As much as her thesis depends on internal and external staff performance it is unusual to find that performance does not exist as a chapter sub-heading. To be fair, a client's satisfaction is sought in the form of a tour passenger's evaluation report, but the word performance is not even used as a criteria.

Tour planning is discussed at great length with regard to European destinations. Ground Operators are discussed in depth with "pros" and "cons" and on them Sarbey de Souto relies for intelligence gathering for the importance of geographical timing and/or variation. It would be important for future students to fully understand how geographical benchmarks of destinations relate to the choice of supplier products.

Finally selling to groups would be helpful as a means of understanding how groups may think relative to destination decisions, timing, and pricing. Group selling from year to year may be nothing more than the awareness of staying ahead

AN EVALUATION OF
"Essentials of Tour Management"
by Betsy Fay

1) What is the author's educational travel philosophy?

Betsy Fay began in the tour business by working as a General Manager for a major individual and group attraction. Later as a tour operator's assistant she garnered the knowledge that the tour industry is a specialized field unlike that of a travel agency, even though both hats may be worn by the same professional.

As a teacher of Tour and Travel, she become frustrated when she found no books dealing with the trenches of daily tour operation. She writes her manuscript from the special vantage point of first hand experience with standard terms of the tour industry. The student is lead through the profession with a bird's eye approach of existing topical behaviors.

Each chapter begins with a new glossary of terms. As the chapter unfolds these terms are defined in some detail. Soon the student comprehends that the tour industry is passionate with a variety of terms. A quick read could frustrate any student in learning. The author, however, explains each management level with both ample illustration of tour literature and industry representatives who have achieved some success in their career and are recognized by their profession as unusually intuitive.

of the three kinds of itineraries that work well. They are as follows: 1) hub and spoke, 2) circle tours, and 3) the open jaw itinerary (sometimes referred to as an intermodal itinerary).

As in Sarbey de Souto's text, Betsy Fay has a comprehensive chapter about pricing. Fay discusses the topic from both ends and once read, the student has the clearest picture

By treating each essential level of tour management, the author takes the reader's mind by its tenant and leads him through the rudiments of this fascinating business.

Her book becomes a beginning text for group travel curricula. The student while understanding the multiple definitions will need to develop her newly defined behaviors into skills.

2) What is the author's approach to design, preparation, and planning of group travel?

Elementary to Fay's thesis is that she acquaints the student with the essential suppliers needed to plan an appropriate tour. A skein of these functions are woven to present an honest picture of the steps or people needed to plan any tour package. The representation of basic tools in any profession is of preliminary importance.

Once the latter components are discussed and understood,

the student is shown the "how to" of planning itineraries. Rules of good itinerary planning are explained in order to allow the student to prepare a tour for maximum appeal and comfort. As Betsy Fay explains, "if the itinerary would be difficult for a family to achieve in one day, it will be impossible for a tour to achieve" (Fay, 1991, p. 102).

Particularly useful in her explanation is the definition as to the importance of cost, mark-up, and revenue.

3) Proposals for training personnel.

The author understands the pre-tour environment that must exist for the internal office communications of a tour operator, but spends little time explaining the individual training of tour personnel. It is expected that some of the skills are carried over from general office administration efficiencies. Yet understanding things needed and knowing exactly how to do them are two different sets of behavior.

What is indicated is for the agency to have a training manual which explains in detail those skills that are expected of escorts and guides. Examples of escort and guides' materials are not included, however.

Finally some measurement of escort or guide performance could be identified by Fay. It appears that the latter is not within the scope of this text, however. Many tour oper-

ators feel all they have to do is return a group home in order to relinquish responsibility and fulfill the contract. Follow-up relationships with group administrators ensures that repeat business is unending provided that a group is important to the tour operator after returning home.

4) Proposition for entry into the Tour Industry Marketplace.

The presumption by Fay is that if a tour operator puts in place the Nine P's of Tourism Marketing that the clientele will fall into place. The Nine P's are identified as the following:

- 1) Price
- 2) Product/Service
- 3) Place
- 4) Promotion
- 5) Partnership
- 6) Packaging
- 7) Positioning
- 8) Programming
- 9) People/employees

A student can react quite favorably to this approach provided that the customer is identified as the key receptor.

Business courses tend to view any client as being putty in the hands of aggressive sales people. The same view is held by tour operators. Fay advances her proposition of the marketplace as a communications mix which is composed of all

the strategies necessary to reach the all important customer. This chapter is the most academic portion of the whole text. Several authors from several texts are quoted so as to give the student a *raison d'être* for the value of empirical knowledge gained in the pursuit of individual or group sales.

The objective of service does enter Fay's treatment but only superficially as it relates to the nature of service industries in general. The travel product is a perishable item, thoroughly time specific. If it's unsatisfactory, "a client cannot return a travel product/service that did not meet the client's expectations. The service has perished or been consumed. There is nothing physical to return to the tour operator" (Fay, 1991, p. 131).

To be sure the cold hard realities of the marketplace and the necessary budget are important to any successful undertaking. What would be more compassionate though is a feeling that the customer is someone to be observed, courted, and induced to buy gracefully.

