



# Market Research Central America

## Europe 9 / 2000



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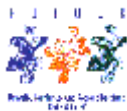


**CENTRAL AMERICA**  
**MARKET RESEARCH EUROPE 9/2000**  
on  
**European Tour Operators and Travel Agencies**



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# 1 THE INVESTIGATED MARKET

## 1.1 Population

The investigated countries were Austria, Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy, Spain and Switzerland, representing a total market of 312 mio. inhabitants.

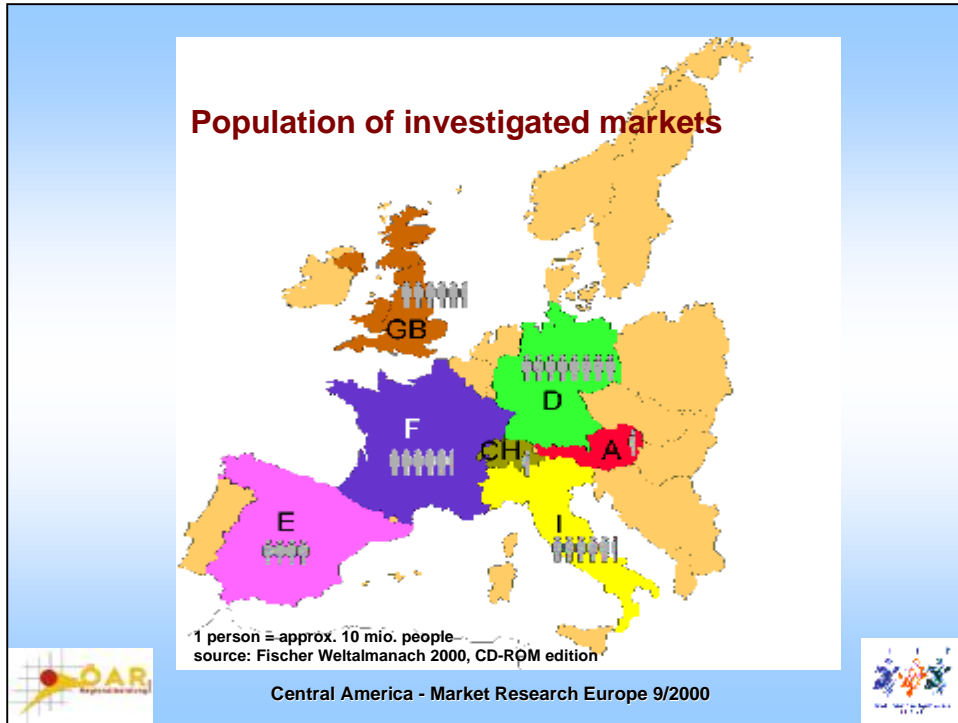


Exhibit 1: Population of investigated markets

COUNTRY	POPULATION	COUNTRY	POPULATION
Austria	8 mio.	France	58 mio.
Germany	82 mio.	Great Britain	59 mio.
Switzerland	7 mio.	Italy	58 mio.
Spain	40 mio.		

Figures taken from „World Almanach 2000“ (CD-Rom edition)

## 1.2 Tour operators and travel agencies

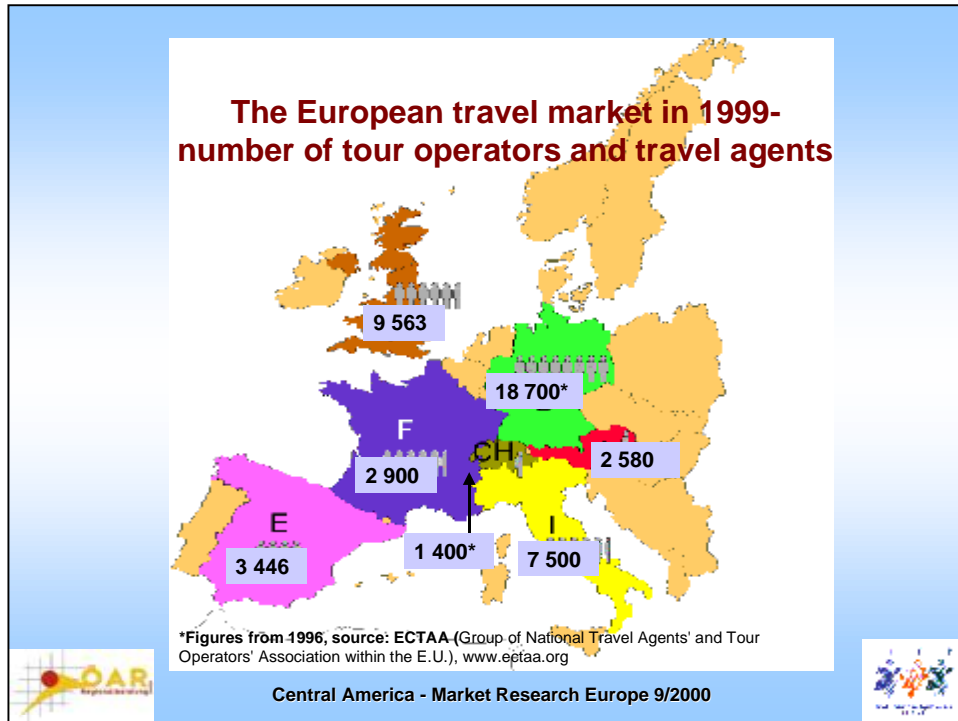


Exhibit 2: European Travel Market in 1999 – agents and tour operators

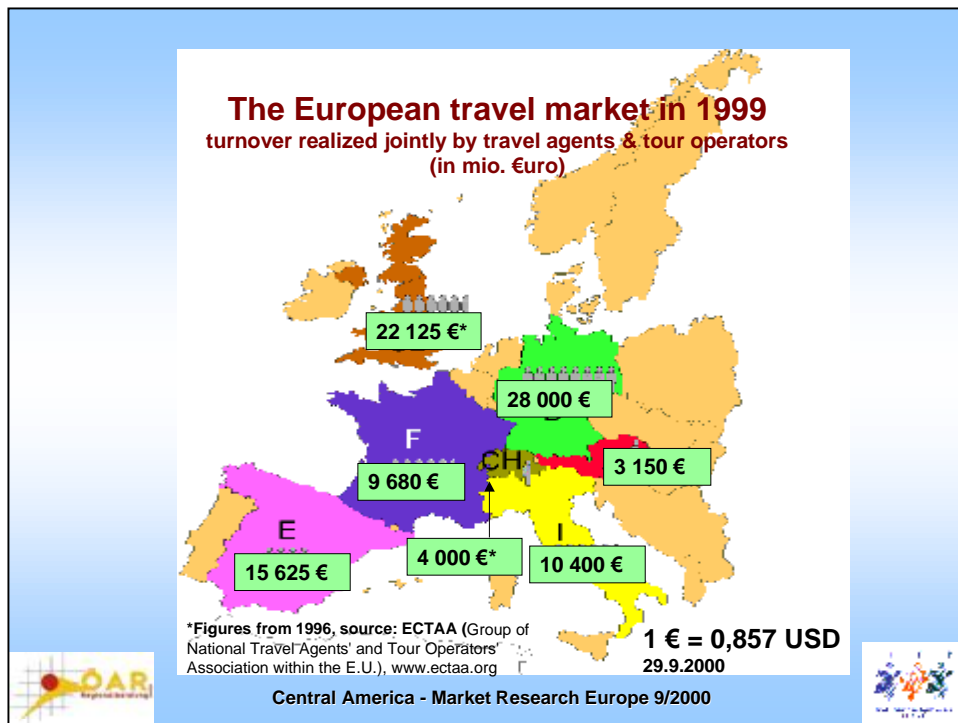


Exhibit 3: The European Travel Market in 1999 - turnover

## 2 RESEARCH DESIGN

This research is based on 190 interviews with tour operators and travel agents in European markets, which are relevant for Central America. They were carried out from a central call center in September 2000.

Germany	30
Great Britain	30
France	30
Italy	30
Spain	30
Austria	20
Switzerland	20

In order to achieve the most useful results the focus was set on target groups with special interest in at least Latin American and Caribbean destinations. This criterion applies to both travel agents and tour operators.

Within each country the division between tour operators and travel agents was made by a quota system, implying 50 % tour operators and 50 % travel agents.

### Selection of addresses:

- partly well-known specialized travel businesses
- partly random sample from travel agents' (pre-selection) and tour operators' directories

The phone-based interviews were held in the respective national language of the country. Each interview had an average duration of 20 to 30 minutes. The failure rate (refused or cut short interviews) was relatively low for tour operators: Approximately every second call was successful. On the other hand travel agents normally work in small offices in close contact with clients. Therefore approximately only every fifth call resulted in an interview.

The underlying questionnaire has been set up on the basis of preliminary interviews in German and Austrian cities and information from the client.

For data harmonizing and unification reasons the results have been processed in English language.

Within the scope of the computer processed evaluation (software: SPSS) frequencies, means and cross tabs were used. The level of significance was fixed at 0,05 in order to avoid accidental results. A special

evaluation for three subgroups was carried out: specialists, countries and categories (tour operators and travel agencies).

According to the basis of 190 realized interviews, the results of this market study is able to show tendencies relating to the European travel markets.

Differentiating the general results into specific subgroups like

- Central America specialists / non-specialists
- tour operators / travel agencies
- European countries

leads to less reliable results. Nevertheless the evaluation for different subgroups might show interesting trends.

## 2.1 Special Evaluations

It seemed to be highly interesting whether or not differences between the two categories, between specialists and non-specialists or between the countries exist.

### SPECIALISTS

In order to differentiate between specialists and non-specialists the following criterions were introduced:

- ✓ Specialists are those travel businesses whose share of Latin America-products (including tours to South America) comes up to more than 50% of business and who offer tours to Central America.
- ✓ In addition people who have already been to Central America were regarded as specialists, too.

Following these criteria 80 specialists (42% of all interviewed travel businesses) were named.

