



In This Section >> [Going Global](#) | [The Euro: Good News for the Industry](#) | [Get Your Piece of A Bigger Pie](#) | [Modern Marketing Strategies](#) | [Think Globally](#) |

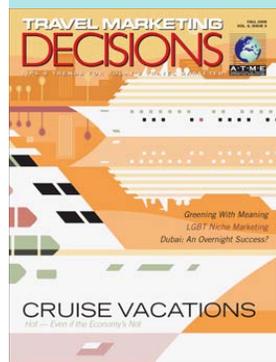
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INTERNATIONAL MARKETING: Don't Just Get Your Piece of the Pie; Make The Pie Bigger!

By [Michel Bouquier](#)

Going international is a major decision, and one that depends primarily on a company's CEO. He or she should be open-minded about international culture. But all too often, heads of companies are not sufficiently creative or dynamic when confronting the challenge of going after new international markets.

To cite just one example: The French are especially inclined to develop international activities in French speaking countries, virtually regardless of the potential of these new markets for their specific product or service.

To successfully go international, of course, you must first be domestically strong. When you have a strong home base, international activities can reinforce the domestic positioning of your company.

Going international does not entail becoming a multinational firm. International activities can be carried on efficiently through branch offices, joint ventures, franchising, or simply through general sales agent contracts. And today's new technologies such as e-mail, the Internet, GDS or Intranet can significantly reduce the cost of the operation.

Everyone is out to maximize profit, of course, and to succeed in this a careful procedure must be respected. The rules of the game must be strictly followed (see Travel Marketing Decisions, Volume 1, Issue 4).

Because customers care about the end product above all, decision-makers must first measure the added value of the product or service they want to promote on the international scene. They must then evaluate the targeted market-call it the size of the pie-first with their product or service and then

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without it. The difference represents the added value, and serves to gauge the real potential of the move.

Take the U.S. cruise industry as an example. The leaders of U.S. cruise companies have done an excellent job of making their pie bigger-their domestic pie, in most cases. They successfully went after first time cruise customers with a new marketing approach, and the pie quickly grew bigger. Today, with its enormous berth capacity, the cruise industry is starting to hit a critical mass, and probably has no other choice but to look abroad to find new first-time prospects.

What is required? New embarkation locations, new itineraries, new packages and services matching the needs of international customers. Toward this end, alliances must be forged with foreign lines and leisure industry partners. Customer databases must be exchanged and shared. In short, the cruise lines must follow the lead of the airlines in going global, because soon the will simply have no other choice.

Hotel guide books, cruise line brochures, joint marketing activities and advertising would support this new worldwide strategy. Indeed, the best repeat customers of deluxe hotel chains represent a rich potential market as cruise line passengers. Recently, the owners of an international hotel chain discovered the best way to strengthen their bonds with loyal customers: go on a cruise together. Over eight full days, hoteliers and clients shared a unique experience. Hotelier suppliers such as Champagne companies were thrilled to be selected as partners during the cruise. And the experience was so successful that it will be repeated every year on a much larger scale. The hotel chain is planning to showcase its world offer to loyal customers and valuable potential prospects on one or several cruise ships.

One can easily imagine the marketing link between international hotel chains, airlines, cruise lines and various suppliers inside or outside the travel industry. The marketing concept and approaches of the cruise industry in Europe, which is about 30 years behind the USA, could easily be revamped and revitalized through such an approach.

Instead of focusing on older, repeat customers among Europeans with theme cruises that have been promoted for decades, European cruise lines would become key players in the leisure and travel industry. To sum up: Going international does not necessarily require a major investment; but it does require creative thinking to make a bigger pie. ■

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