The affect of government regulation is presented though halfheartedly. Most tour operations have in fact been deregulated. What Fay does advance, however, is that unfair competition is a wart in the business arena and that the National Tour Association has been active to eradicate it with legislation, which heretofore has been unsuccessful.

The cold hard realities of the Tour Industry's marketplace make it imperative that students learn the definitions and practices of responsible tour operations. How skillful they become in their quest for knowledge will be the major factor in their acceptance by the industry insiders as they progress upwards or laterally.

5) This author's insight towards a tour's operation.

This section is Fay's strongest. For in it she develops for the students three phases of tour operation, namely, Pre-Tour, Tour Execution, and Post-Tour. Sarbey de Souto developed a similar thesis, yet Fay has produced a more comprehensive hands-on presentation. This is to be expected, given her past experience.

The first part of the book was to acquaint her reader with the tour industry realm, its participants and protagonists. Now she can reiterate many of her precepts to refresh and orient the student towards a clearer understanding of actual tour operation.

A division of duties or skills is outlined and defined with ample examples which inform and prepare the student for actual agency operation. These examples are not industry standards set in stone but serve to inform the student how any tour operation might choose to register and track its customers.

This is the first textbook to give the motorcoach driver his due. These captains of the road are very necessary ingredients which can totally affect the outcome of any tour's execution. The escort is the next most important role player. How they interact is the third. With unsuccessful interplay among these two role players, repeat business is virtually impossible.

With pre-formed groups, the group leader presents another internal force and as Fay suggests, "this relationship is a tricky one, and for the sake of the tour, the escort often has to ask that they 'execute' the tour together and share some responsibilities" (Fay, 1991, p. 170).

Suppliers are team players, too. The destination, the tour's attractions, and the price must fulfill as well. Yet the most important image producing advantage is created by the bus driver and the tour company's escort.

Post-Tour Marketing is newly presented for textbooks about Group Travel. Sarbey de Souto did present Post Tour Wrap-up but Fay takes post tour strategies to another level. Here she gives practical applications for overcoming poor client evaluations and cross-selling from good client evaluations. Thinking the tour is over when it's over is an unfortunate mind-set for tour operators to comport. Students who can appreciate this pit-fall early on will adjust favor-

ably to the tour industry at any entry level.

Fay also develops useful tour operating ratios which in the climate of fiscal integrity help newly indoctrinated students to understand the management's perception of success and failure for any departure.

6) What gaps does the author leave to explore?

Comparing Sarbey de Souto's work with Fay's manuscript, this writer would have to say that the former's first half of her work is better whereas Fay presents the latter half of her work more formidably.

Betsy Fay's text, however, does leave some gaps similar to Sarbey de Souto's as well as some of her own. Like Sarbey de Souto the most important exclusion is that no research of the early history of group tourism has been undertaken. What transpired even during the times of the stage coach or shipboard travel needs to be probed. In that light, group dynamics could be explored in terms of today's psychological profiles of groups and how certain attributes could be displayed and rectified in group situations. Fay chooses to explore this topic of group dynamics as a modest inclusion in the chapter on tour execution. Such solutions for certain passenger types should be advanced, in my opinion, much earlier so that students may comprehend the loose footing that poor dynamics can create.

The scope of Fay's thesis relates the development of group tourism as it unfolds within firms which are highly capitalized. Group Travel has evolved because of the persistence of much smaller businesses who deign to create more personal tour experiences.

Her planning philosophy would have greater impact if she highlighted the importance for a supplier to fully understand the special needs of a tour operator's detailed planning stage. And likewise tour operators could appreciate the supplier status if they could understand the supplier's thoughts in making ready for the needs of the tour operator. Both roles require significant investment of time and research. The more each knows of the other position at all levels the more intuitive their business decisions will become.

Furthermore the supplier would be of greater assistance if he knew the importance of his own geography, his business' physical relationship to his immediate destination, his regional destination, and his national compass bearing. All of the latter bench marks can play a significant role in the production of a tour itinerary. The successful outcome could be affected greatly if the supplier fails to understand the importance of his geographical position in relation to other suppliers in his own back yard as well as his national back yard.

Finally the text is modern in scope with regards to its glossary design impact. What the author needs is to more fully explore the application of skills that she alludes to, at times names as important to the tour industry and then show how they can be developed within the scope of academic training.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Sample

During March/April of 1992 a one page questionnaire was sent to a random sampling of half of the 660 campuses identified by the National Tour Foundation as offering educational programs in Travel and Tourism Management. A copy of the letter to Tour and Travel department chairpersons and a sample questionnaire is located in Figure 3.1 and Figure 3.2 respectively.

The mailing consisted of the letter, questionnaire numbered in sequence corresponding to the sample, and a numbered in sequence stamped return address envelope.

Instrument

The questionnaire was constructed using six questions. In an attempt to illicit a high response rate it was decided that a one page questionnaire would be used. Therefore, only six questions comprised the entire questionnaire.

Question 1 sought to qualify the respondents. It asked if the institution which received the questionnaire offered a program in travel management. If the response was negative, the respondent was requested to return the questionnaire unanswered.