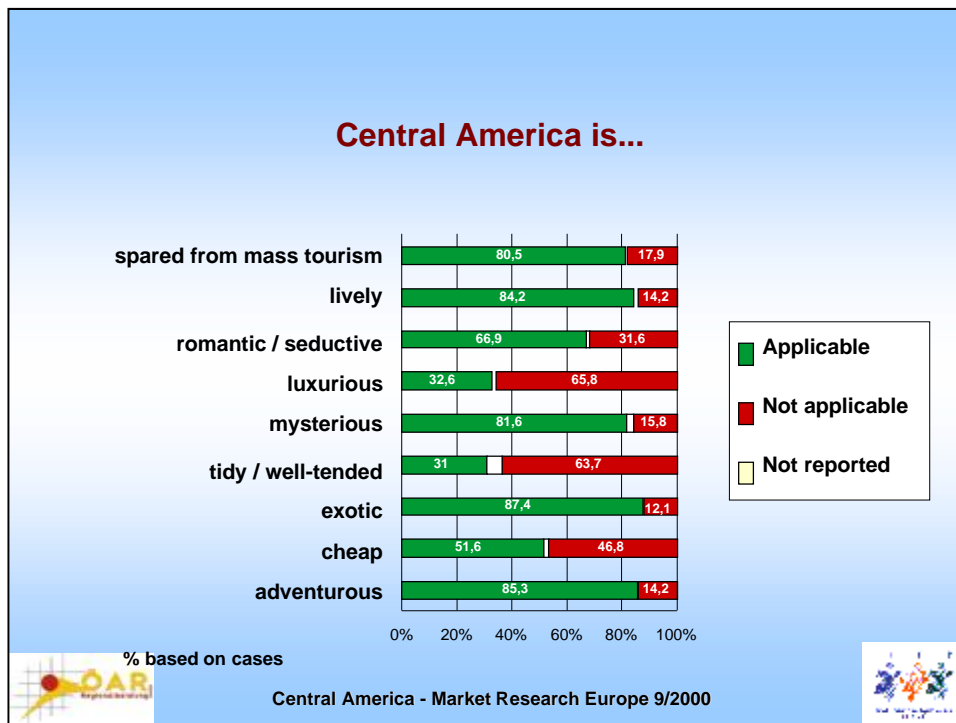


### 3 RESULTS

#### 3.1 Image and ratings/benchmark

##### CHARACTERISTICS OF CENTRAL AMERICA

**Question:** „Thinking of Central American countries, what is your opinion about the following statements?“



**Exhibit 4: The image of Central America among European travel businesses**

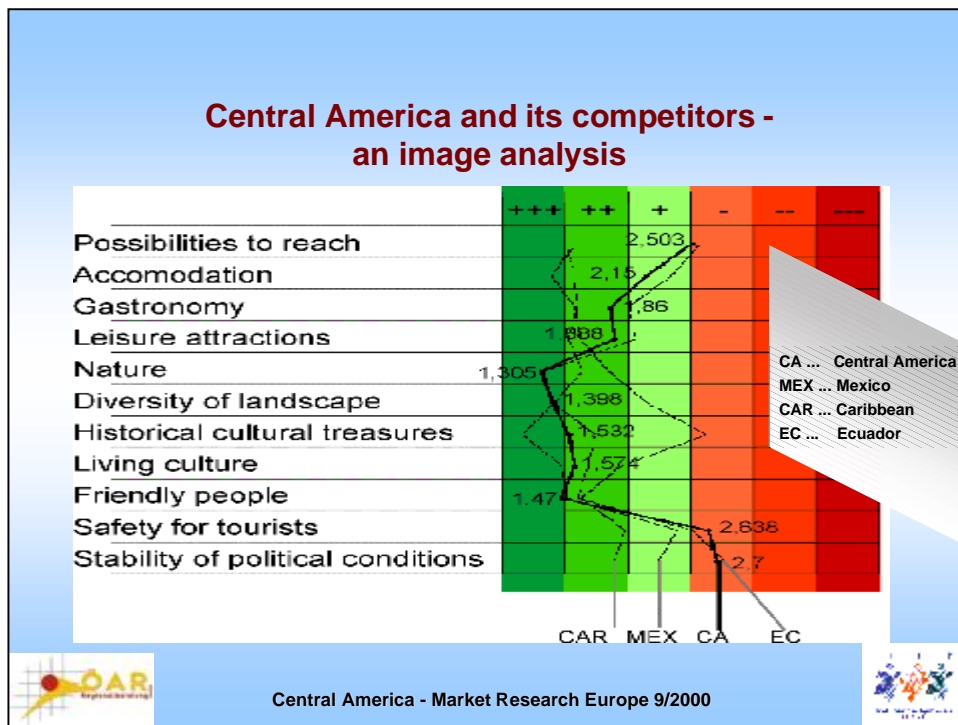
In order to describe the image that Central America creates in Europe, tour operators and travel agents were asked to judge to what extent 9 given adjectives are applicable for Central America. Summarizing all positively judged statements Central America leads in being exotic, lively and adventurous. According to the interviewed sample, Central America is not luxurious, tidy/well-tended and cheap.

The following table gives an even more detailed overview of the opinions related to Central America (in % of all statements).

	<b>very applicable</b>	<b>applicable</b>	<b>less applicable</b>	<b>absolutely not applicable</b>
<b>adventurous</b>	45,8%	39,5%	9,5%	4,7%
<b>cheap</b>	15,3%	36,3%	30,5%	16,3%
<b>exotic</b>	56,3%	31,1%	9,5%	2,6%
<b>tidy / well-tended</b>	8,9%	22,1%	49,5%	14,2%
<b>mysterious</b>	37,4%	44,2%	11,6%	4,2%
<b>luxurious</b>	10,0%	22,6%	42,1%	23,7%
<b>romantic / seductive</b>	29,5%	37,4%	19,5%	12,1%
<b>lively</b>	55,3%	28,9%	10,0%	4,2%
<b>spared from mass tourism</b>	46,8%	33,7%	11,1%	6,8%

**EVALUATION OF CENTRAL AMERICA AND ITS COMPETITORS AS A TOURISM DESTINATION**

**Question: „Now I would like to read out some aspects, normally important for all tourism destinations. How would you judge the quality and conditions in Central America, the Caribbean, Mexico and Ecuador?“**



**Exhibit 5: The image of Central America and its competitors**

One of the central aims of this survey was to determine the position of Central America compared to its direct competitors. Mexico, Ecuador and the Caribbean were selected as competing countries. They are all about the same distance from Europe and dispose of a similar offer.

The findings described in Exhibit 5 show the touristic highlights of each country. Central America tops its competitors in terms of “nature” and “diversity of landscape” and its tourism benefits from the image of a friendly population. In absolute figures Central America’s advantage regarding an intact nature (70% of all valued cases judge this factor as “very good”) is only topped by Mexico’s culture (judged as “very good” by 83%).

The tables below show the results in detail (% based on cases):

**Abbreviations:**

- CA ... Central America
- CAR ... the Carribean
- MEX ... Mexico
- EC ... Ecuador

Leisure attractions				
	very good	good	bad	very bad
CA	35,3	34,7	22,6	1,1
CAR	44,7	41,6	6,8	1,1
MEX	53,7	35,8	7,4	
EC	27,4	31,6	24,7	3,7

Accomodation				
	very good	good	bad	very bad
CA	14,7	52,1	26,8	1,1
CAR	60	32,1	1,1	0,5
MEX	47,4	44,7	5,3	
EC	11,2	39	34,8	3,2

Nature				
	very good	good	bad	very bad
CA	70	26,8	1,6	
CAR	34,4	41,8	17,5	1,1
MEX	45,3	43,2	9,5	
EC	67,9	21,6	3,7	0,5

Gastronomy				
	very good	good	bad	very bad
CA	29,5	48,9	14,2	1,1
CAR	42,6	43,2	4,2	
MEX	46,8	40,5	7,9	
EC	24,7	37,9	21,1	1,6

Diversity of landscape				
	very good	good	bad	very bad
CA	62,6	31,6	3,7	
CAR	24,7	33,2	32,1	3,2
MEX	60,5	34,7	2,6	
EC	60,5	26,8	4,2	0,5

Historical cultural treasures				
	very good	good	bad	very bad
CA	52,1	40	5,3	0,5
CAR	14,7	21,6	41,1	15,8
MEX	83,2	13,7	1,1	
EC	38,4	37,9	13,7	0,5

Stability of political conditions				
	very good	good	bad	very bad
CA	6,8	23,2	56,3	8,4
CAR	26,3	51,1	12,1	2,1
MEX	15,3	46	31,2	3,2
EC	1,6	31,4	42	13,8

Friendly people				
	very good	good	bad	very bad
CA	57,9	30,5	6,3	0,5
CAR	45,8	35,8	11,1	
MEX	52,6	37,4	5,8	
EC	47,6	33,3	10,1	0,5

Safety for tourists				
	very good	good	bad	very bad
CA	6,3	32,6	48,4	10
CAR	18,5	60,8	10,6	2,6
MEX	6,8	50,5	33,7	5,3
EC	6,8	42,1	30,5	11,1

Living culture				
	very good	good	bad	very bad
CA	49,5	38,4	8,4	
CAR	31,1	38,9	22,1	1,6
MEX	55,8	35,8	5,3	
EC	42,9	37,6	11,6	0,5

Possibilities to reach				
	very good	good	bad	very bad
CA	11,6	37,9	36,8	12,1
CAR	51,6	34,7	7,4	2,1
MEX	56,3	35,8	4,2	2,1
EC	6,3	37,6	42,9	9

**Specialists**

Specialists value Central America generally as more tidy/well-tended and lively. Nevertheless, in terms of „protection from mass tourism“ non-specialists judge Central America significantly better. The results showed that there obviously exist prejudices against Central America.

**Countries**

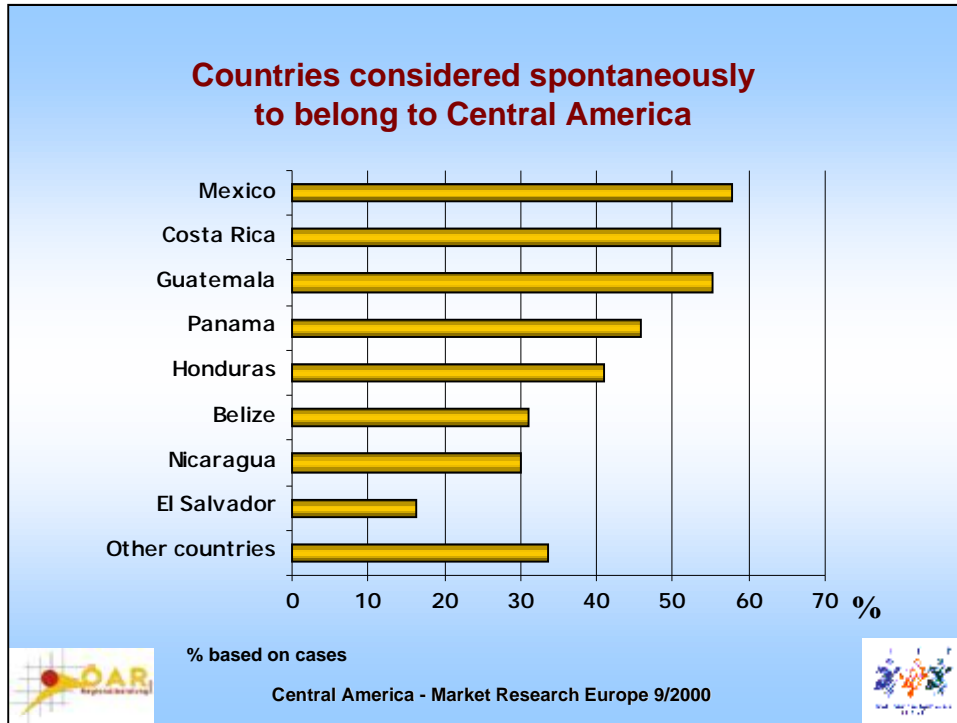
French travel businesses generally ranked the adjectives “adventurous” and “cheap” significantly lower than their European colleagues. Germans showed doubts in terms of acceptable prices and cleanliness whereas English and Spanish judged it better.

**Categories**

/

**LEVEL OF AWARENESS ABOUT CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRIES**

**Question: "In your opinion which countries belong to Central America?"**  
**(open question)**



**Exhibit 6: percentage of respondents mentioning the respective countries (no matter on which position).**

Thinking of Central America the first country that European travel businesses mention is Mexico (57,9% of responses), followed by Costa Rica (56,3%) and Guatemala (55,3%). The countries least mentioned are El Salvador (16,3%) and Nicaragua (30%).

Other countries – actually not belonging to the Central American region – were quoted as well, starting from Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, the Caribbean to the United States and Canada.

