

A SUCCESSFUL TOURISM DESTINATION IN PATAGONIA ARGENTINA: THE CASE OF EL CALAFATE-GLACIER PERITO MORENO

Marcelo Barrios
EDDE-Escuela de Dirección de Empresas
Universidad Argentina de la Empresa

ABSTRACT

This chapter shows the development of a small tourism destination localized in the South of Argentina in the region of Patagonia. The main destination attraction is the Perito Moreno Glacier and its occasional breaks down.

The marketing strategy was centered in the following issues: the experience concept, the press and community relationships.

Since the development of a new marketing strategy the number of visitors increased 75% between 2002 and 2005.

Keywords: Patagonia-Argentina-Glacier-Marketing Strategy

INTRODUCTION

The objective of this chapter is to show the development of a small tourism destination located in the South of Argentina in the Patagonia region. The destination, “El Calafate” is now a world renowned destination with the tourism development of the Perito Moreno Glacier, one of the Human in Heritage declared by United Nations.

This chapter is developed as follow. First, the localization and short history of El Calafate. Secondly it is developed the main tourism characteristics and the main tourism attractions. Finally a description of the marketing strategy followed to obtain a successful tourism destination.

I. THE LOCATION AND HISTORY OF EL CALAFATE

El Calafate city lays on the southern shore of Argentino Lake, 315 km away from Río Gallegos, capital city of the province of Santa Cruz, in the South of Argentina, South America and 80 km away from the entrance to Los Glaciares National Park.

Geographical Location



Glacier
Perito
Moreno



Source:

Located on a steppe landscape, visitors are admired because of the size of its views, the turquoise colors of the Argentino Lake, and its vegetation, typical of a desert region.

It is inevitable to visit the National Park without first taking a view of El Calafate, as it is the last habited place before entering the National Park. Its structure is exclusively dedicated to render touristic services, with its many hotels, transport and excursion services, typical gastronomy, and sale of regional products and handicrafts from all over the country.

By 1938, the southern continental ice region was declared National Park. From that moment on, this place started being visited by people from all over the world.

This place was born as wagons stop, in the times when this region was only inhabited in order to rear sheep and sell their wool. As time went by, wool's international prices made this business less attractive, and the village started losing its interesting features.

A South View of the Perito Moreno Glacier



Source: Marcelo Barrios

El Calafate takes its name from a bush, which can still be found in the region, though not in the same quantity as in old times. It is a typical steppe plant, covered by yellow flowers in the spring.

The El Calafate Fruti



Source:

Its fruits belong to the berries family, very small and dark violet. Visitors can get to know it through marmalade and liquors made by the people in the village.

The legend-WEB PAGE

The nires, lengas and coihues woods take a noticeable color, announcing autumn, and turning trees multicolor, from deep red to gold and orange. This change is repeated every year since immemorial times. This landscape was inhabited by Tehuelches, originary owners of the land. When winter came, they emigrated, on foot, towards the north, where it wasn't so cold, and there were enough animals to hunt.

The legend kept by the Tehuelche tradition is related to these migrations. It is said that, long time ago, Koonex, the tribe's old quack doctor, could not walk anymore, her old and tired legs were exhausted, but nobody could stop. So Koonex understood the natural law of meeting fate. The women in the tribe made a hut with guanaco fur, piled enough wood and food to leave her behind, and said good-bye to the old quack doctor with family chants. While coming back to her hut, Koonex fixed her tired eyes in the distance, until the rest of the tribe were lost behind the plateau.

She was left behind to die. Every living creature ran away from her. She started feeling silence as a heavy puff of smoke around her. The multicolor sky started fading days and nights went by until spring came.

Many sprouts were born, swallows, golden plovers, chingolos and parrots arrived... Life was back again. Some birds stepped on Koonex's leather hut, singing happily. Suddenly, the old woman's voice was heard, coming from inside the hut. She told them off for having left her on her own during the long and cold winter. A very surprised chingolo answered: "We left because during the autumn we run out of food, and during the winter we have no place to hide from the cold".

"I understand", answered Koonex, "that's why, from now on, you'll have food during autumn, and a place to hide during winter, and I shall never be alone again". And then, she went silent. Suddenly, a clap of thunder turned the hut upside down, and in Koonex's place a beautiful prickly bush appeared, covered in perfumed yellow flowers. When summer came, those flowers turned into fruits, and before autumn they ripened taking a violet-blue colour, exquisite taste and nutritious value. From that day on, some birds stopped emigrating, and those which had already left and heard about the news, came back to taste that new fruit. The Tehuelches tasted it, and started eating it regularly.

There is an old Tehuelche Indians legend which ends in the following phrase: "THOSE, WHO TASTE CALAFATE, SHALL COME BACK".

History

After being inhabited by the Tehuelches tribe for many years, this area started being important for the Europeans, when they discovered how worth it was for sheep rearing, due to wool's worldwide high price, and the extension of the area this kind of livestock needed.

In the early 20th century, you could find sparse estancias in this area, with many kilometres' distance from one another, and they all had to reach Rio Gallegos' port in order to ship their products to Europe.

That's why the need for stops in the road arose, in order to eat and rest, as the 300km distance trip to Rio Gallegos we make today in only a few hours took many days in those times.

The estancias lying in nowadays Los Glaciares National Park and their surroundings made the first stop, taking advantage of the El Calafate bushes in order to stop the wind at the stream's shore. Many small groceries, hostels and garages were then built, and as time went by, more and more people stayed in the area, until the population reached 300 inhabitants.