FIGURE 3.1

March 23, 1992

Dear Educational Colleague,

As a travel and tourism educator, you are constantly looking at new courses and current trends in the tour and travel industry. You are certainly well aware of the time and effort taken to design new courses for the travel management curricula.

I am a professional tour operator, with 20 years experience, presently enrolled as a candidate in the Executive Leader Masters Program at the Rochester Institute of Technology fulfilling requirements for a Masters of Science. It is my thesis project to evaluate the current textbooks available in group travel.

Thereto, I am attempting to identify the gaps that the authors leave. Then I may verify if a textbook, for which I have completed an outline, is needed to understand the skills that a student would use and implement in a travel management career.

Would you please fill out the enclosed one page questionnaire and return it to the RIT campus. It will take you less than three minutes to fill out. Several hundred colleges are being asked to participate in this survey. Complete confidentiality is assured. Individual questionnaires will be tabulated and analyzed by me and then destroyed. An identification number has been printed on each questionnaire to simplify mailing procedures. This tells us that you have responded, and that your answers will be included in our final results.

You as a college curriculum consultant are a vital part of this important research project. Your completion of the questionnaire will be greatly appreciated. Please return the questionnaire by April 9, 1992. I would be most happy to answer any questions regarding this research study. Please call me at 1-800-736-1221. If you are interested in obtaining the results of this research, please include your business card or write your name on the back of your completed questionnaire.

Thank you for your time and contribution.

Sincerely,

John P. Spare, CTP
Candidate
Executive Leader Masters Program

FIGURE 3.2

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Do you have a travel management program? ____ Yes ____ No
If NO, please return in the enclosed envelope.
2. Are you a ____ certificate, ____ 2 year, ____ 4 year, or
____ graduate program? (Please check all that apply.)
3. From the following list, please identify the range of
courses your institution offers in Travel & Tourism.

____ Airline automation (back offices)
____ Airline automation (reservation)
____ Commercial recreation ____ Tour Wholesale
____ Group Travel ____ Tourism Marketing
____ Travel Agency Management ____ Tourism Planning/
Development
____ Other (Please specify) _____
4. How many students are currently enrolled as a
____ major or as an ____ elective?
5. What skills do you feel are important for students to
learn?

____ assessing group dynamics ____ sales' presentations
____ brochure preparation ____ selling to groups
____ costing/pricing ____ site inspections
____ guide/escort selection ____ tour planning/consumers
____ making group reservations ____ tour planning/"fam trips"
____ negotiating group meetings ____ working nat'l conventions
6. From the above list which do you feel are the most important?

Thank you.

Question 2 sought to identify the level at which the tour and travel program was offered. The respondents were asked to select all levels (certificate, 2-year, 4-year and/or graduate) that applied.

In Question 3 respondents were asked to identify the range of courses presently offered at their institution in Travel & Tourism. Ample examples were listed such as Airline automation (back offices or reservation), commercial recreation, Group Travel, Travel Agency Management, Tour Wholesale, Tourism Marketing, Tourism Planning/Development, plus specifying any other courses.

For Question 4 the respondents were asked to verify an approximate number of students who were enrolled as majors or as electives.

In Question 5 twelve skills were listed. Respondents were asked to identify by check mark any or all skills they felt to be important for students to learn. They were listed alphabetically from Assessing Group Dynamics to Working National Conventions so that the author's favored skills would not be listed in his preferred sequence.

Finally in Question 6, respondents were asked to rank their choice of the three most important skills. The question was constructed to encourage the respondents to answer based on the skills they had just read in Question 5.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Sample

Three hundred and thirty questionnaires were posted on March 27, 1992 to those schools identified by the National Tour Foundation. After a reasonable period following the deadline of April 9, 1992 a total of 117 responses were received. None was returned because of a faulty address.

Approximately 25% of the total sample, identified themselves as having travel management programs. The questionnaires were then processed, analyzed, and tabulated by SPSS.

Findings

The first question singled out those respondents who had a travel management program on their campus. Of the 330 samples, designated by the National Tour Foundation, 80 schools responded, "yes" and 37 schools responded, "no" or made no declaration and returned the questionnaire.

The next objective was to verify in Question 2 the current mix of the respondents' certificate or degree programs. By referring to Table 1, it can be seen that the mix indicates a fairly equal distribution among those institutions offering certificates of 33 percent, two-year degrees of