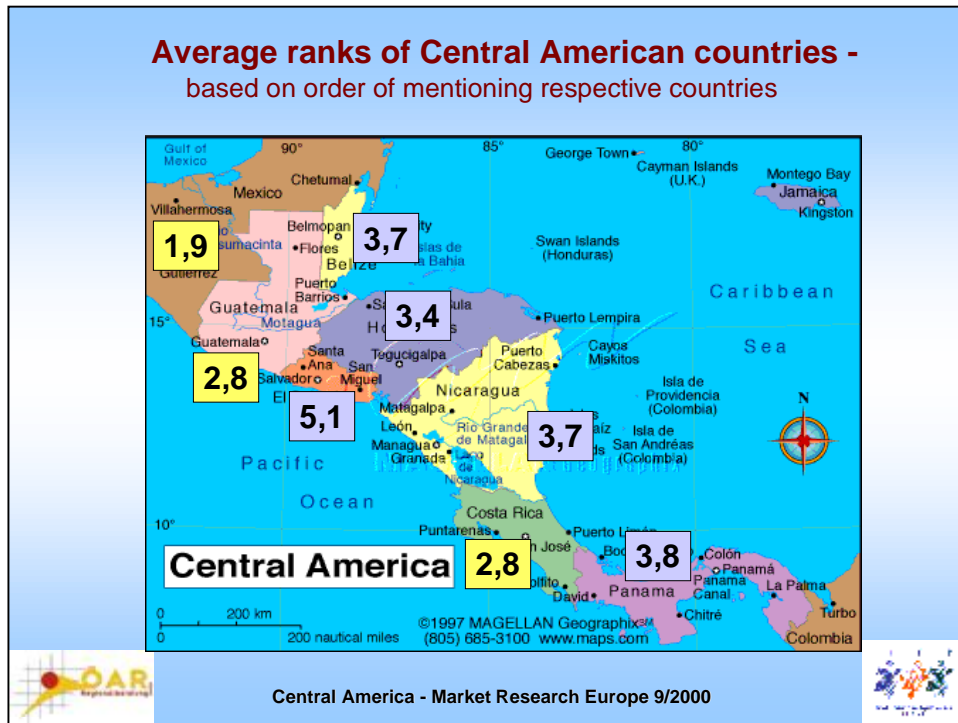


Exhibit 7: Average ranks of Central American countries

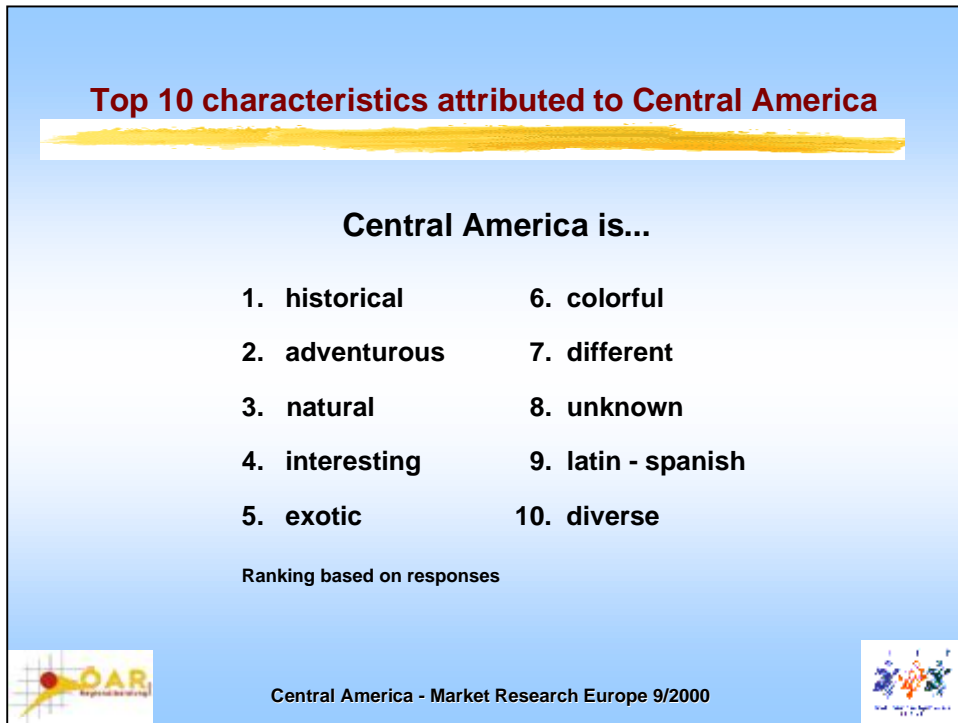
The exhibit above (exhibit 7) shows a ranking based on the **average positions** in which the respective country was mentioned.

Comparing exhibits 6 and 7 it is obvious that the countries Mexico, Costa Rica and Guatemala are the three most mentioned countries *and* the countries with the best average position.

The following conclusion can be drawn that European travel businesses are most aware of the **countries Mexico, Costa Rica and Guatemala**.

**ADJECTIVES ATTRIBUTED TO CENTRAL AMERICA**

**Question: "In one brief outline, which characteristic would you attribute to Central America?"**  
*(open question)*



**Exhibit 8: Top 10 characteristics attributed to Central America**

The TOP 10 ranking of statements varies from 18 to 4 statements per attribute. Most stated was „historical/cultural“ with 18 statements, on 2<sup>nd</sup> position „adventurous“ with 10 statements and on 3<sup>rd</sup> position „natural“ with 9 statements.

Most attributes account for positive or neutral associations - generally speaking the associations correspond to the strengths of Central America.

**Other attributes associated with Central America:**

fascinating	ecological	worth seeing	American
friendly	mixed	magic	attractive
exciting	folkloristic	bright	authentic
unspoilt	big	eventful	adorable
brilliant	strange	green	ideal
incredible	all-inclusive	marvelous	paradisiacal
visionary	pure	romantic	breaking the routine
tropical	growing	warm	wild
wonderful			

**Negative attributes associated with Central America:**

1. poor	4. drug dealing	6. "forgotten"	8. not appealing
2. dangerous	5. politically unstable	7. confusing	9. alienating
3. underdeveloped			



## ASSOCIATIONS WITH CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRIES

**Question: "What do you associate with the three countries you mentioned first? What's your first thought, thinking of...?"**



**Exhibit 9: Main association with respective CA country**

**Guatemala** is primarily associated with **culture** (39% of people ranking country on 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> position), implying for example Maya culture as well as pyramids and excavations.

**Belize** stands particularly for **nature** (49%), including for example beaches, rainforests and reefs.

**El Salvador** is known for its **nature** as well (29%), especially for beaches and volcanoes.

In **Honduras** **nature** also ranks first (29%) - nature in Honduras stands e.g. for jungle, islands, coffee and wilderness.

**Nicaragua** stands primarily for **negative aspects** (34%) such as underdevelopment and brutality.

In **Costa Rica** **nature** was mentioned most (66%), including for example beaches and sugar cane.

**Panama** is known by the majority (78%) for the famous Channel (category: **nature**).

**Mexico** is associated with **culture** (62%), implying e.g. Maya culture and pyramids.

**Further information:**

	Nature	Ethnic aspects	Culture	Touristic aspects	Negative associations	Positive associations	Not reported
<b>Guatemala</b>	16%	19%	39%	3%	13%	4%	6%
<b>Belize</b>	49%	14%	3%	17%	11%	3%	3%
<b>Honduras</b>	29%	2%	18%	11%	18%	2%	20%
<b>El Salvador</b>	29%	14%	0	14%	14%	0	29%
<b>Nicaragua</b>	21%	5%	3%	5%	34%	11%	21%
<b>Costa Rica</b>	66%	5%	4%	6%	1%	14%	4%
<b>Panama</b>	78%	0	3%	8%	4%	5%	4%
<b>Mexico</b>	10%	8%	62%	7%	4%	5%	4%

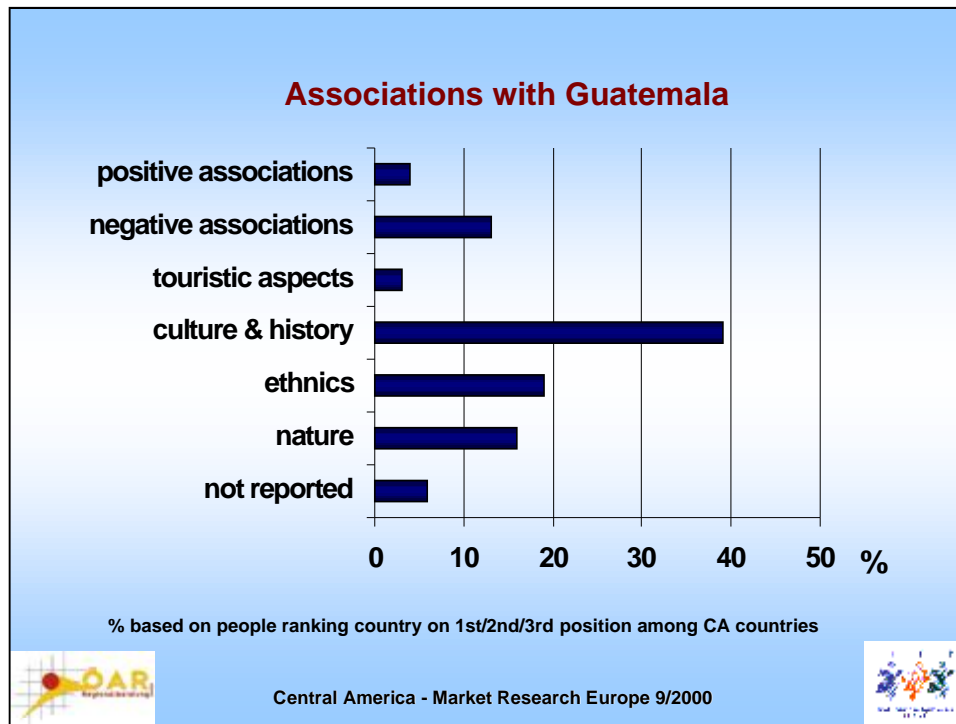
**ASSOCIATIONS WITH THE PARTICULAR COUNTRIES**

Exhibit 10: Associations with Guatemala

European travel agencies and tour operators associate with Guatemala primarily **culture**, implying Maya culture, Tical excavations, Aztec culture, temples, archeology, pyramids, pre-Columbian civilization, excavations of Antigua

**Ethnic aspects** rank second and include colorfulness, exotic, folklore, Indigenas, markets and music.

**Nature** was mentioned as third. The term nature includes mountains, volcanoes, rainforests, coffee and lakes.

Other aspects include:

**Negative associations:** uninteresting, poverty, dangerous, unknown, poor touristic offer, negative reports, tourist rip-off, expulsion of Indigenas

**Positive associations:** incredible place, widespread offer, wonderful experiences

**Touristic aspects:** individual tourism, language tours and trekking, good preparation for tourists.

**GUATEMALA is the colorful and exotic country of mountains, volcanoes, coffee and lakes, famous for Maya culture.**

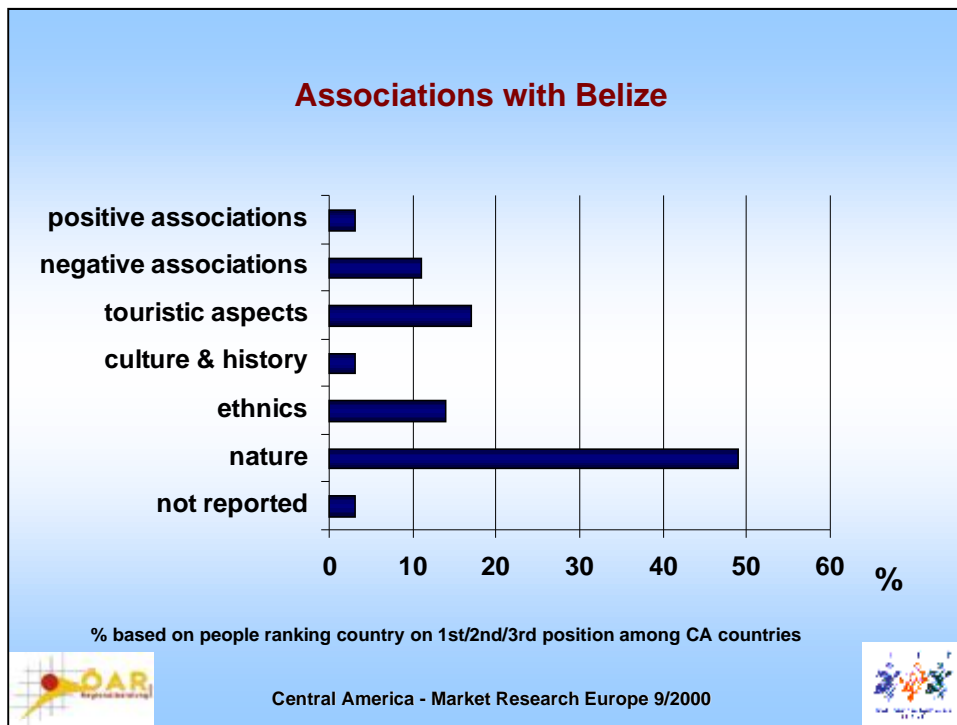


Exhibit 11: Associations with Belize

Belize stands primarily for **nature**, i.e. beaches, rainforests, marsh, sea, unspoiled landscapes, ecology and reefs.