In 1950, the price of wool fell considerably in every stock market in the world, so the estancias stopped rearing livestock and the activity in the area almost disappeared, until the National Park Administration came, and built its office in El Calafate.

II. MAIN CHARACTERISTICS AND ATTRACTIONS

The Glaciares National Park –WEB PAGE

From the high mountains to the Patagonian steppe, everything around it changes constantly: the heights in the Andes Chain of Mountains, always snowy, become hidden hills covered in typical southern woods as they lower; two of the biggest lakes in the continent have their source within the Park; and between them, on their left, we can find the Southern Continental Ice Platform, one of the biggest in the continent, apart from the Antarctic.

Then, the steppe following the Chain of Mountains creates a special habitat for a great variety of mammals and birds, and it is hard to imagine the flora of this isolated place.

Their main attractions are glaciers, and each one of them is special. There are also many prehistoric traces in this almost uninhabited area, from rupestrian paintings to animal, human and vegetable fossils.

The Glaciers National Park contains more than 350 colossus of ice. The Glaciers National Park is definitely a unique place in the world, and this is why, in 1981, UNESCO declared it 'Human Inheritance'.

The glacier

The glaciers' area was declared National Park in order to keep its beauty, unique in the whole world, for the years and generations to come.

This made this natural phenomenon known, not only in Argentina, but also worldwide, and from that moment on, the glaciers' magic started attracting many tourists. Some time ago, the 80 km long road to the glacier was made on horseback, by barely traced paths, and the services in the town were very low. Tourism wasn't an important activity, and the people in the town didn't know much about it... But willow to see the Touristy Village we became in turn.

A North View of The Perito Moreno Glacier



Source: Marcelo Barrios

The Glacier Main Characteristics

The argentine lake has a total surface of 1.600 km².

The Perito Moreno Glacier

The Perito Moreno Glacier is 78 kms. from El Calafate city.

The glacier measures:

- Length 30 km
- Surface: 195 km
- With : 4 km
- Height: between 30 and 60 meters.

The Glacier moves 1.7 meters in the center and 0.45 meters in the borders per day.

The static front from 1917 has approximate 4 km².

The breaking process

The Moreno Glacier descends from Andes Mountains like a real ice river and in some cases touch the opposite side of the Glacier valley. That 's mean that generate an obstruction in the Brazo Rico river to the Lago Argentino.

So, that implicate that the elevation of the Rico waters pressure the glacier wall and elevate the amount of ice generating a tunnel of ice that communicate both amounts of waters. The tunnel is erosionated and after that destroyed. The last break down occurred in March 15, 2006.

Glacier Upsala:

The biggest in The Glaciers National Park and the longest in South America.

The Upsala Glacier



Source: Marcelo Barrios

The measures:

- Length: 60 km.
- Surface: 595 km
- With: between 5 and 7 km.
- Height: between 60 and 89 meters

Breaks Down Chronology

1899: In February, the front of the Glacier was separated from Cerro Buenos Aires for 750 meters distance.

1900: In March the front of the Glacier was 1 km from de coast of Peninsula de Magallanes.

1903: the front was 750 meters from the Peninsula.

1908: the front was 750 meters from de Peninsula.

1914: the front was 100 meters from de Peninsula.

1917: reach the coast. The first ice dock was originated in that date.

1928: the glacier was 200 meters

1940: first registered glacier's break down. The ice dock was 300 meters in the whit in front of the coast.

1956/66/70/76/80: Breaks

1988: In February of this year was the last break down registered until that date.

2004: Alter 16 years there is another break down in March.

2006: the last break down occurred in March 15, 2006.

NOTE: From 1935, the breaks down occurred uninterrupted every 4 or 5 years until 1988.

The tourist seasons-WEB PAGE

The region's climate is cold and dry, with an average temperature of -2°C during the winter and 18°C during the summer. Rain is scarce, as it mainly rains during autumn, and it does not surpass 300mm a year.

High season

It starts in October, and ends in the Holy Week. During this season, daylight is longer, which allows you to enjoy excursions and time in the open air. If the tourists are planning to visit El Calafate during this season, it recommend it to book the accommodation beforehand, as there is not as much room yet. The temperature average differs from day to night, so it is necessary to use cool clothes during the day, and warm during the night and for the trips to the glaciers.

Low Season

It starts after the Holy Week, until September. Days in this season are shorter and colder, but we still can make the excursions to the glaciers. Days are generally sunnier and less windy, and during May, June and July it's possible to enjoy ice skating, if Redonda Bay freezes. Hiring of ice skates is available at the Club Andino. Although the number of tourists in this season is lower, it has increased considerably during the last years. On the other hand, many hotels, restaurants and other shops close for holidays or reforms.

Table 1
Main Statistics Information

Population: approximately 15.000 inhabitants

Climate: cold, dry

Distance from Buenos Aires city: 3000 km.