Programs Offered by Respondent

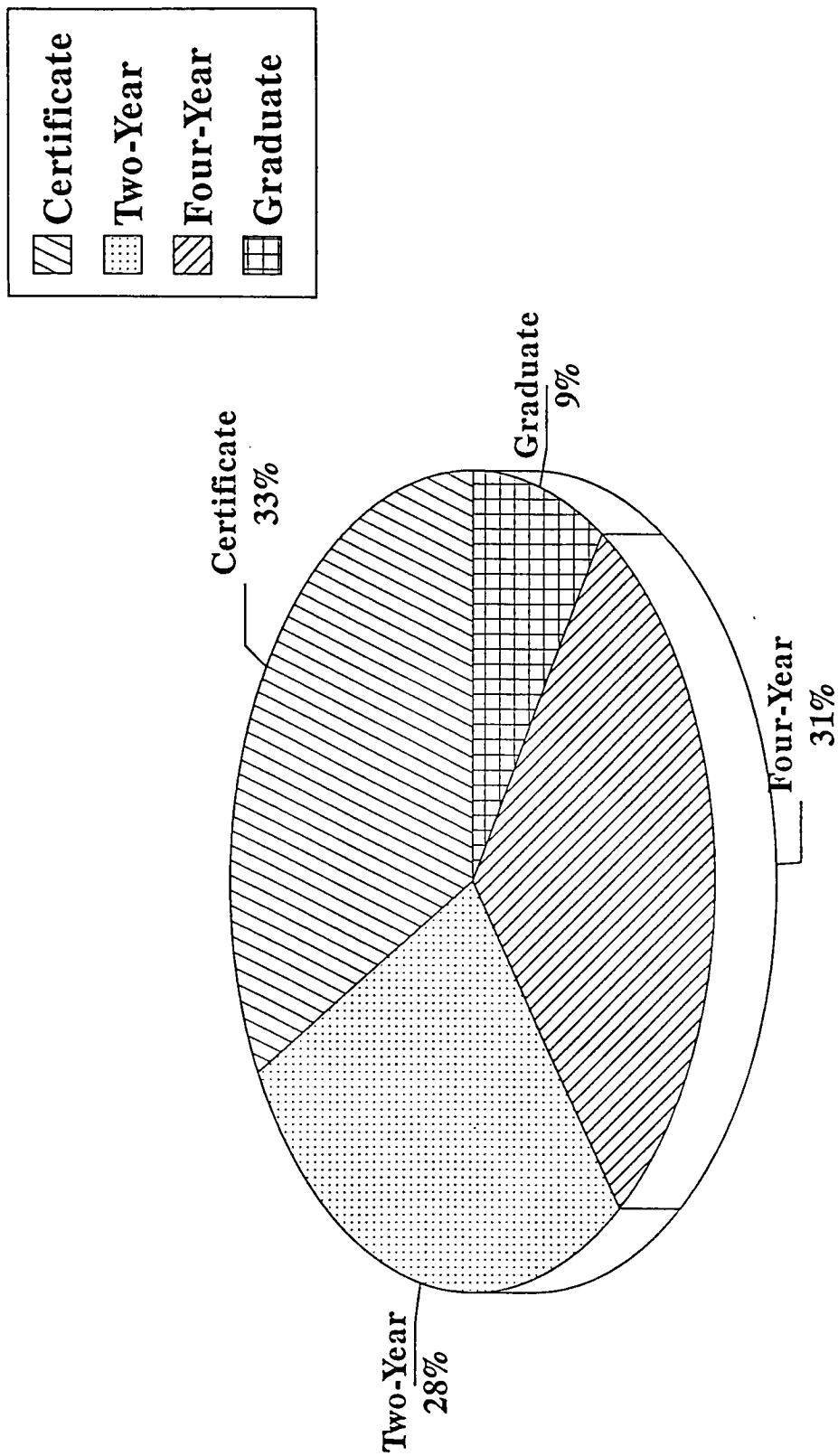


TABLE 1

28 percent, and four-year degree programs of 31 percent. In addition, the sample establishes that roughly one tenth of the schools have a corresponding graduate program.

For question three, respondents were asked to identify the range of courses which their institution offers in Travel and Tourism. The rationale here was to begin to establish a recognition for courses representing back office, tour wholesaling, and tourism planning skills. As expected there was a wide range response with airline automation and computer, travel agency management, and tourism marketing courses taking the lion's share of support. At the same time as seen in Table 2, educators have begun to develop courses exposing the skills pertinent to the back office, tour wholesaling, and tourism planning.

The enrollment of travel majors and travel electives were asked in question four. Data sought here could verify the population of students for future sale of a new tourism text. The respondents showed a mean registration of 104 students per school enrolled as tour and travel majors. Accompanying data also demonstrated that the medium number of respondents was 52.5 students.

Next, the respondent was asked to designate which skills were important for their students to learn. Twelve skills were listed. Referring to Table 3, the skills listed here