**Touristic aspects** like diving, honeymoon and adventure rank on 2<sup>nd</sup> position.

Costa Rica distinguishes itself from the other Central American countries through its **ethnic particularities**: bilingual (English), mixed population, folklore, “great people” and “Hippie scene”.

Other aspects include:

**Negative associations**: bad accessibility, expensive holidays

**BELIZE is the bilingual country with beautiful beaches and reefs - suitable for diving, honeymoon, and adventure holidays, but not easily accessible and expensive.**

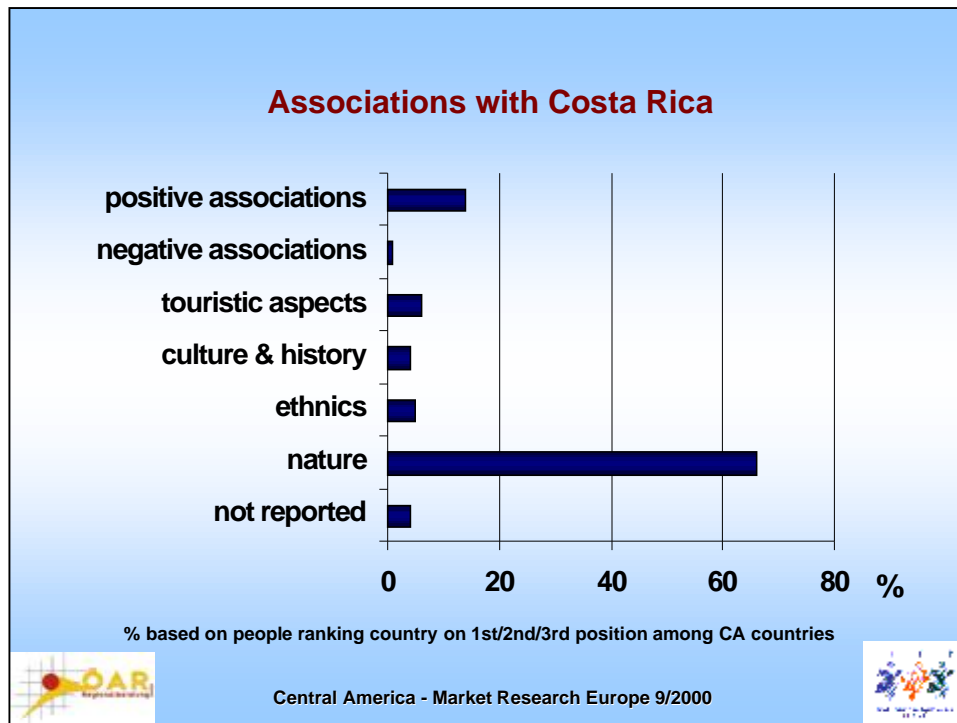


Exhibit 12: Associations with Costa Rica

Every other respondent associates Costa Rica with **nature**: nature in Costa Rica stands for beaches, biodiversity, national parks, bird watching, coffee, jungle, green untouched nature, landscapes, lava hiking, sea, Tarpon-fishing, lushness, volcanoes and sugar cane.

**Positive associations** follow on second place, such as adventurous, beautiful, peaceful, secure, small but well organized, interesting, politically stable, enjoyment.

Costa Rica is also known for **touristic aspects** like Eco-tourism, individual tourism, language tours and the German tour operator "LTU".

Other aspects include:

**Ethnic:** other civilization, Picos, ponchos, music, siesta, friendly people

**Culture:** Maya culture

**Negative associations:** profiteering

**COSTA RICA is the small and beautiful country of beaches, bids and sugar cane - politically stable and secure and therefore attractive for tourists.**

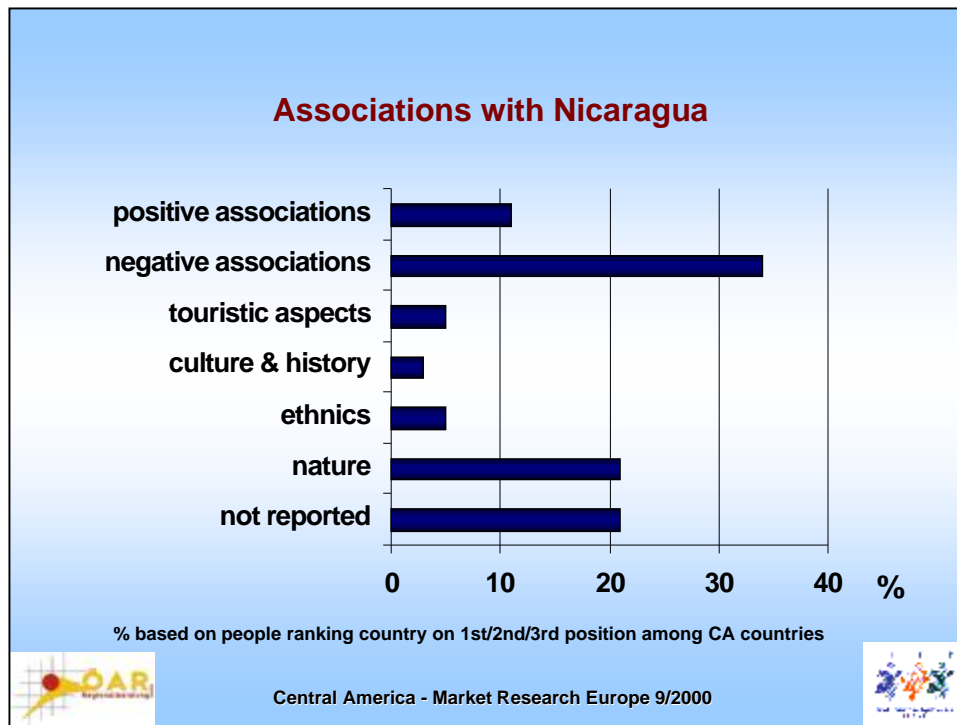


Exhibit 13: Associations with Nicaragua

Nicaragua obviously does not have a very good image among European tour operators and travel agencies. **Negative associations** are poverty, third world, earthquakes, brutality, disastrous accommodation facilities, revolution, unstable political situation and turbulence, dirt and underdevelopment.

**Nature** ranks second with associations like wilderness, tropical and undiscovered.

A lot of people ranked Nicaragua on 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> position among Central American countries, but did **not have any idea** of the country itself.

Other associations are:

**Positive associations:** diverse, high-contrast, surprisingly beautiful

**NICARAGUA is the underdeveloped country associated with poverty, political instability and revolution - but just about to emerge this negative situation and make use of its widespread offer.**

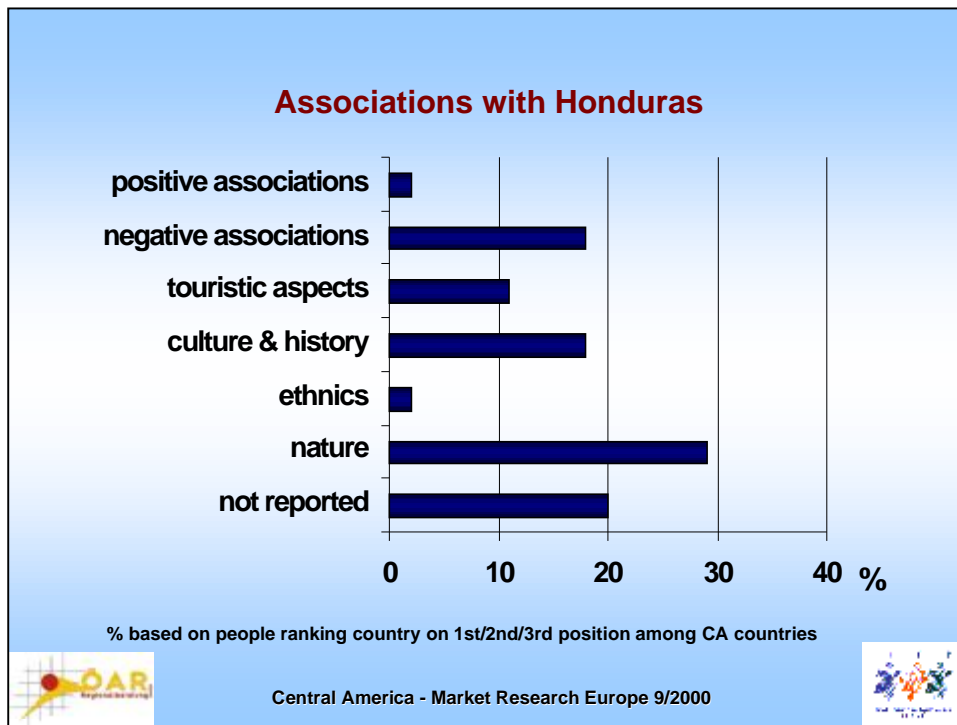


Exhibit 14: Associations with Honduras

Most European travel businesses link Honduras with **nature**. Nature includes beaches, jungle, islands, coffee, landscape, bananas, sea, animals, coasts and wilderness.

Quite a lot of respondents did **not have any ideas** or imaginations about Honduras.

**Culture and history** were stated by approximately one out of 5 respondents. This vague word stands for ancient civilizations, cultural heritage and Maya culture.

But **negative associations** rank among the most cited statements as well, including the following associations: not interesting, poverty, natural disasters, ruins, underdeveloped and "lost".

Other aspects include:

**Touristic aspects:** diving, known because of film "hunting the green diamond", emerging country, no mass tourism

**HONDURAS is the emerging country of beaches, bananas and wilderness, known for its cultural heritage but still associated with negative terms such as poverty and nature hazards.**

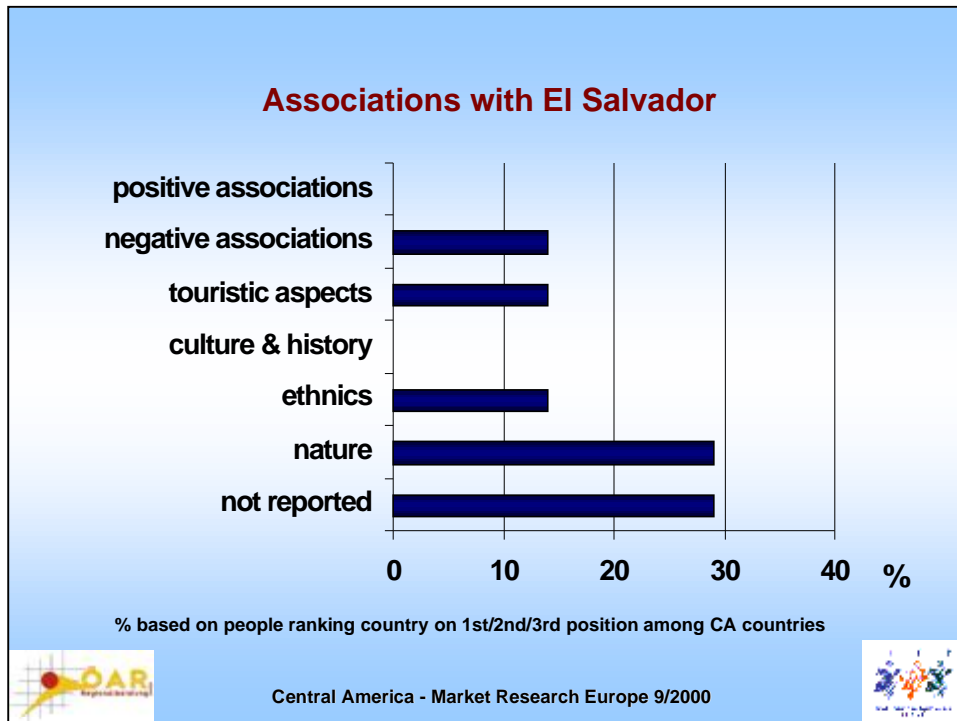


Exhibit 15: Associations with EL Salvador

El Salvador is still relatively unknown. Approximately one third of persons ranking El Salvador on 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> position did **not have any associations** with this country.

