

back-country fishing enthusiasts. As companies attempted to lure customers from competitors, they are developing product offerings to meet the needs of smaller and smaller market segments.

Mass customization is the extreme of microsegmentation. A company mass customizes when it produces a good or service to fulfill the unique needs of an individual buyer. An example of how these trends are being manifested in the tourism industry can be found in hotel developments in locations where real estate has become extremely high priced. In these settings, companies are dual or co-branding two or more hotel brands under one roof. It may seem unique to find a Courtyard and a Residence Inn by Marriott under one roof or a Hampton Inn and Homewood Suites by Hilton under one roof, but how about an Aloft, a Marriott, and a Hyatt Place under one roof. In addition to real estate cost savings, there are also operating efficiencies to be gained by sharing laundry, housekeeping, maintenance, and even amenities such as pools and fitness facilities. As companies strive to meet individual customer segments and real estate prices continue to increase, expect to see more co-branding. Tourism businesses in the future will definitely use both microsegmentation and mass customization to attract guests and meet their needs.

Mass customization will allow travelers to customize their service packages and travel itineraries. Hotels specializing in the business and professional segments are building rooms that can be **configured** to suit individual guests' needs for multimedia presentations, conference calling, telecommunications links, and so on. Tour companies will use mass customization to allow more flexibility in touring. As the tourism market becomes more competitive, the empathy component of service quality you learned about in Chapter 3 will become more and more important. Both microsegmentation and mass customization can add the personal touch of empathy to a tourism service. "As travel costs increase and as costs, restrictions, social pressures associated with greenhouse gas emissions and climate change continue to evolve, it seems likely that middle and down-market mass tourism will decrease or become more localized" (p. 66).³¹

One segment of the tourism industry, cruise lines, could face two unique and completely unrelated customer service challenges in the future. The first area of customer concern deals with a perception by some cruisers, especially first time cruisers, that they are being "nickled and dimed" while they are onboard. With additional charges for mandatory gratuities, both soft and alcoholic beverages, photographs, upcharges for specialty restaurants, specialty coffees, and convenience food choices, the marketing promise of an "all inclusive price" may start to be questioned. This "sticker shock" realization on the day of disembarkation is especially true for many first time cruisers. The second, and unrelated concern, also occurs on the day of disembarkation. As larger and larger ships are being put into service current procedures and port terminal facilities are not adequate to efficiently move cruisers off the ship and through the terminal. Technological improvements

FYI MASS CUSTOMIZATION = PERSONALIZATION

The Ritz-Carlton luxury hotel chain is taking the concept of mass customization seriously. Guest preferences are entered into the hotel database so that service during return visits can be more personalized. For example, if a guest requests a

hypoallergenic pillow, for her next stay, housekeeping will make up her bed with that type of pillow without waiting for a request. And if a guest eats only the complimentary peanut butter cookies (for going the chocolate chip and sugar cookies), he will receive

more peanut butter cookies during subsequent stays. A guest checking into the Orlando Ritz-Carlton receives an empty glass to be filled with his or her favorite citrus juice courtesy of a Citrus Concierge. Talk about making a guest feel at home!

Sources: Based on Brown, Tom. (1996). Efficiently serving customers uniquely. *American Management Association*, 85, 60–61; Braley, Sarah J. F. (2002). The new concierge. *Meetings and Conventions*, 37(11), 14.