Range of Courses

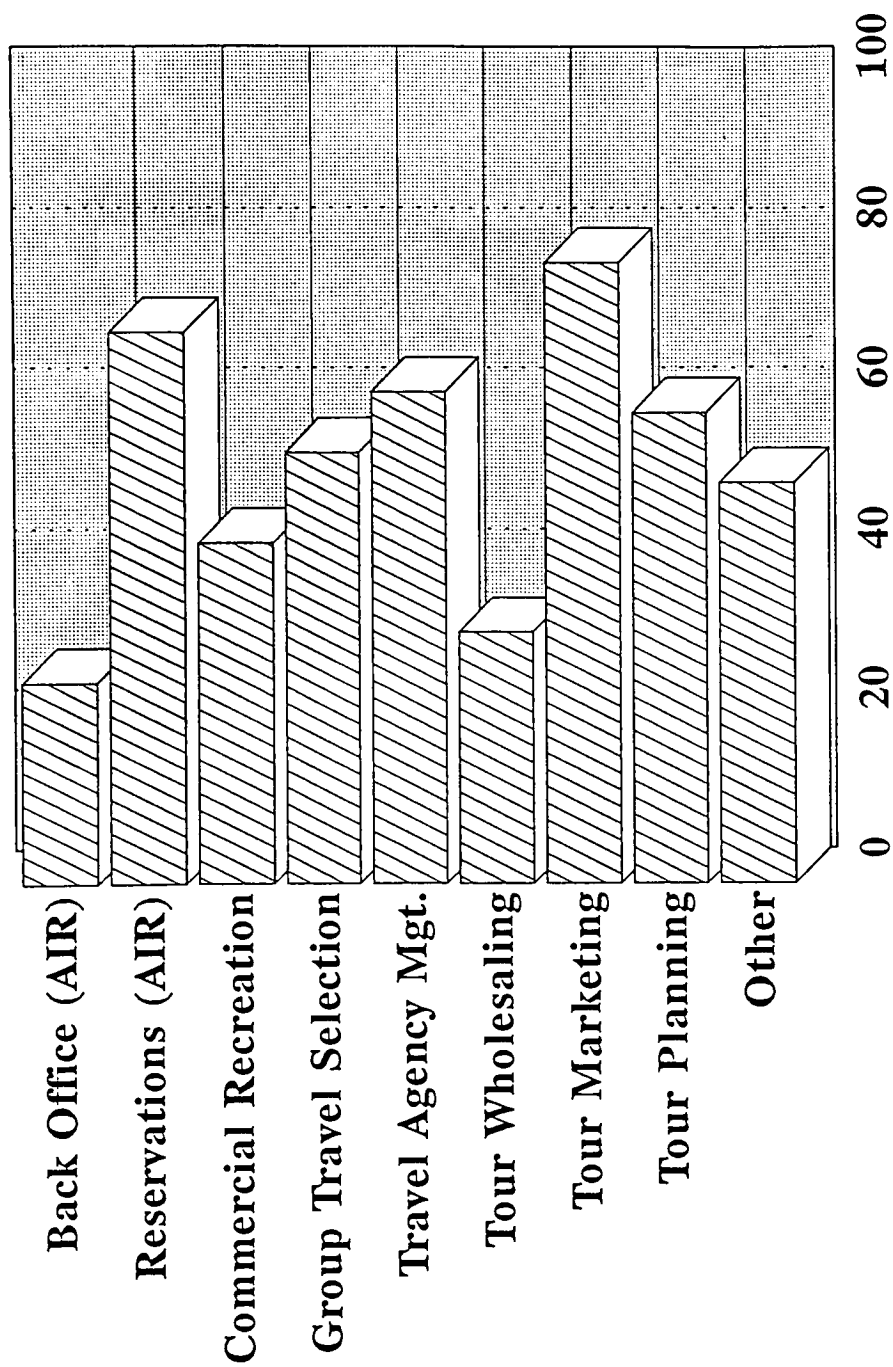


TABLE 2

Important Skill Dynamic

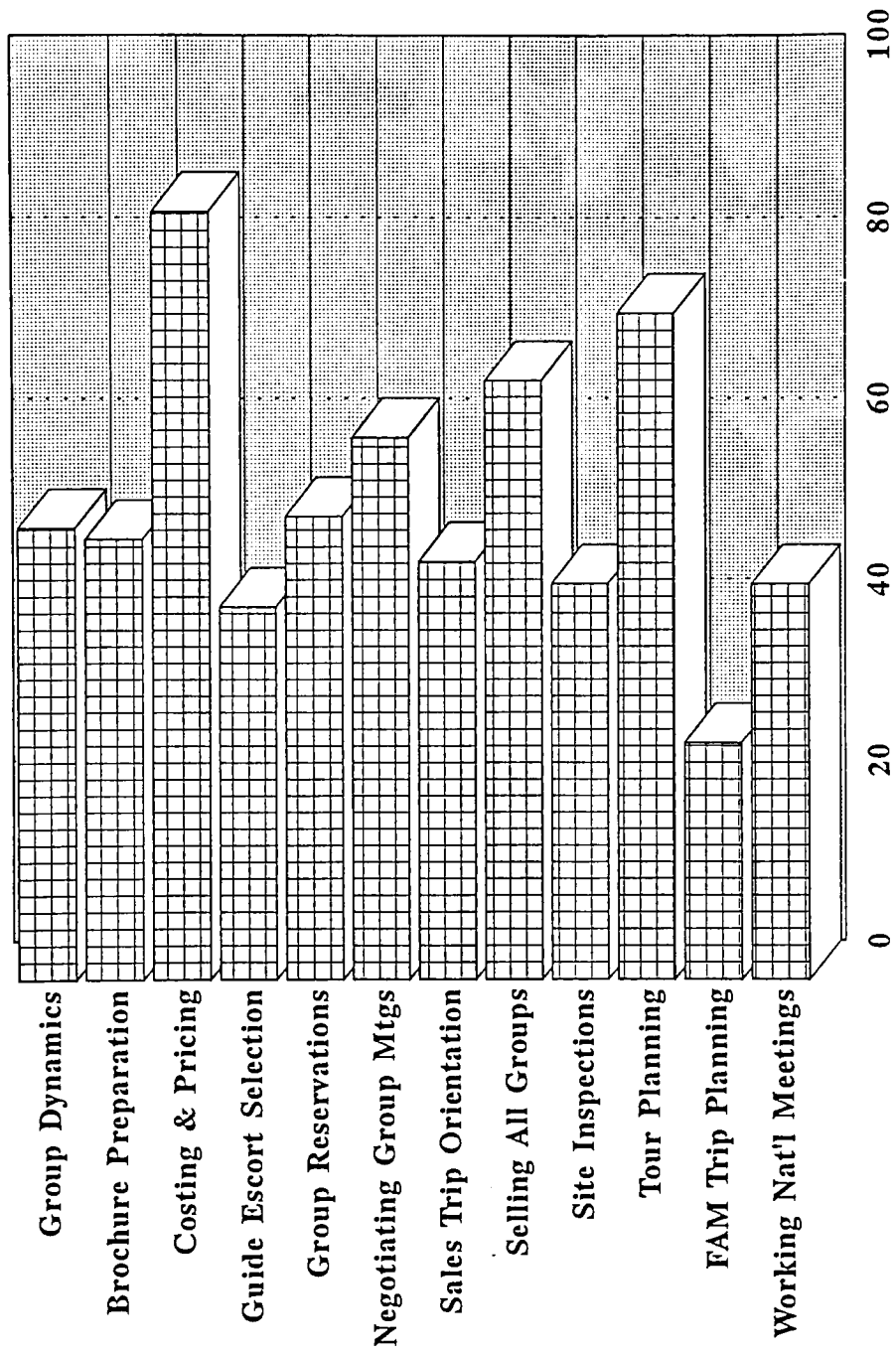


TABLE 3

with their corresponding percentage, appear in a descending order of importance:

1) Costing and Pricing	85.0%
2) Tour Planning for Consumers	73.8%
3) Selling to Groups	66.3%
4) Negotiating Group Meetings	60.0%
5) Making Group Reservations	51.3%
6) Assessing Group Dynamics	50.0%
7) Brochure Preparation	48.8%
8) Sales Trip Presentations	46.3%
9) Site Inspections	43.8%
10) Working National Conventions	43.8%
11) Guide/Escort Selection	41.3%
12) Tour Planning "Fam Trips"	26.2%

It is interesting to note that the more popular skills related to group management are found at the top of the list. These are the skills for which educational courses can be more academic. The psychodynamics of group tour operation can be validated from a perceptive distance in an academic setting.

On the other hand, those skills which are more related to the practical outcome of a tour are being sidestepped by academia, because of the lack of industry oriented educators who to date seem less interested in articulating their industry for today's students than creating profit within their individual business spectrums.

Ultimately, they were asked to rank the importance of each skill dynamic in relation or competition with others. This question clearly established the importance of rudimentary skills of costing and pricing, selling to groups, and tourism planning.

The following skills were ranked according to importance. The rankings in three sets can be compared and viewed in Table 4.

- a) **Costing/Pricing** is listed **first** in the first ranking, first in the second ranking, and second in the third ranking.
- b) **Group dynamics** is ranked **second** in the first ranking but not again in the second or third.
- c) **Selling to groups** is ranked **third** in the first ranking, second in the second ranking, but not in the third ranking.
- d) **Tour Planning** was ranked **third** in the second ranking, yet first in the third ranking.

The lowest response ranking was for site inspection, brochure preparation, guide/escort selection, working national conventions, and negotiating group meetings. The latter skills had received a much higher qualification from the data tabulated earlier in the fifth question.

While the latter four skills received the lowest response, they along with the primary four skills help make up