One third associate **nature** with El Salvador which includes mainly beaches and volcanoes.

El Salvador is considered to be **touristically not developed**.

Friendly people but also revolution come to peoples' minds thinking of El Salvador.

**EL SALVADOR is the relatively unknown Central American country famous for its beaches and volcanoes, but touristically underdeveloped and associated with revolution.**



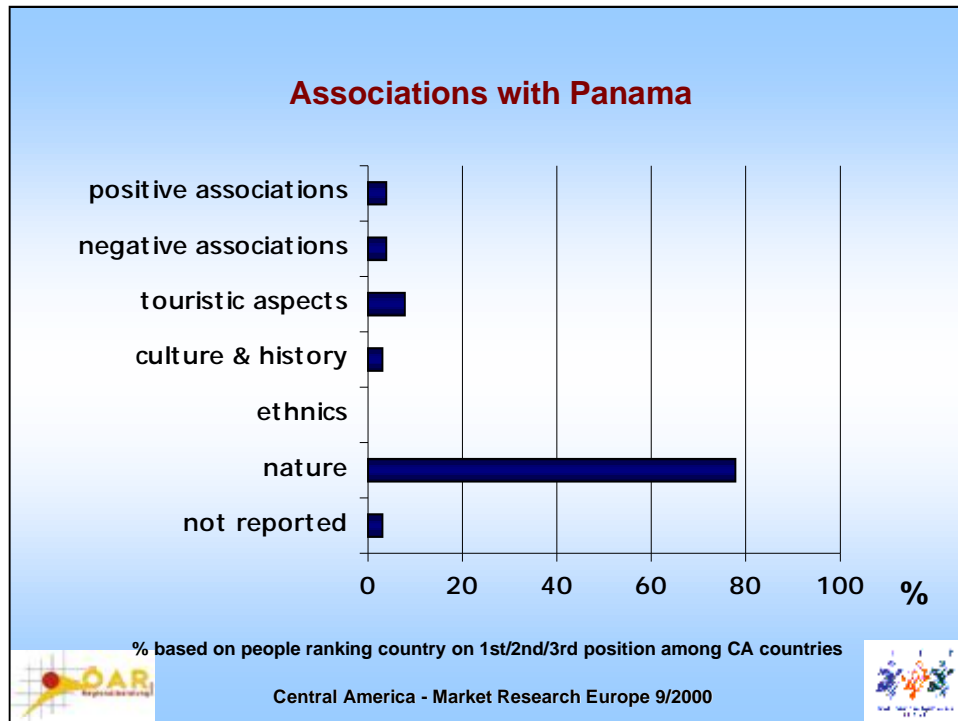


Exhibit 16: Associations with Panama

The great majority of European travel businesses associates Panama with **nature** - and within the term nature most statements relate to the famous Panama - Channel. Apart from the Channel nature stands for jungle.

Apart from the channel touristic aspects - in particular cruise tourism - were mentioned on 2<sup>nd</sup> position.

**Negative associations** such as underdeveloped and unknown: were stated as well.

**PANAMA is the country with the famous Channel, apart from cruise tourism underdeveloped with respect to tourism and relatively unknown among European travel businesses.**

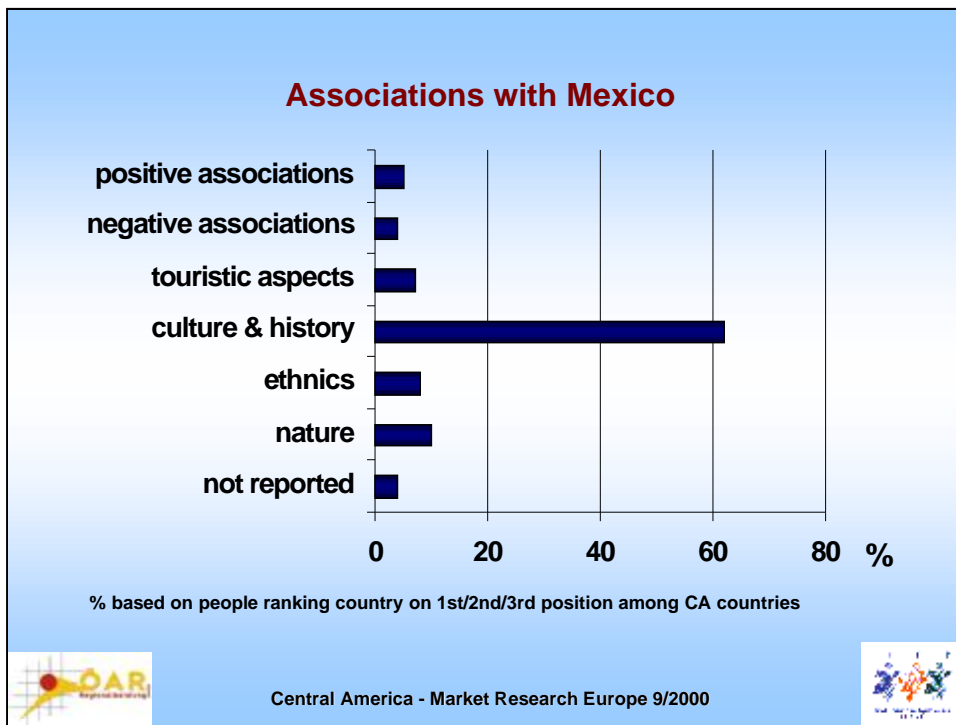


Exhibit 17: Associations with Mexico

According to European travel businesses, Mexico's absolute highlight is its **culture**: Most of the respondents associate Mexico with ancient cultures, archeology, excavations, Aztecs, Maya culture, history, pyramids, Inca culture (!), temples, Acapulco, Cancun, Yucatan, Cosumel.

**Nature** ranks second - including beaches, sun and volcanoes – followed by **ethnic aspects** such as friendly people, folklore, colors and sombreros.

Other aspects include:

**Touristic aspects**: sightseeing tours, beach holidays, combination of bathing and culture, good infrastructure, study tours.

**Negative associations**: "redneck charter", poverty, mass tourism

**MEXICO is the colorful country of Maya culture, sun & sea and friendly people with sombreros - extensively used for touristic purposes with mass tourism as a consequence.**

## 3.2 Competing Countries

### STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF CENTRAL AMERICA

**Question: “What are the strengths of Central America as a tourism destination?”**

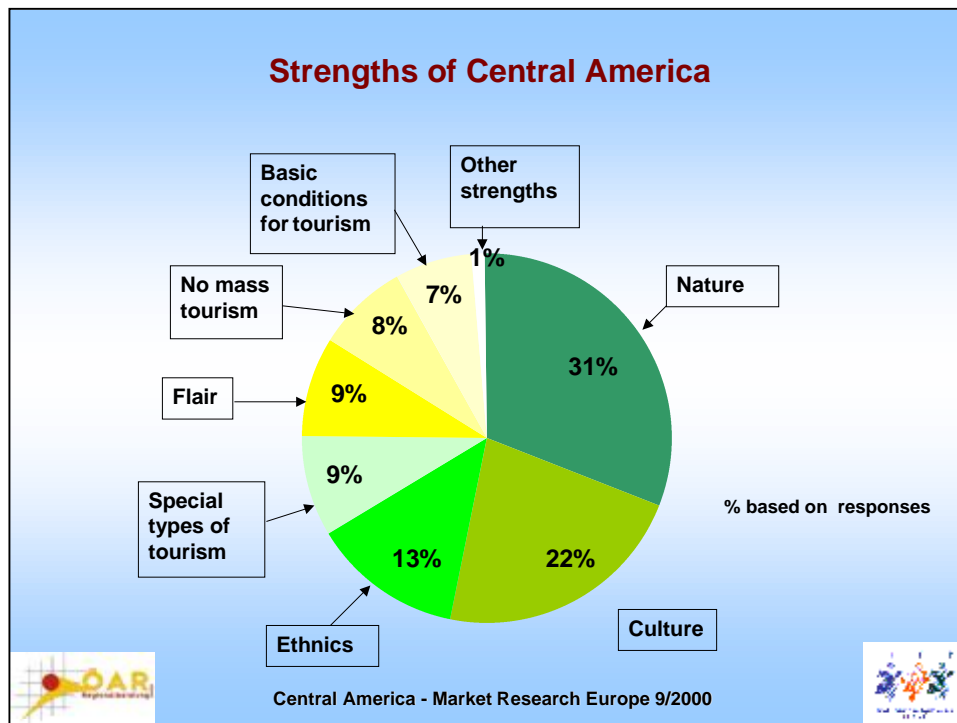


Exhibit 18: Strengths of Central America

According to European travel agencies and tour operators the major strength of the Central American region is **nature**. The term nature implies untouched, intact, diverse nature and ecosystems as well as diverse landscape, beaches, the sea, wildlife, lakes, volcanoes and the jungle.

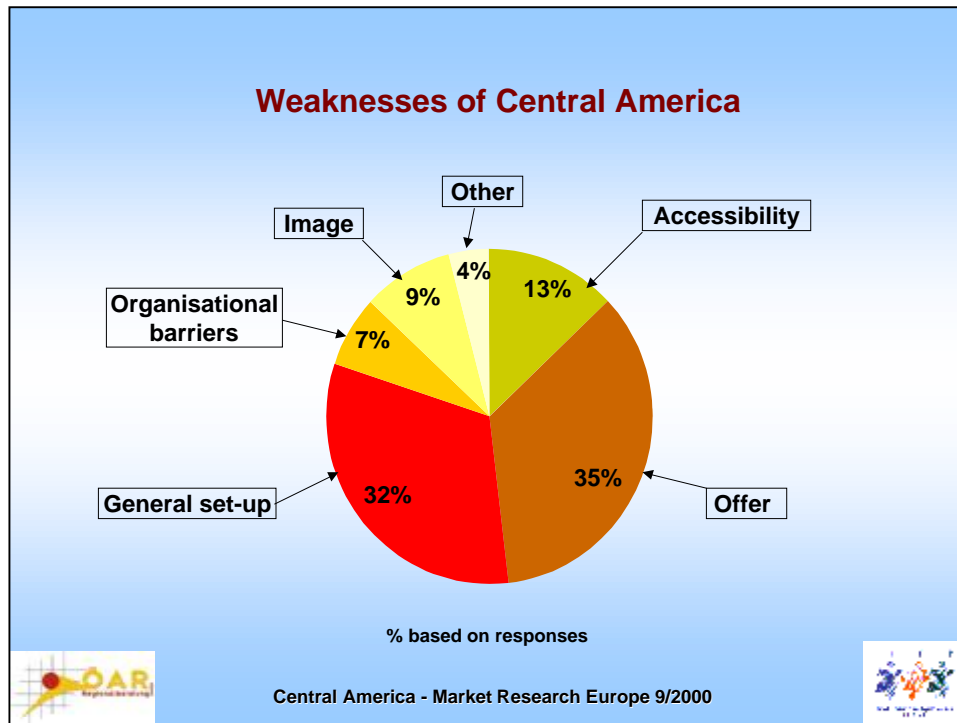
Central America distinguishes itself from its competitors through its **culture**. The respondents associate with “culture” ancient, undiscovered and diverse cultures, history, archeology and excavations, Maya culture, temples.

**Ethnic aspects** rank on third place with respect to Central America’s strengths and include open-minded, hospitable people, the Latin-American way of life, language, authenticity, traditional food, traditions/folklore and indigenous people.