Things to see: Perito Moreno and Upsala Glaciers

Best season for your visit: October to April

Village's Birthday: December, 7th

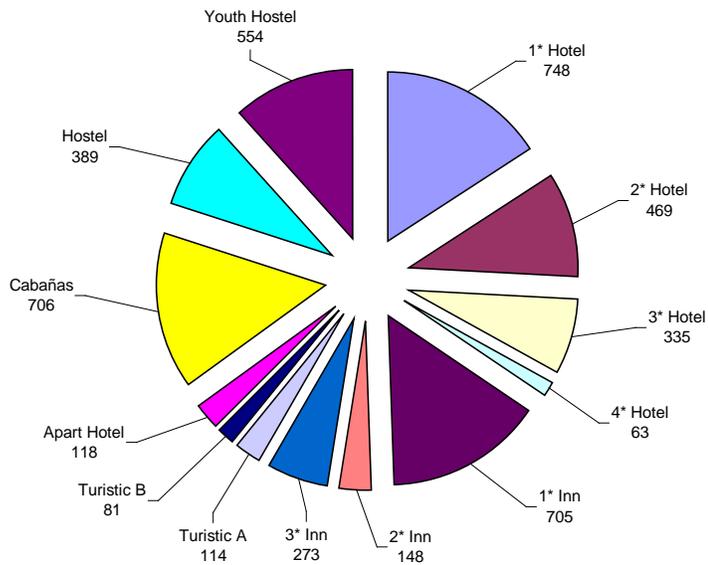
Feast you mustn't miss: February, 15th. Argentino Lake's baptism anniversary

The Hotel Supply 2004-2005

The 2004-2005 season registered a new record in the growth of bed supply, with an increase of 31.30%, adding more 1121 beds.

In El Calafate there is 4.703 beds, with 1.217, 3* and 4 * stars beds, and a percentage of 28.33% of the total amount of beds.

Bed Supply By Category

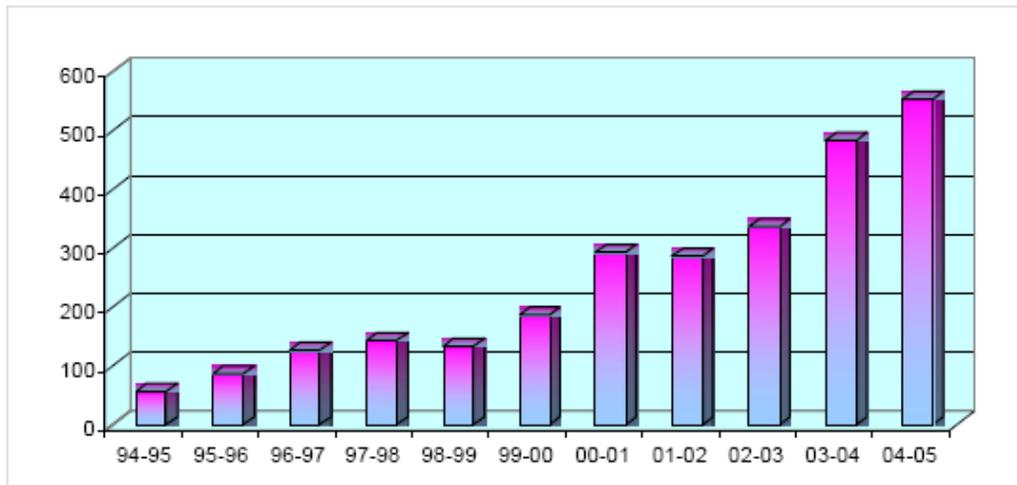


SOURCE: Secretaría de Turismo de la Ciudad de Calafate

But the highest increase of beds was registered in the Hostel supply with an increase of 62% respect to the year before.

The minor growth correspond o the 1* and 2* starts hotels with 9.64%

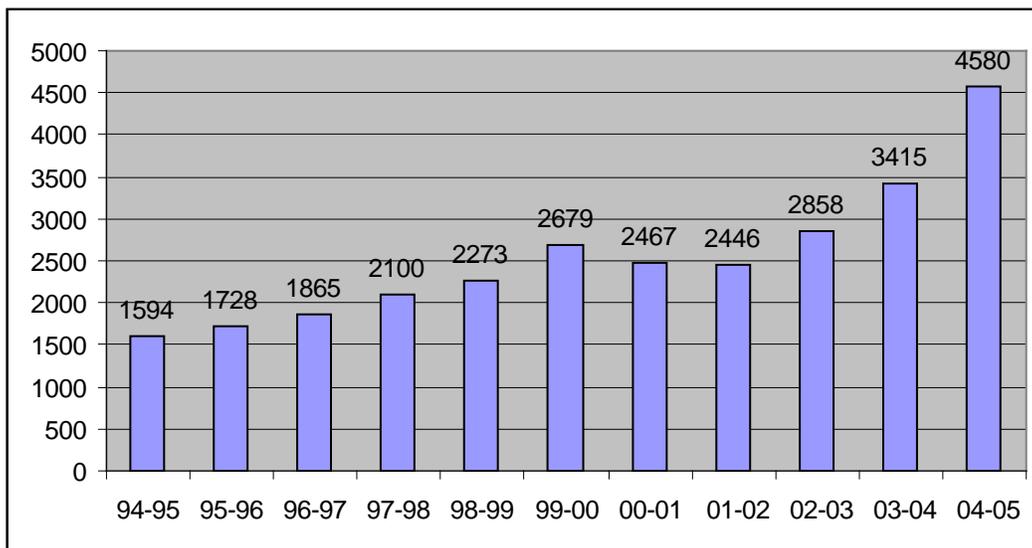
Bed Supply – Last 11 seasons



SOURCE: Secretaría de Turismo de la Ciudad de Calafate

In the gastronomy activity, the growth was 43.80% with a total amount of 1387 places more than the year before and than the increase of 23% respect to the previous year.