Most Important Rankings

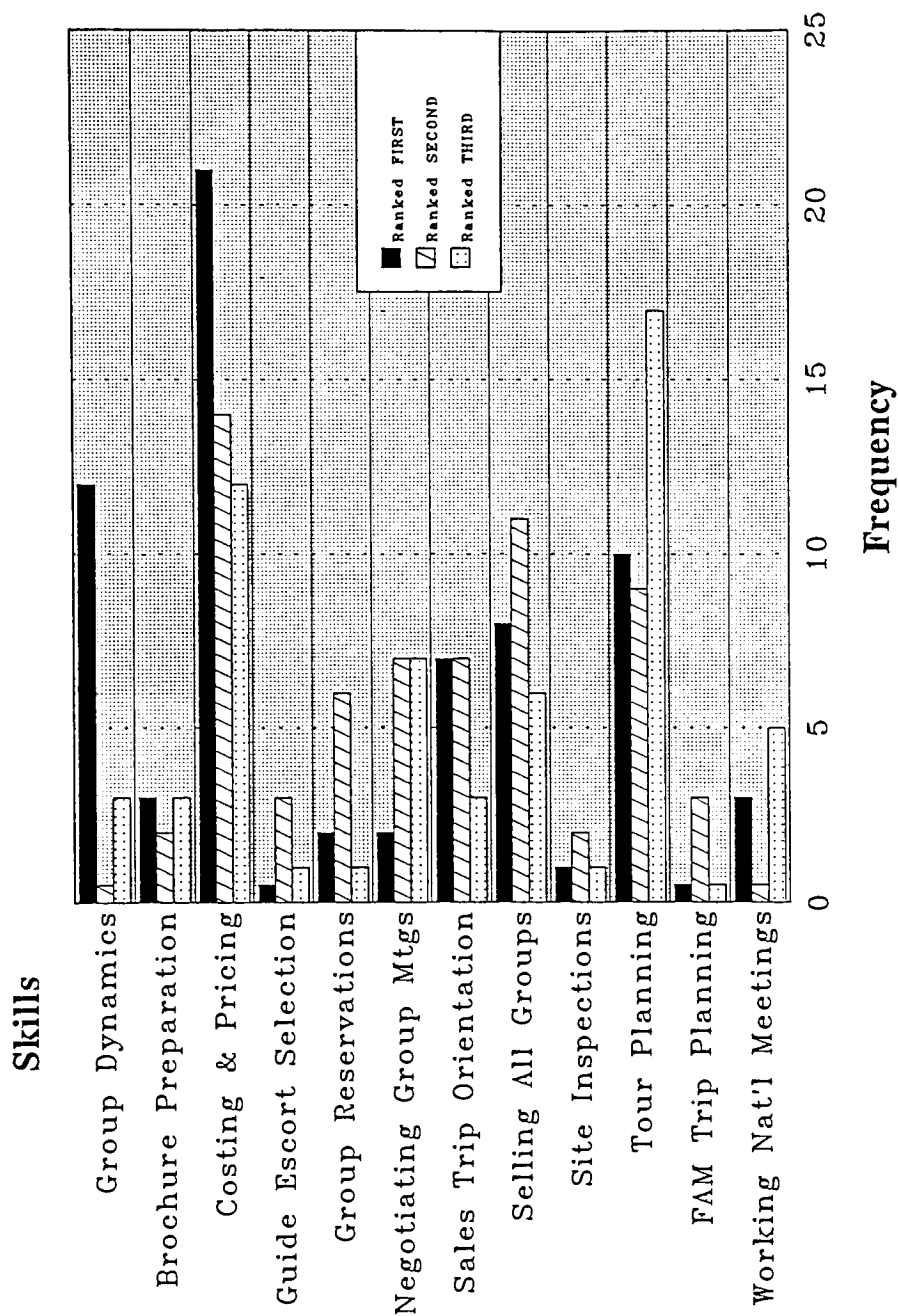


TABLE 4

the majority of skills needed to be truly professional group travel operatives.

That only one respondent ranked "fam trip" planning as a worthy skill is indicative of how far the group travel profession must go to reach a lucid understanding within academia of the multi-level roles of group travel sales. Only then can students actually know how the motorcoach tour industry segments, targets, and positions their product in the group travel market.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Research can be discouraging. Research can be exhilarating. Random sampling is risk oriented, too. But it generally scoops the intent of the experiment. A good return of the sample has occurred. 25% of the respondents have concluded that four skills are paramount to the discussion of tour management. Let us discuss these results briefly.

That Costing/Pricing appears at the head of two rankings and second in the third is a good indicator of the importance of this skill to the success of any tour operation. Too often tour practitioners will cost an itinerary assiduously yet lose sight of the pricing the a tour needs to compete in the marketplace.

Not all costing is done the same. Each tour operator has his own method. However, one generic tour may contain the same ingredients and basic costs within any tour office but carry a different price in several different markets. Students need to discover this variation. Without an understanding of this basic tenant of tour development, a student could lose sight of the competition and worse yet his first job.

Though group dynamics appeared sixth in question 5 it soared to second place in the first ranking. This skill observation is becoming increasingly valuable in problem solving. It appears that academia is feeling its importance. Perhaps, this is because of new research done by Charles Zastro, Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin. A chapter relative to decision making among group members will generate appropriate thought as further clarification of study for the training of tour escorts, guides, and particularly travel office personnel.

A tour operator knows his selling territory. On him rests the successful outcome of his tour programs. This is not a skill that someone can purchase and then possess the knowledge. It comes from years of experience. Learning to ferret out a group movement where none had appeared in the first sighting. The skill contains the nuances of so many characteristics of other professions. The tour operator's intuition is constantly simmering as it waits for new opportunities.

Selling to groups was ranked third in the first ranking of Question 6. Higher learning has recognized its importance to the group travel industry. In this skill dynamic are many clues for students to put in their kit bag for discovery of new group business. The needs of special interest groups must be defined.

Finally tour planning is still revered, though it's ranking suggests - afterthought. What makes this realm so interesting is the tour operator's understanding of his own "geographic-synchronization." Many packages are put together without any consideration for one's position on the earth, relation to larger cities, attractions, or natural wonders. Once this keen awareness is fostered, promulgated and appreciated, however, better business is possible. Students with this knowledge always make better tour itineraries.

Recommendations

Any good evaluation of available text books must discuss the important gaps left for further study. The danger is to make a mountain out of a mole hill, however. To be significant the gaps must cry out like sentinels along a researchers roadway.

What alarms this appraiser most is an apparent disregard in any of these books for some historical data from what has gone before. Learning the background of any industry should be paramount to academic pursuit, because it lays a secure foundation in fact. Future generations of students may then improve their techniques; yea, even industry practitioners may search for more meaningful insights in their own realms with this new found knowledge.

