

A Clash of Cultures

Abstract

The clash of cultures between skiers and snowboarders has brought about many new problems to the United States ski-industry. Resorts and local skiing mountains have to start looking at ways to maintain stability within the industry while not altering the sense of freedom that both skiers and snowboarders obtain from their activities.

Introduction

The United States ski-industry has begun to see an increase in popularity in general, but there have been some negatives. James C. Makens writes about the quarrel between skiers and snowboarders in many aspects, but focuses mainly on the challenge that ski resorts and the ski-industry have to face. The article written by Makens entitled, "A Ski-industry challenge," explains the main points

of conflict between these similar activities and the lifestyles that surround them.

The basis of this article is to bring attention to a changing market that must be attended to soon or else the whole ski-industry and related industries will be affected. The solution to this problem is subjective, but Makens believes that "fear-reducing strategies" will help ease the culture clash. By reducing the fear that currently occurs between skiers and snowboarders, then each side will be able to understand each other's culture better and be able to live and play harmoniously.

Results

Makens makes some very important points in the article stating how each activity has its own culture and lifestyle to it, thereby creating a collision of ideals and attitudes. There is a definite clash between reasoning behind each activity. Makens claims that most skiers are concerned about "alpine pleasure," which is the enjoyment of the natural environment and the tranquility of the surroundings. On the other hand, also discussed in the article is that snowboarders focus more on the "adrenaline rush" of their activity by desiring more extreme situations, equipment, and overall speed.

There is the "fear factor" that Makens claims to be one of the major reasons why skiers and snowboarders do not meld well. Each activity has its own style to it, but because of the change in attitude and the increase of slope velocity through technological advances, collisions no matter what form have become feared. Even though collisions have always occurred, they are often nowadays seen as being intentionally caused by one-side acting out of release of constraints.

Makens also states that corporations in the ski-industry do not believe that fear is the major concern, but that "hassle, cost, and competition" are the majority of challenges to skier retention (Makens, 2001). Separation of skiers and snowboarders was a possible solution for resorts to construct and implement. There is statistical data that promotes "segmentation and physical separation of downhill snowsport participants" (Makens, 2001). This idea lacks the reasoning behind the entire ski-industry's basis of existence. People choose to ski and snowboard because of the "freedom" they have and the overall control they possess. There is an assumed result of decreased participants if you take these benefits away from people who use them as a basis to continue the sport.

Synthesis

The issue presented in this article is surrounding the concept of a "changing market" (Gee, 1996). A changing market is something that every industry will encounter over time. An industry can be altered by something as extreme as a plane crash (September 11, 2001: NYC World Trade Towers) or scientifically based, such as a technological advances. Many factors can contribute to the need for revolutionary ideas on how to embrace the change and use it positively for the sake of the industry.

The ski-industry has been introduced to snowboarding, an ever-growing trend in the United States and all over the world, which makes for an automatic problem in usage of the mountains and ski resorts. Skiers no longer have the "right of way" and must share the space with snowboarders. There are many differences between these two cultures, such as style, attitude, and equipment needed. Winter resorts and the ski-industry in general have been put in a position where

they must either embrace this new population by enhancing their mountains and programs or keep the two cultures separated, usually focusing on increasing profits with only one particular sport.

Analysis

The snowboarding vs. skiing issue has just recently gained increased attention. Snowboarding has been embraced in many areas where normally skiing would have dominated alone. The reasoning behind this action is the obvious increase in profitability of the sport with an increasing number of people, mostly the youth population; there will be more chances for moneymaking. Snowboarders and skiers continue to hold differences in attitude and style, but have started to learn how to inhabit together for the main reason of lack of resources. Mountains have started to become overcrowded, thereby requiring skiers and snowboarders to share the space in closer areas than usual. With more skiers trying snowboarding as a recreational activity, there has been more understanding and connection between the two cultures.

Opinion

The article is thorough and detailed when discussing the main points of conflicts between skiers and snowboarders. The article was attempting to give background information for a topic that continues to be an existing issue in hopes of gaining support in trying to find the solution to the problem. Makens does not stay neutral in the discussion, which makes the article lack value. With a more neutral position on each factor presented, the article would gain credibility and would have both skiers and snowboarder's insights. The information in the article was easy to understand and analyze, allowing for non-skiers and non-snowboarders to be able to have an opinion on the subject.

Summary

Overall, Makens challenges the reader to look closer into the conflicting cultures of skiers and snowboarders, but fails to include the similarities that do exist within them. This issue is important because it shows how a changing market can sporadically occur. It also demonstrates the lack of society input in the situation, such as cooperation and understanding between snowboarders and skiers, which could potentially improve the entire population affected. There needs to be collaboration between winter resorts, the ski-industry, and the people to achieve a fair and useful solution that will end the conflict.

References

Gee, C.Y. (1996). Resort development and management (2nd ed.). Michigan: Educational Institute of the American Hotel & Motel Association.

Makens, J.C. (2001). A ski-industry challenge. *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 42(3), 74-79. Retrieved September 9, 2002, from ProQuest database.