For the purpose of completion details on the strengths mentioned above will be outlined in the following table showing a ranking of aspects within the strengths mentioned above, based on respective number of statements:

<b>NATURE (31 %)</b>	<b>responses</b>	<b>CULTURE (22%)</b>	<b>responses</b>
untouched, intact, diverse nature/ecosystems	44	ancient, undiscovered, diverse cultures	49
diversified landscape	29	history	11
sea	18	archeology/excavations	10
(Caribbean) beaches	11	Maya culture	6
wildlife (flora and fauna)	5	temples	2
lakes	1	Aztec culture	1
volcanoes	1	Inca culture	1
jungle	1		
<b>ETHNIC ASPECTS (13%)</b>	<b>responses</b>	<b>FLAIR/ATMOSPHERE (9%)</b>	<b>responses</b>
open-minded, hospitable, tolerant people	25	foreign/different/exotic	15
Latin American lifestyle	6	exciting/adventurous	8
language	6	mysterious	4
authenticity	5	unknown/undiscovered	3
traditional food	2	colorful	1
traditions/folklore	2		
Indigenas	2		
<b>BASIC CONDITIONS FOR TOURISM (7%)</b>	<b>responses</b>	<b>SUITABILITY FOR SPECIAL TYPES OF TOURISM (9%)</b>	<b>responses</b>
diversity of sights and potentials	14	study tours/round trips/combination possibilities	10
inexpensive	10	Eco-tourism	8
price/service-ratio	2	individual tourism	5
touristic infrastructure	1	trekking	3
		sports tourism	3
		recreational holidays	2
		hiking	1
		active holidays	1
<b>OTHER STRENGTHS (1%)</b>	<b>responses</b>	<b>NO MASS TOURISM (8%)</b>	<b>responses</b>
easily accessible	2	No mass tourism	29
politically stable	1		
short distance	1		

**Question: “What are the weak points of Central America as a tourism destination?”**



**Exhibit 19: Weaknesses of Central America as a tourism destination**

According to European travel businesses the major weakness of Central America is its **poor basic conditions for tourism**. Among the critical statements a poor standard of service in hotels, an inefficient transportation system within the countries and a low quality of accommodation was mentioned most frequently.

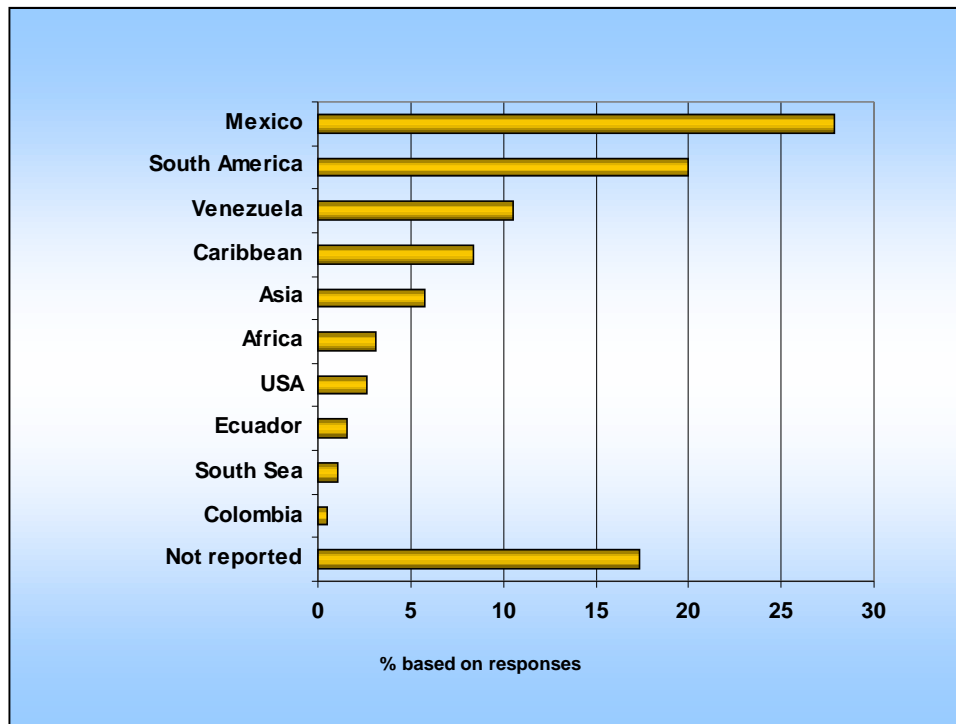
The second position regarding the weaknesses of tourism in Central America is held by a **poor general set-up**. This term implies insecurity, a lack of political stability, poverty etc.. Following behind in the ranking is the unattractive accessibility standing for a lack of flight connections, expensive airfares and long hours of flight.

A list showing all given statements on the subject of weaknesses follows below:

<b>BASIC CONDITIONS FOR TOURISM (34%)</b>	<b>statements</b>	<b>GENERAL SET-UP (33%)</b>	<b>statements</b>
Bad touristic infrastructure in general	33	Insecurity, criminality	41
Poor roads and means of transport within the countries	22	Lack of political stability	31
Low quality of accommodation	14	Economical instability	9
Too expensive	10	Poverty	8
Only few interesting leisure attractions	7	Dollar currency, unfavorable exchange rates	3
Poor service standards in hotels	6	Natural disasters, bad weather conditions	2
lack of hygiene, dirt	5		
Poor standard in some regions (regional differences)	2		
<b>ACCESSIBILITY (13 %)</b>	<b>statements</b>	<b>IMAGE (10,4%)</b>	<b>statements</b>
Countries are hard to reach (not enough flight connections)	27	Poor marketing, advertising and PR	12
Expensive airfares	7	Relatively unknown among tourists	8
Distance, hours of flight	4	Bad image and reputation	6
		Offers are tailor made for Americans and not for Europeans	2
<b>ORGANISATIONAL BARRIERS (6,6%)</b>	<b>statements</b>	<b>OTHER WEAKNESSES (3,5%)</b>	<b>statements</b>
Creating "packages" in these countries is time consuming (no support)	8	Unpunctual transportation service, no ideal possibilities for swimming,	each 1
Lack of information about attractions, lack of knowledge	4	unfriendly population, diseases and infections, mass tourism, Mexico serving as an bad example,	each 1
Communication problems (regarding the knowledge of languages)	4	only for individual travelers, mosquitoes, lack of touristical interest	each 1
Inefficient work of incoming agencies	3		

**DIRECT COMPETITORS OF CENTRAL AMERICA**

**Question: "Which country would you consider as a direct competitor of Central America?"**



**Exhibit 20: Percentage of respondents mentioning the respective countries**

Mexico is seen as the main competitor of Central America, followed by South America (including Brazil, Peru, Argentina and others). Venezuela and the Caribbean are also very important. Colombia and Ecuador are playing only a less important role.

**Specialists:** Specialists consider significantly more often Mexico as a direct competitor as non-Specialists do. South America is named more often by non-specialists, Asia more often by specialists.

**Countries:** /

**Categories:** /

**Fields of competition**

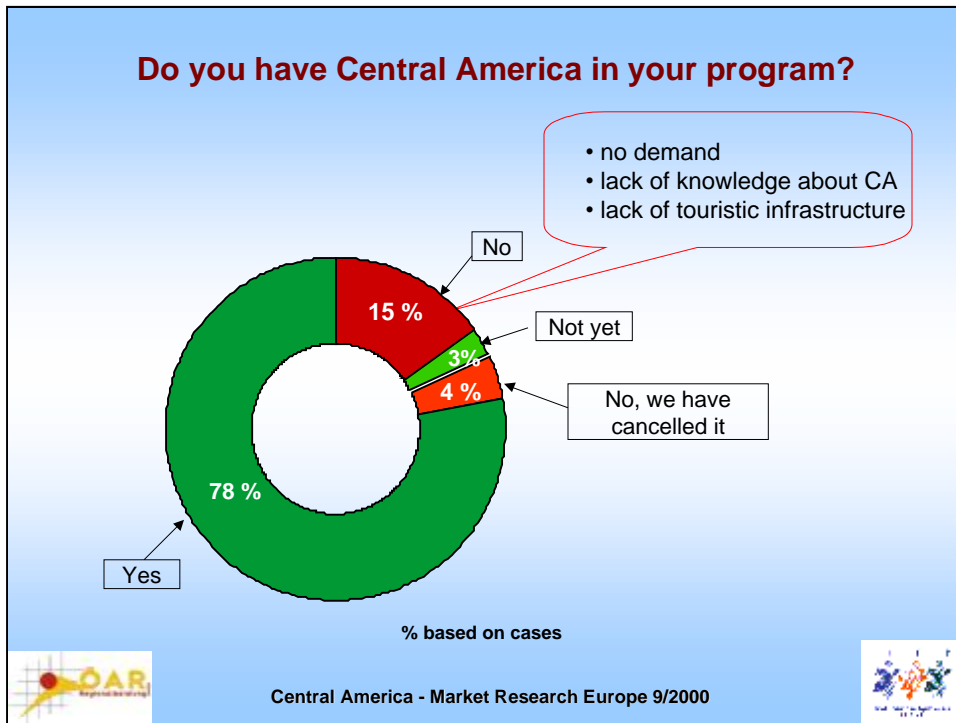
<b>Mexico – Top statements</b>	<b>Others</b>
Culture Historical attractions Infrastructure Beaches	the same offer – nature – better known – possibilities for combination – hotels – adventure - possibilities to reach – better image – prizes - living culture – cities
<b>South America – Top statements</b>	<b>Others</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culture</li> <li>• The same offer</li> <li>• Beaches</li> <li>• Friendly People</li> </ul>	landscape – nature – historical attractions – diversity - „better known – more authenticity – prizes – security – packages
<b>Venezuela– Top statements</b>	<b>Others</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nature / Wildlife</li> <li>• Culture</li> <li>• Landscape</li> </ul>	infrastructure – beaches – historical attractions – excursions – adventure
<b>Caribbean – Top statements</b>	<b>Others</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beaches</li> <li>• Hotels</li> <li>• Prizes</li> </ul>	security – language holidays – sea cruises – packages
<b>Ecuador – Top statements</b>	<b>Others</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nature</li> </ul>	Eco-tourism – Soft-Adventure – similar Image
<b>Colombia – Top statements</b>	<b>Others</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living culture</li> </ul>	no statements
<b>Asia, Africa, USA, South Pacific – Top statements</b>	<b>Others</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culture</li> <li>• Beaches</li> <li>• Landscape</li> <li>• Nature / National Parks</li> </ul>	language – prizes



### 3.3 Central American offer of the interviewed companies

#### CENTRAL AMERICA AS PART OF THE PROGRAM

**Question:** „Do you have Central America in your program?“



**Exhibit 21: Do you have Central America in your program?**

In the previous survey more than three quarters of all valued cases already have Central America in their offer. Additionally 4% are willing to start organizing tours to Central America and provide therefore a potential for future cooperation.

**Specialists** (providing tours to Central America was one of the selecting criteria for specialists)

**Countries** Italy, Germany and Spain break ranks regarding the Central America offer. Different to all other countries, travel businesses in Italy mostly do not provide an offer to Central America.