Such a chapter could relate the evolution of earlier

group travel, chronicling pertinent experience. Group operations would then have a skin. Industry operators and suppliers would know the wrinkles of their profession. Their careers could be practiced more meaningfully.

Of what gaps do we speak? They are, after all, mostly individual in nature. Included are the skills of site inspections, making group reservations, negotiating hotel contracts, and guide/escort selection.

Additionally, group tour operatives must learn brochure preparation, sales trip presentations, the social behavior employed at national conventions, and arrange and facilitate familiarization trips. Let us look at these gaps conceptually.

Operators and suppliers alike need to possess a clear understanding of the other's roles in their prospective group sales capacities so that they can negotiate the best program for their individual or company needs. Gaining an awareness of the "big picture" in the marketplace is something that occurs only after a constant vigil to detail with years of trial and error producing, in the end, a sharp sense of market reality. Great illumination of the other's job may then occur after personal years of experience. Let us look further towards these gaps and this author's recommendations for each of the gaps' incorporation into today's travel management study program.

Site Inspections

Every traveler makes subconscious appraisals of public accommodations on any trip. It is the nature of the human animal to assess habitat at first glance. Tour operators need to be aware of the criteria for making site arrangements. Most people travel on motorcoach tours because of variety in accommodation, attractions and daily menu. Once the tour is operating, it's too late to ameliorate a hotel's, attraction's, or restaurant's service.

A chapter introducing a student to site inspections followed by skill preparation in group reservations and ultimately concise information about negotiating hotel contracts for group meetings would make for a full appraisal of the importance of sites and the integral nature of the physical structure in a tour.

Guide/Escort Selection

At the center of every "on the road" tour is a tour conductor (T.C.). This company representative must wield diplomacy, style, and class. A raconteur to be sure. A protector. A courier. A negotiator. A statesman.

This employee is often taken for granted and sought by tour operators at the last minute of tour preparation. Tour operators think of getting passengers first. When they should think of tour guides/escorts almost immediately there-

after. For without such responsible individuals in leadership capacities, a company's image, its longevity in the marketplace could be severely damaged.

There are several techniques in selecting these road warriors and in training them for the customer's itinerary. Students should know these techniques well, because it may be the first job category open to them for industry entry.

Brochure Preparation

In chapter two, we noted that current text books perceive brochure preparation as completely separate priorities. Some gloss over its preparation and inclusion in sales promotion, while others give it more credence and position in the marketing plan.

Brochures are definitely a marketing tool. What bothers this author however is that a full understanding of its inner psychology should be approached more towards the end of the text just prior to a chapter relating sales presentations rather than at the beginning or middle of the thesis. There are too many nuances to decipher in the group travel business to expect to be able to design a useful sales instrument so early in the text presentation.

Sales Trip Presentations

Newly trained salesmen or road weary vendors should all

have the same ammunition for their sales pitch. They have to know their product. Grabbing the brass ring without this knowledge is virtually impossible. Sales calls must be planned precisely in order to be successful. "Cold calls," usually made on an impromptu basis can be fruitful without intense planning but only because product knowledge wins the customer over.

There are tricks to any trade and tour vendors have their share. Students of tour and travel should know how to choose which days of the week to make sales' calls.

Strategies must be honed for the opportune seasonal windows that occur for sales trips to be effective. There's the right time to call and there's the worst.

Statistics play a key role in product definition. Students discovering the reasons for their knowledge of statistical data will take greater interest in learning such data in their prospective post graduate employment.

Several periodicals exist which help tour vendors plan their sales presentations. Students can learn how to read these journals and get a jump on the competition.

Working the National Conventions

In any business year the buyer and the seller find themselves in a state of purchase, expectation, day to day

operation, and final outcome. All business revolves around this form of contemplation and quiet apprehension.

Tour operators and suppliers need two marketplaces, the American Bus Association and the National Tour Association conventions at years end, to present their needs and new products. Both sides of the aisle need this co-mingling to draw conclusions about the current business climate and the prospects for the future. They party, cajole, and defend their positions, all to create an atmosphere of convivial negotiation, a psychodrama, in which operator and supplier alike strive to make new contacts and to maintain old friendships.

Students must learn these anxieties, in particular the anxieties that present themselves at the time of national conventions.

Facilitating Familiarization Trips

Too often the familiarization trip is thought of as a "junket" designed as a free bonus for travel agents. This is not the case as it pertains to tour operators. The "fam trip" as it has come to be known has evolved into a mission statement made by various destination marketers to tour operators and/or group leaders.

Fam trips have become extremely competitive. They are

operated year round and those they target, i.e., travel writers, travel organizers, tour operators and travel agents, and group leaders are under constant siege to participate in various destination events. "Fams" have become nominal revenue producers because no tour operator wants to fritter away valuable time mixing with individuals who are participating in such an event as a lark, therefore he is willing to pay for the privilege once receiving an invitation.

Though this is considered by the respondents as the least desirable skill, an exhaustive appraisal of this important area will help students to learn about these unusually structured events. Hence they will be able to function as perceptive employees in group travel sales and marketing positions.

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