Restaurant Supply

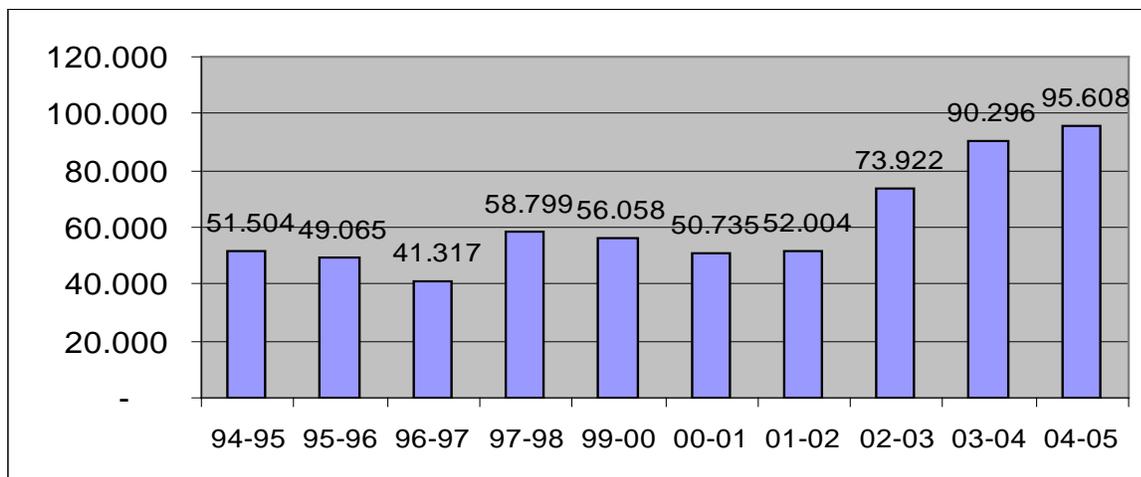


SOURCE: Secretaría de Turismo de la Ciudad de Calafate

The demand 2004-2005

During this peak season 95.608 passengers were registered in El Calafate

Total Number of Visitors



SOURCE: Secretaría de Turismo de la Ciudad de Calafate

In 2005, 95.608 tourist visit El Calafate, that implicate an increase of 22.1% of visits compared with the previous year.

Month	Agentine	Europe	America	Asia	Africa	Oceania	No Data	Total	%
Oct	1.366	3.545	642	150	12	86	389	6.190	6%
Nov	2.843	9.720	1.570	270	12	194	778	15.387	16%
Dic	4.293	7.832	2.966	968	75	285	1.048	17.467	18%
Jan	6.017	5.972	2.900	541	17	291	292	16.030	17%
Feb	5.249	6.915	2.683	884	21	236	684	16.672	17%
Mar	5.231	6.098	2.609	683	27	223	941	15.812	17%
Apr	3.559	2.141	1.533	310	40	135	332	8.050	8%
Total	28.558	42.223	14.903	3.806	204	1.450	4.464	95.608	
%	30%	44%	16%	4%	0%	2%	5%		

SOURCE: Secretaría de Turismo de la Ciudad de Calafate

January continue to be the month with the mayor affluence of tourist. That means more than the 17.57% of the annual tourist visits followed by February with 15.96%. Other important months are March with 15.17%, December with 14.70, November with 13.61%, april with 11.88 and October with 11.08%.

Another important point is the decrease of the amount of national (argentines) tourist respect to the previous years. And at the same time an increase of the foreign tourist.

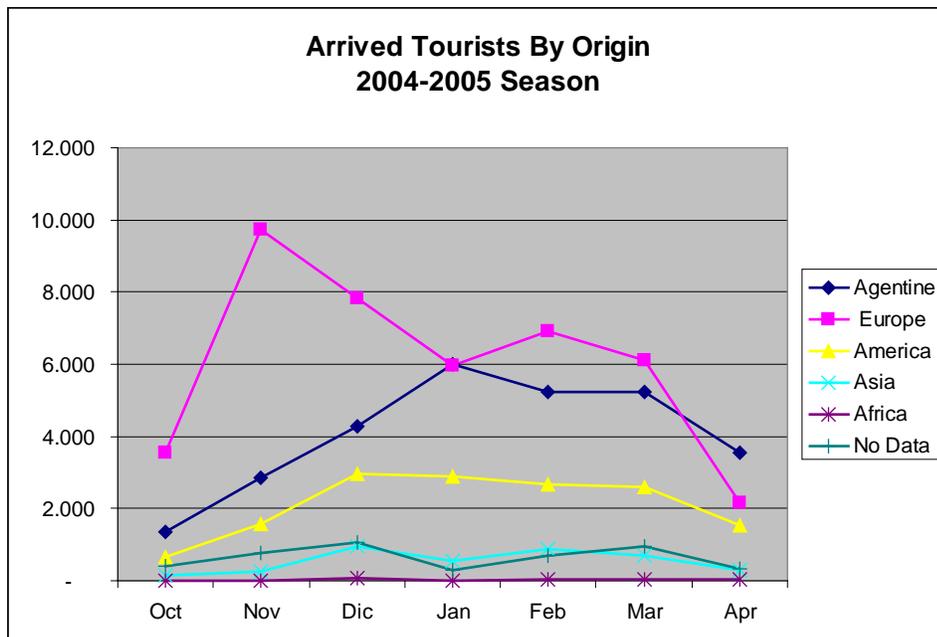
Europe represents 36% of the total foreign passengers and in increase of 8% respect to the previous year. The domestic tourist represent in 2005 44% and in the previous year 53%. There is also another important point: the increase of 1% of the tourist from the rest of America.

Every European country increase the numbers of tourist but the mayor increase were from Spain with a growth of 118% and represented 41% of the European tourism. Following Spain appears Italy with 15% and France with 14%.

The tourism from Asia shows the leadership of Israel with more than the 65% of the continent. The change was the decrease of the number of Japanese in 4%.