The noticeable difference in Germany concerns the fact that 5 companies (16,7%) have cancelled their Central America offer. In three cases the mentioned reason is a decrease in demand, in one case it is the lack of political stability and in the other case is only a small tour operator who

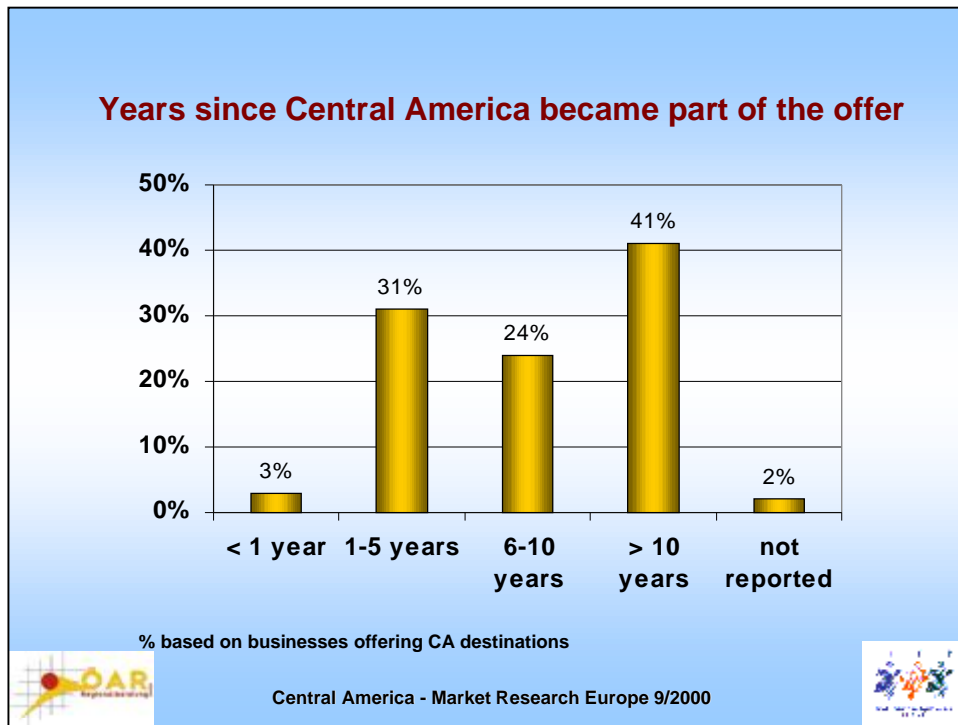
changes his program every year.

All valued Spanish respondents cases cover Central America within their program.

**Categories** /

**EXPERIENCES WITH CENTRAL AMERICAN OFFER**

**Question: „For how long have you had Central America in your program?“**



**Exhibit 22: Years since Central America has become part of the offer**

The majority has had a Central America offer for more than 10 years followed by those travel businesses offering Central America between one and five years.

**REASONS FOR NOT OFFERING CENTRAL AMERICAN DESTINATIONS**

(% based on cases)

- No demand for CA destinations (21,2%)
- Lack of knowledge about Central America (12,1%)

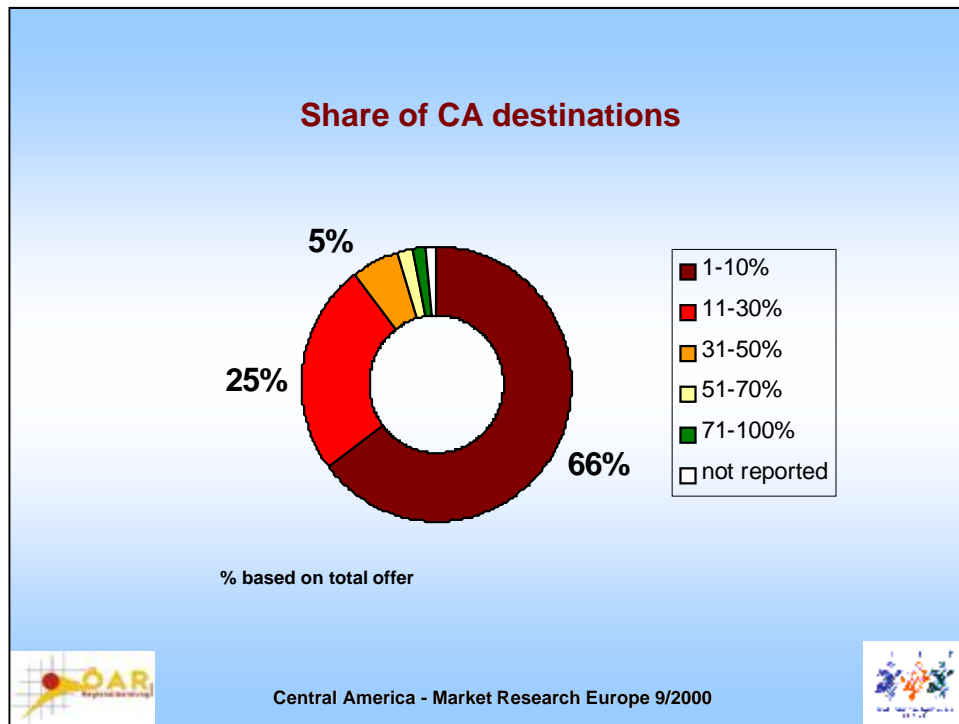
- Lack of touristic infrastructure (6,1%)
- Not attractive for touristic purposes (3,0%)
- Other reasons (63,3%)

Other reasons include:

Concentration on other destinations, poor marketing and therefore not attractive, missing flight connections and high air fares, not interesting for incentive tours, unstable political situation and danger.

**SHARE OF CENTRAL AMERICA**

**Question: „How big is the share of Central America in your whole offer (in %)?“**

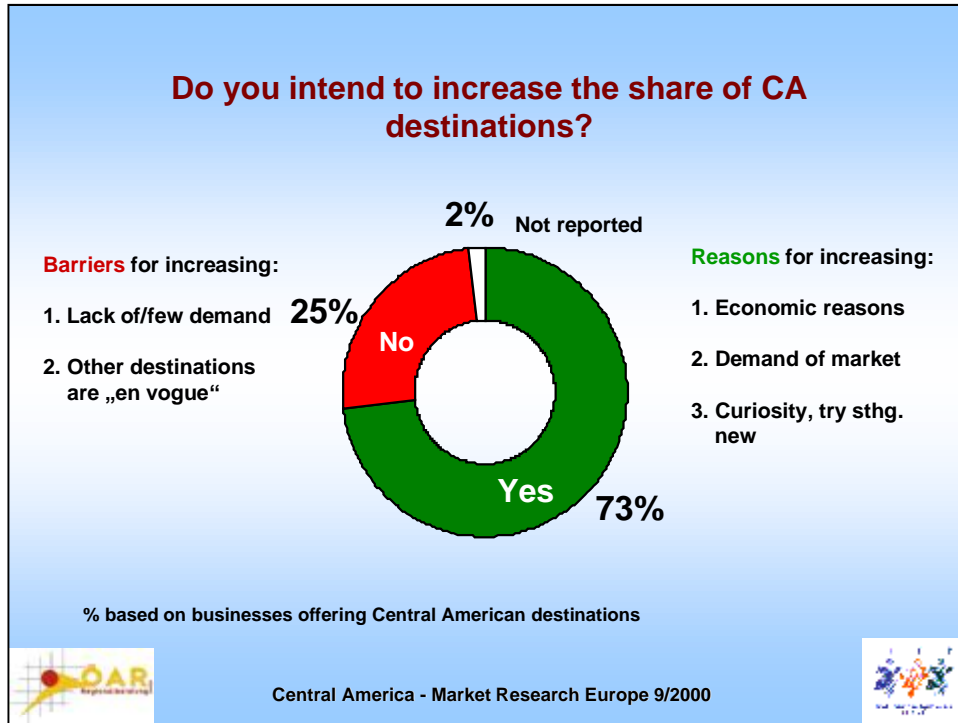


**Exhibit 23: share of CA destinations based on total offer**

With more than half of the respondents (66%) the share of Central American destinations is only at 1%-10% of the total offer.

**INTENTION TO INCREASE THE SHARE OF CENTRAL AMERICAN OFFER**

**Question: “Do you intend to increase your current share of Central America?”**



**Exhibit 24: intention of expansion share on CA destinations**

The majority of European travel agencies and tour operators intend to expand their Central American sector. One reason for this willingness for expansion is – among others that will be listed later – a growing demand for Central American destinations.

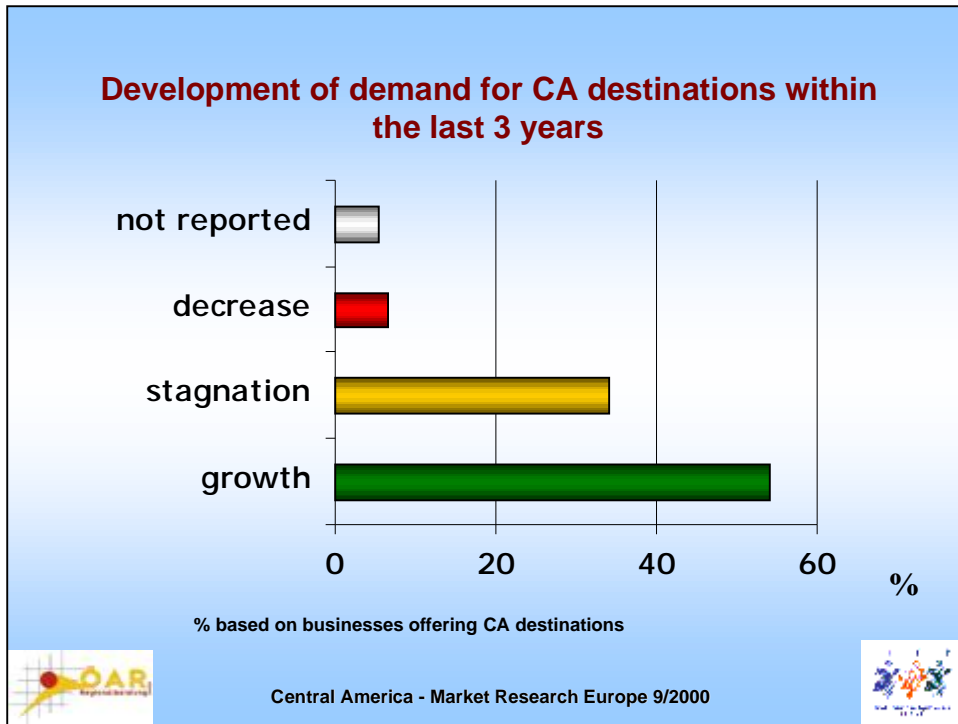
**Specialists:** /

**Countries:** Austrian, German and Swiss travel businesses are notably more reserved with respect to expansion on the Central American sector than the other countries. This result corresponds to other statements of the respective countries, saying that demand has decreased or stagnates in those countries and negative images and fear related to political instability and criminality are more common.

**Categories:** /

**PERFORMANCE OF CENTRAL AMERICAN OFFER DURING THE LAST 3 YEARS**

**Question: “How was the performance of the demand for your Central American offer during the last 3 years?”**



**Exhibit 25: development of demand of CA destinations**

43 % of the interviewed companies state that the demand for CA destinations has increased in the last 3 years whereas 26,8% report\_a stagnation of demand.