The North America visitor increased 4% and the Mexicans visitor increased 3% but descend the number of tourist from Chile and Uruguay. The Canadian visitors maintain the percentage in 4%. From the American continent arrived 12481 passengers during 2005.

The statistics show that 39% of the tourist prefers to stay in El Calafate 3 nights. The one night tourist represents 27% and the 2 night's tourist represent 25% and show an increase of 2%.



SOURCE: Secretaría de Turismo de la Ciudad de Calafate

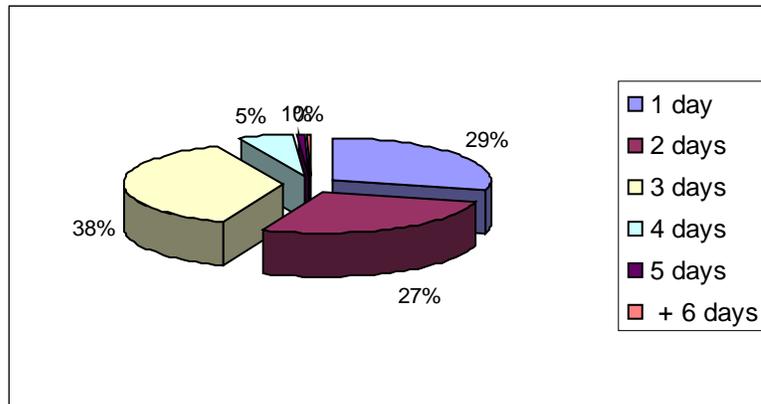
Footpaths of Perito Moreno Glacier



Source: Marcelo Barrios

Of the total arrived tourist, 31.878 persons occupied 3* and 4* stars hotels, followed by 14.380 passengers using 1* and 2* stars hotels. That numbers represent a 35% and 16% of occupancy respective.

Average days of Hotel Occupancy



SOURCE: Secretaría de Turismo de la Ciudad de Calafate

The El Calafate Airport

A new international airport-23kms to the city-was inaugurated in November 17, 2000. The airport has direct flights to Buenos Aires and other important Argentine cities.

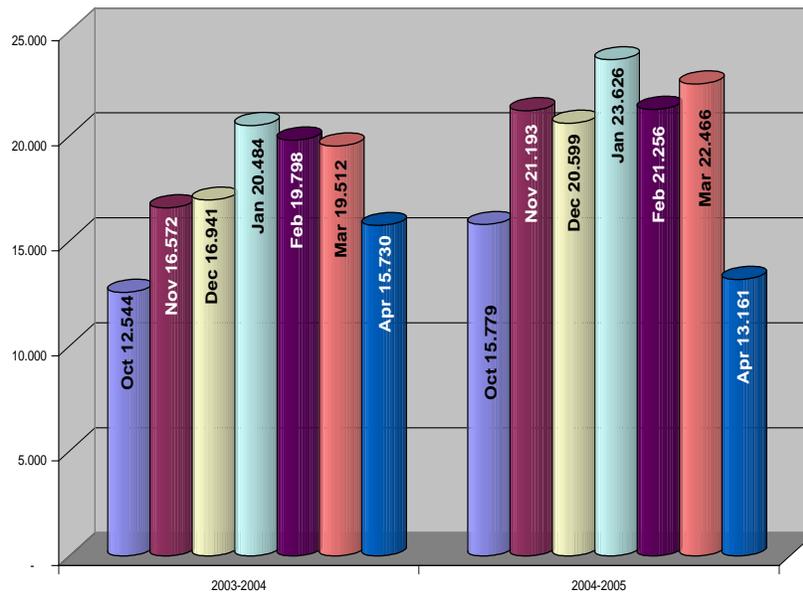
The El Calafate Airport



Source;

The development of the airport allows changing the segment of tourist that arrives to El Calafate. There is not more just backpacker's going to Glacier Perito Moreno, or going to Chalten or the majesties Fitz Roy mountain.

Landing Flights- Comparative Seasons 2004-2005



SOURCE: Secretaría de Turismo de la Ciudad de Calafate

III. EL CALAFATE MARKETING STRATEGY

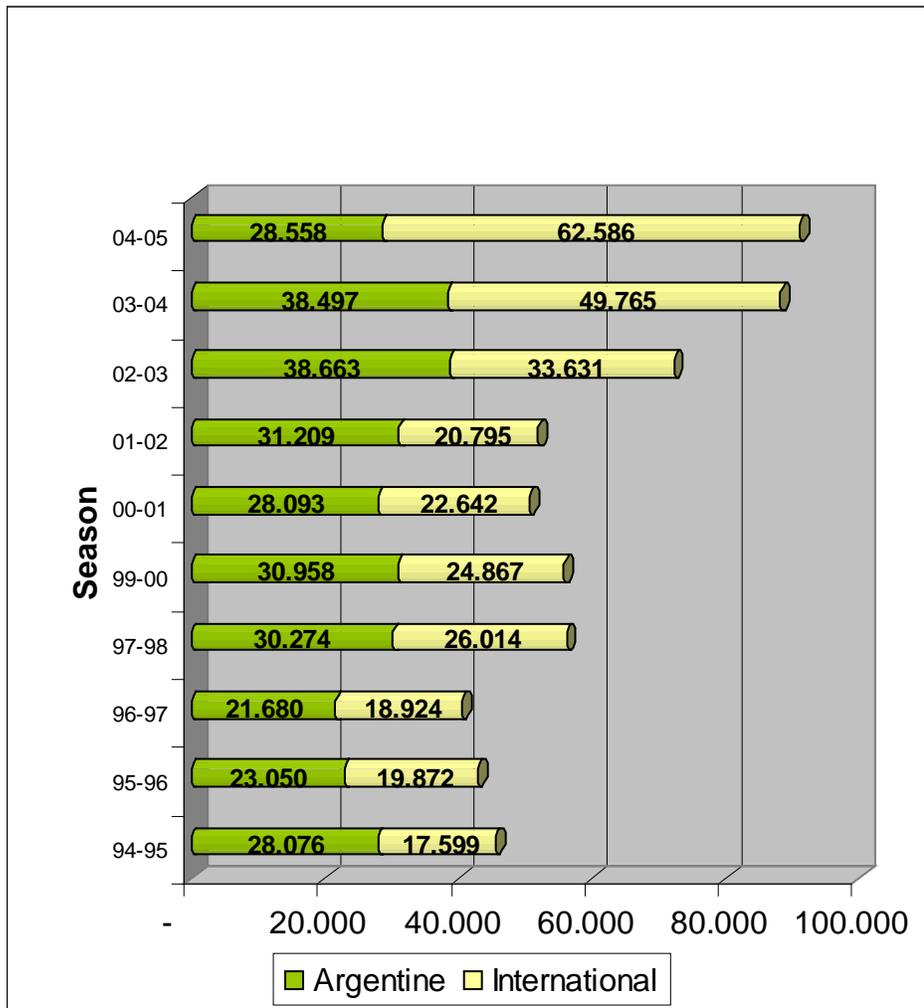
In 2003 the El Calafate Government decides to re-launch and develops the tourism destination after the launch of a new international airport three years before.

The first action was a call for proposal to present an integrated communication strategy.

In 2002 the advertising agency Yggy won the contest and began to work in the development of a new communication strategy.

The follow chart shows the main indicators and numbers when Yggy began to work in the development of El Calafate in 2002.

Total Tourists by Season



Source: Secretaría de Turismo de El Calafate.

The above chart shows the evolution of the number of tourist since the development of a new marketing strategy. The number of tourist increased 75% in the first three years of the new strategy.

The positioning strategy

During the last ten years the destination grows only in a spontaneous development based. That's mean without any type of planning or strategy. The natural resources helped to invite to the different visitors. The building of a new airport also collaborated with the growth of tourism.

The advertising agency-YGGY- decided to work in different ways. The first point was to separate El Calafate name to the Argentinean destination Cafayate that has a similar name in Salta in the north region of Argentina.

Iggy- the advertisement agency- proposed to ad the “El” to the name Calafate. After this point developed an isologues with the objective to positioning El Calafate brand as a world tourism destination that can be visited during the whole year.

The follow graphic show the first isologues and the different communication strategies.



Source: IGGY

The above isologue show the strategy positioning of El Calafate: “Always ready to receive you”

They also added the word Patagonia with the objective to use a world name that everybody knows in the rest of the world.

The below isologo shows fourth different icon that represents a different season of the year.



Source: IGGY

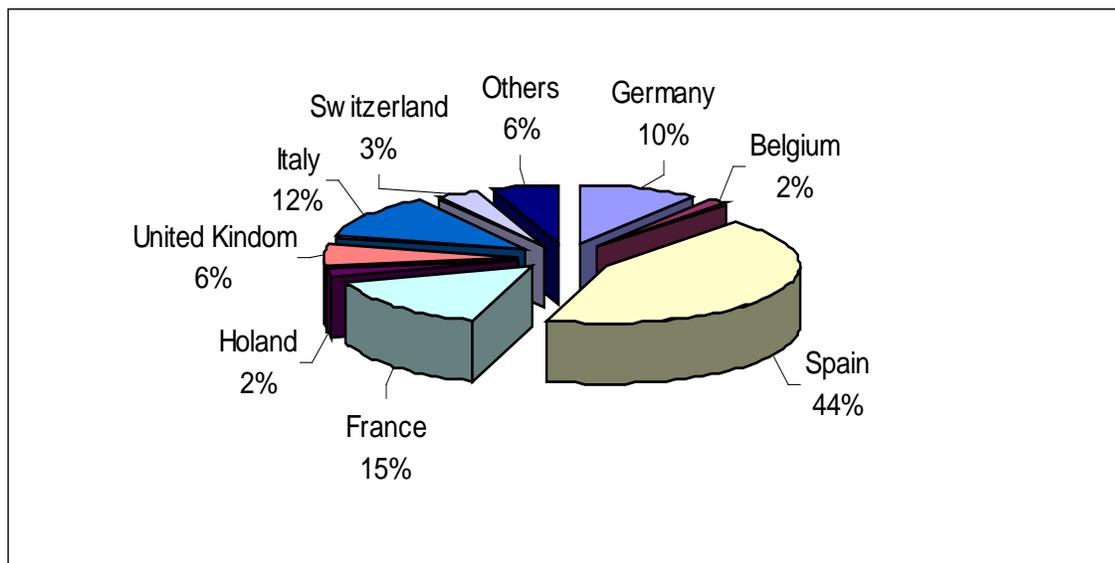
After the development of the isologues strategy, the next step was the development of the marketing strategy.

The main objective was to determine the main segments to target the communications resources.

Argentina history helps to establish the main targets. Most of the Argentinean people is descending of European countries like Spain, Italy and France. This data was

also confirmed with the total amount of Argentinean tourist visitors. Most of them came from these three countries.

European Tourist Share



Source: Secretaría de Turismo de El Calafate.

The next step was to organize different active strategies to involve all the stakeholders. That's mean: community, government, travel operators and agencies, hotel investors, press and media operators.

The marketing strategy was concentrated in press, alliances and web design and development.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

In May 2003 the destination began with the launch of the 2003 autumn/winter season with an important workshop in the Argentina Tourism Secretary in Buenos Aires, Argentina's main city.

The below brochure shows the invitation to the event.

El Calafate - Patagonia 2003
Siempre listo para recibirte

un lugar tan único que el invierno hizo un trato con el verano
 para que el clima siempre te permita ir.

Lanzamiento temporada otoño / invierno

Fecha: 14 y 18 de mayo	Lugar: microcine de la Secretaría de Turismo de la Nación;
Workshop de El Calafate.	suipacha 1111 piso 13, ciudad de Buenos Aires.

para inscribirse o recibir mayor información contactarse con la srta. Mariana Navarro
 al (011) 4325-3102 / 3098 o por email en: infosantacruz@interlal.com.ar. cupos limitados.

www.elcalafate.gov.ar

Source: YGGY

The message was centered in the “El Calafate is always ready to receive you” and where the winter made an arrangement with the summer season.

Another strategy was to implement a calendar to attend to the different tourism fairs and events like the main Argentina tourism fair: FIT (international tourism fair) and in one of the most important world tourism fairs: FITUR in Spain that concentrate the main European tourism operators.

The follow picture shows the stand and posters in the main tourism fairs.



Source: IGGY

The strategy centered in the whole tourism sales operators

¿qué tiene que tener un destino de invierno para que puedas venderlo?

- un atractivo único ✓
- seguridad ✓
- actividades y deportes de invierno ✓
- buena frecuencia de vuelos ✓
- hoteles para todos los gustos ✓
- excelente gastronomía ✓
- buena atención ✓
- gente cálida ✓

El Calafate
único en el mundo y está en tu país

LANZAMIENTO TEMPORADA otoño.invierno

seminario de El Calafate, 28 de marzo, y las ciudades de la Secretaría de Turismo de la Nación, Santiago, Lima, Bogotá, Ciudad de Buenos Aires.

para inscribirse o solicitar más información, contactarse con la oficina de información turística de la provincia de Santa Cruz al 091 4242122 / 0911 2091211 o al correo: info@elcalafate.gov.ar

PROMOCIÓN ESPECIAL PARA AGENTES DE VIAJES + acompañantes*

4 días 3 noches, incluye:

- traslados en avión
- alojamiento en 3 hoteles
- desayuno para el grupo en el hotel
- excursión al Glaciar Perito Moreno y salida en helicóptero
- cena y desayuno al hotel.

info@elcalafate.gov.ar

*Entas empresas turísticas afiliadas a la Asociación Perito y Visit Turística

VISITE NUESTRO STAND EN LA EXPO TODO ESQUI

Source: IGGY

The advertisement agency-YGGY-also developed and important strategy with the whole sale operators. Again, the strategy was centered in show the El Calafate as a whole year tourism destination.

The launch of this strategy was also developed with the help of Aerolíneas the main argentine airline- and National Parks.

The press strategy

Another important pillar in the marketing strategy was the press strategy. This type of promotion was developed both in national and international press media.

The Perito Moreno Glacier break also collaborate with the international press strategy.



Source: IGGY

The future of the El Calafate

This chapter showed the origin and development of a small international tourism destination in the south of Argentina, South America.

The main strategy was centered in the community and the communication strategy. The exhibits 1,2 and 3 show the trend in number of visitor, restaurant supply and beds.

In 2006 the destination started to have some infrastructure problems like water and electricity supply.

The future main challenge is to continue with the development of the tourism destination, looking for a balance between the development of the infrastructure and the increase in the number of visitors. Another challenge is to redirect the target to another region like the United States and the Asia countries.

One of the most important challenges is to increase the days of visitors in the El Calafate. The real challenge is to find a new set of near attractions, or new products through the Perito Moreno Glacier.

Bibliography

Análisis Estadístico 2004-2005. Departamento de Estadística. Secretaría de Turismo de El Calafate.

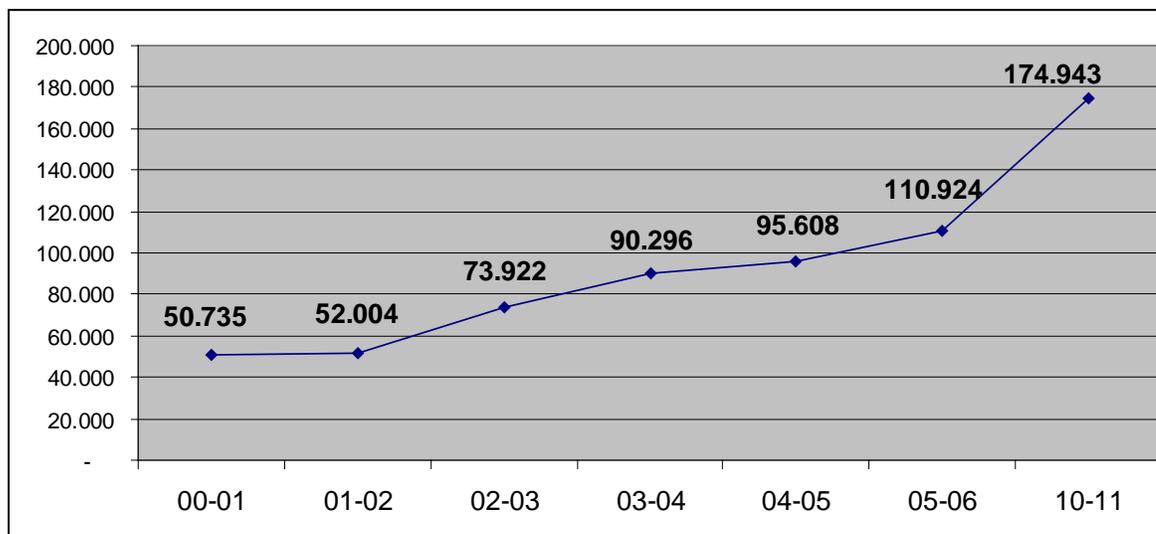
El Calafate oficial web site. www.elcalafate.gov.ar

Iggy web site. www.iggy.com.ar

Interview with Hernán De La Colina, - Director of IGGY Travel Consulting.

Appendice 1

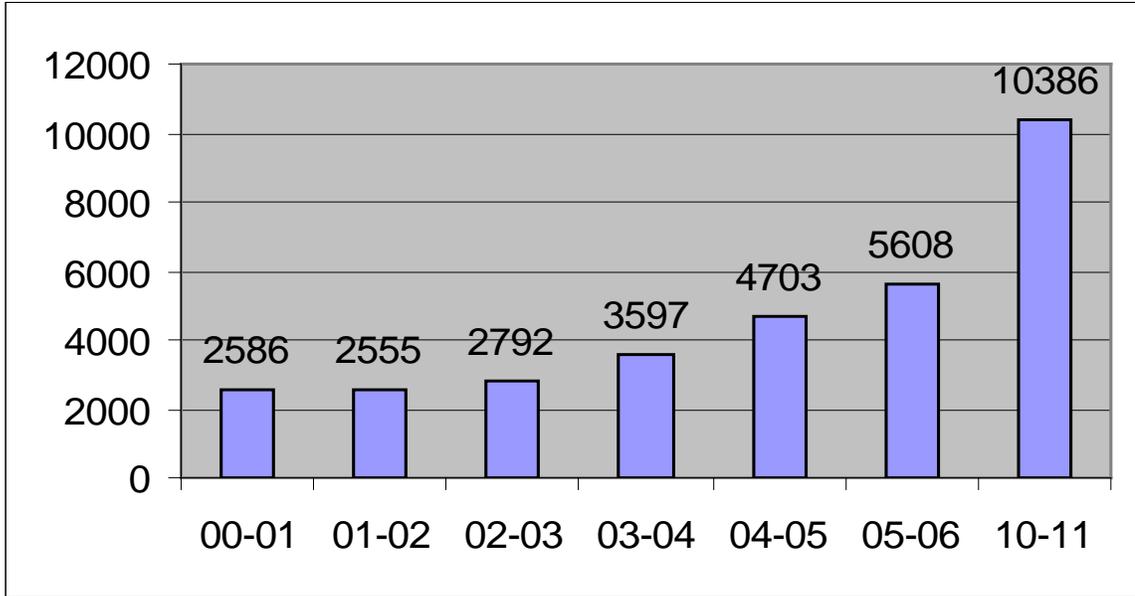
Tourists Trend



Source: Secretaría de Turismo de El Calafate.

Appendice 2

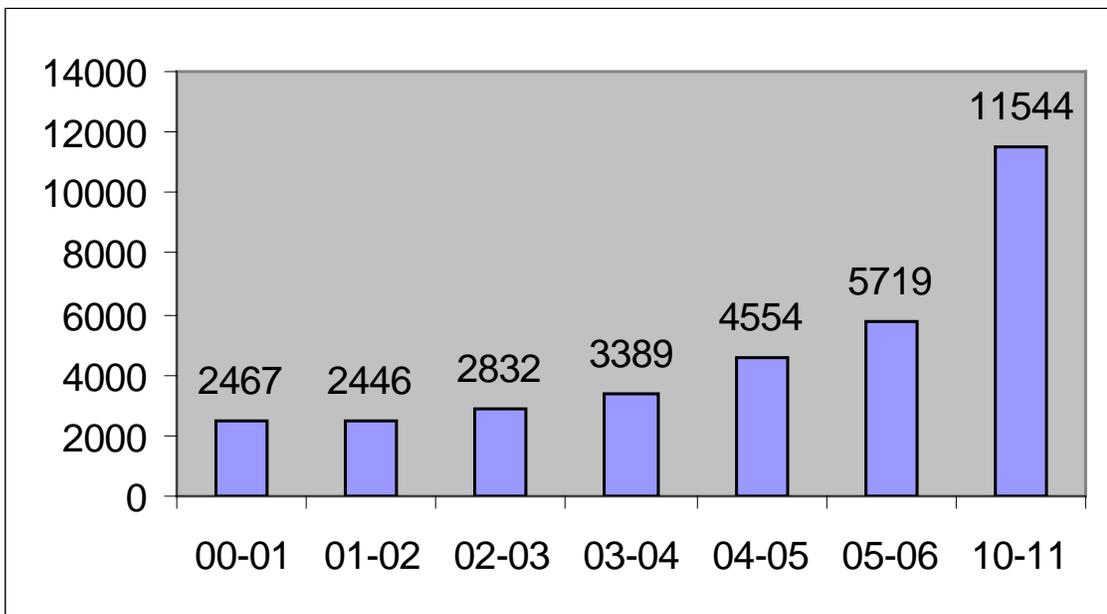
Hotel Beds Trend



Source: Secretaría de Turismo de El Calafate.

Appendice 3

Restaurant Supply Trend



Source: Secretaría de Turismo de El Calafate.