**Question: “Why do you intend to increase the share?”****Reasons mentioned for increasing the CA-share**

1. economic reasons
2. increasing demand of the market (respectively Costa Rica)
3. curiosity, try something new
4. a lot of possibilities, attractive offer, capable of development

Other reasons:

- § unspoiled place, known because of television
- § confidence returned, political situation stable
- § CA= niche; attracts new clientele
- § if CA countries support sales efforts
- § customers ask for new destinations
- § if other destinations are overrun
- § CA is "en vogue"
- § only cooperation with best operators
- § offers in tourism have improved

**Question: Why don't you intend to increase the share?****Reasons mentioned for not increasing the CA-share**

1. lack of /few demand (particularly Honduras)
2. other destinations "en vogue" e.g. the Orient, Central Asia

Other reasons:

- § current supply corresponds to demand
- § concentration on South America (better partners, more demand)
- § stagnating interest/ demand
- § price/ service ratio not o.k.
- § very few cooperation partners in CA (e.g. language schools)
- § Northern America more profitable
- § offer already all CA countries

Factors of the European demand for the Central American offer

**Question: "What are the reasons for this performance (growth/stagnation/increase)?"**

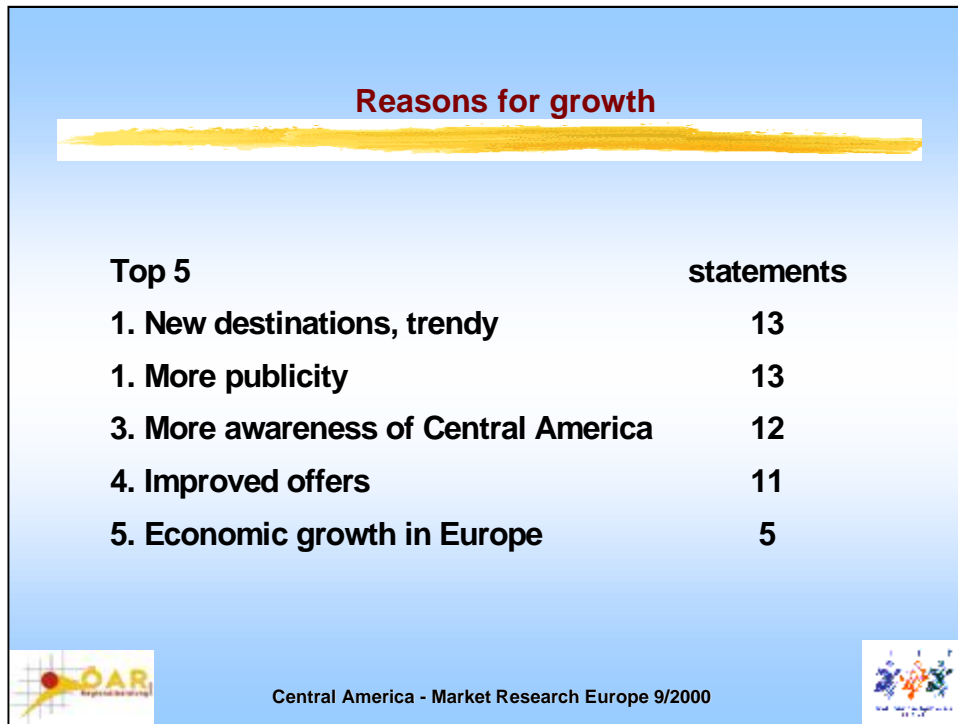


Exhibit 26 Reasons for growth

Exhibit 27:Reasons for stagnation and decrease





The most important factor for a growing demand is the need for new destinations and the awareness that Central America is improving its touristic offer.

Therefore it is not surprising, that "not enough promotion" and "unknown destination" is ranking on the first place according to the reasons for stagnation and decrease of demand. The prices and fears of crime, political turbulence and nature hazards are important, too.

## 3.4 Evaluation of product ideas

### COMMENTS ON IDEAS FOR NEW PRODUCTS

*Question: "What do you associate with the following new ideas for products...?"*

#### COMMENTS ON „RUTA DEL MAÍZ“

**Top 5** (based on the number of statements)

1. No idea, not precise, must be explained (15)
2. Not interesting, not attractive, boring, bad (12)
3. Mexico, Guatemala (9)
4. Corn Fields (8)
5. Good idea, not bad, interesting (7)

#### **Others**

Agriculture - farms - Hinterland - for specialists - Maya culture - country life - Tortillas - gastronomy - history - pig feed - origin of life - bananas or coffee would be better

#### COMMENTS ON „RUTA HERENCIA MUNDIAL DE LA HUMANIDAD“

**Top 5** (based on the number of statements)

1. Okay, good, interesting, yes (15)
2. History, Archeology, Excavations, Ruins (12)
3. Maya (11)
4. Mexico (5)
5. Colonial Cities (4)

#### **Others**

Culture – Inca – Combination with beach – Attractions – Conservation – National Parks – Could be everywhere – Worldwide net of sites – Name sounds too complicated – Study journeys – Guatemala – Wide range of clients – No idea – Unesco – Discoveries – Natural Treasures – Name sounds hackneyed – boring - difficult

**COMMENTS ON „RUTA VERDE“****Top 5 (based on the number of statements)**

1. Nature / National Parks / Eco-Tourism (27)
2. Jungle / Rainforest (25)
3. Good / better / interesting / attractive (12)
4. Costa Rica (8)
5. No idea / what exactly?(5)

**Others**

Amazon – America – not good – green is positive – Ecuador – Central America - Mexico  
– Hiking –Name does not sound well – Honduras – Belize – Plantation – Landscape

**COMMENTS ON „RUTA DE LOS PIRATAS Y LOS CONQUISTADORES“****Top 5 (based on the number of statements)**

1. Sounds good, not bad, exciting, interesting (16)
2. Sea, Islands, Wrecks, Boats, Harbors (15)
3. Caribbean, Cuba (12)
4. Columbus, Spanish Conquerors, Discovery (10)
5. Adventure (8)

**Others**

Terrific – Boring – Difficult – Macabre – Treasure hunt – Battles – Honduras – Accident of  
History – Mexico – Cortez – Hollywood films – Mickey Mouse – Kitschy – For young trav-  
ellers

**COMMENTS ON „RUTA RITMO DE SALSA“****Top 5 (based on the number of statements)**

1. Music, Dancing, Party, Fun, Bars (26)
2. Caribbean, Cuba, South America, Brazil (19)
3. Interesting, good, exciting, possible (14)
4. Not good, not interesting (8)
5. Traditions, Living Culture (7)

**Others**

Trendy – Not typical – For young travellers – Sea cruises - Sounds silly – Matter of taste  
– Sounds bad – Carnival - Promotion – Mexico

There are both positive and negative comments on the presented names of thematic products. Except for the „**Ruta Herencia mundial de la humanidad**“ no ideas are associated with the given titles and therefore additional information is required.

„**Ruta Ritmo de Salsa**“ is not associated with Central America but with the Caribbean and South America.

„**Ruta de los piratas y los conquistadores**“ is controversial, too. Some associate it with the Caribbean, others think of hollywood films and Mickey Mouse.

„**Ruta del maíz**“ has the most critical comments, because the interviewed people often have no idea relating to this name. as comments like „not interesting“, „not attractive“, „boring“ show.

„**Ruta verde**“ is perceived with comparatively good comments.

**EVALUATION OF CHANCES ON THE EUROPEAN MARKET FOR THE PRESENTED ROUTES**

**Question: "...and how would you judge the chances on the European market / how much would you be interested in these products ?"**



**Exhibit 28: Evaluation of ideas for new products**

Between the evaluation of chances on the European market and of own interest there is no special difference. As the previous comments have already shown, a „**Ruta Herencia mundial de la humanidad**“ and a „**Ruta verde**“ are clearly preferred. The „**Ruta del maíz**“ seems to have the lowest chances on the European market.

**Specialists:** /

**Countries:** In **Spain** and **Italy** all presented names got a higher-than-average evaluation. The judgement for „Ruta del maíz“ was worst in **Switzerland, Austria** and **Germany**.

**Categories:** /

### 3.5 Knowledge about Central America

**Question:** „In which of the following fields of knowledge concerning Central America would you consider yourself to be competent?“

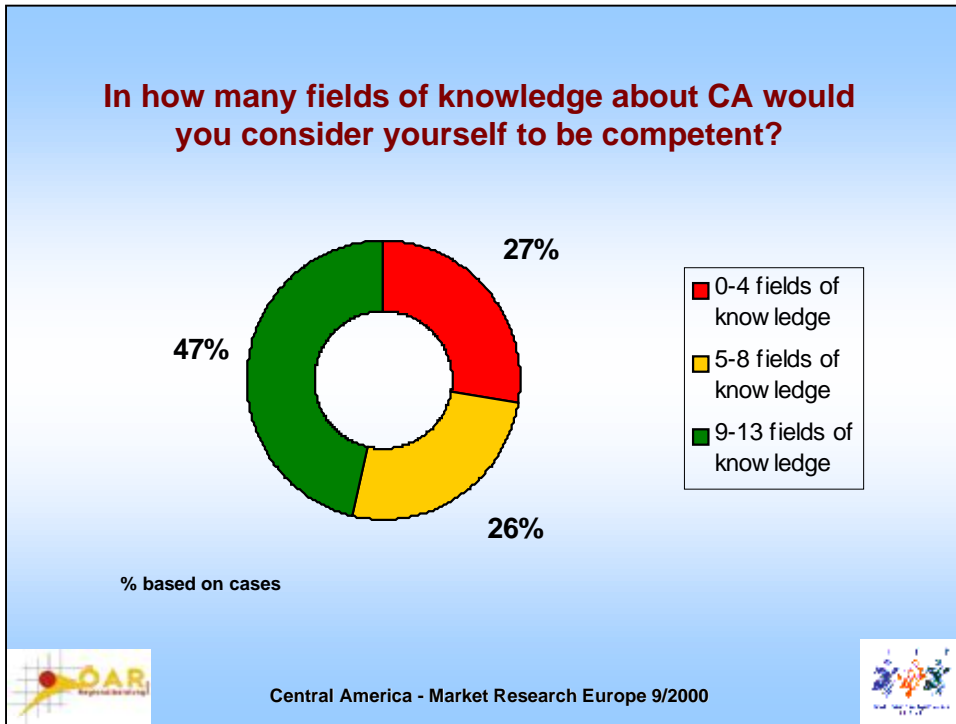


Exhibit 29 : Knowledge about Central America - competence

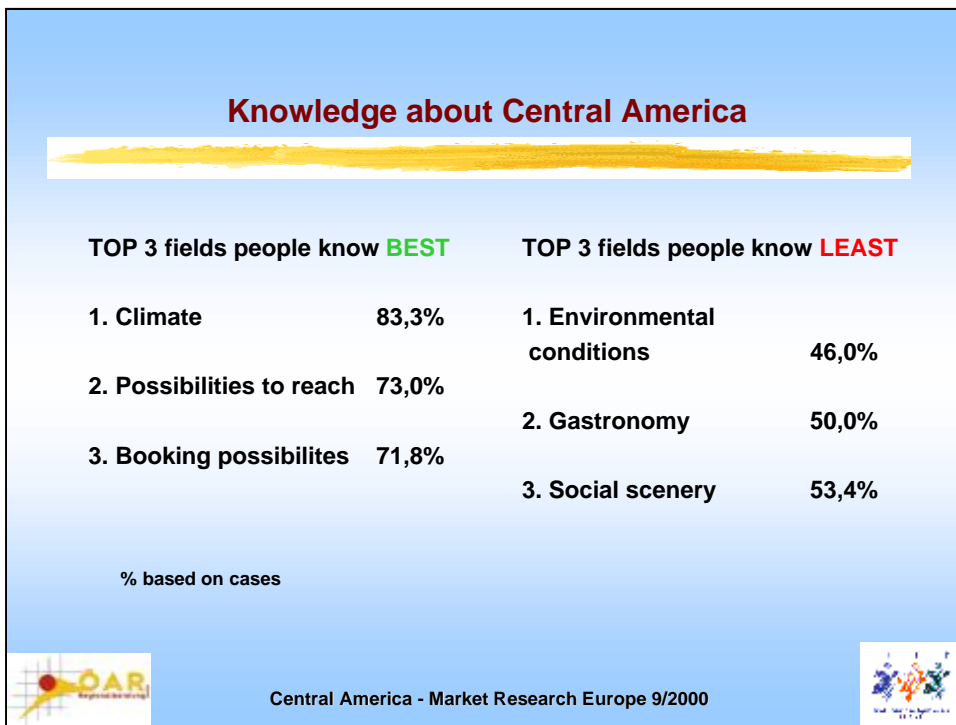


Exhibit 30: Knowledge about Central America – top fields

A quite big share of the persons interviewed (47%) seem to be well informed about Central America. They state to be competent in at least 9 fields of knowledge out of 13.

**Specialists:** Specialists know notably more about Central America than the other persons interviewed. Approximately 3 quarters of specialists state to be competent in at least 9 fields of knowledge compared to only about 1 quarter of „non-specialists“.

**Countries:** French businesses generally feel a lack of knowledge about Central America. Spanish businesses consider themselves as less informed especially in touristic matters than the other countries

**Categories:** /



### 3.6 Information behaviour

#### MEANS OF INFORMATION ABOUT TOURISM DESTINATIONS

**Question: "How often do you use the following possibilities to get information about tourism destinations?"**

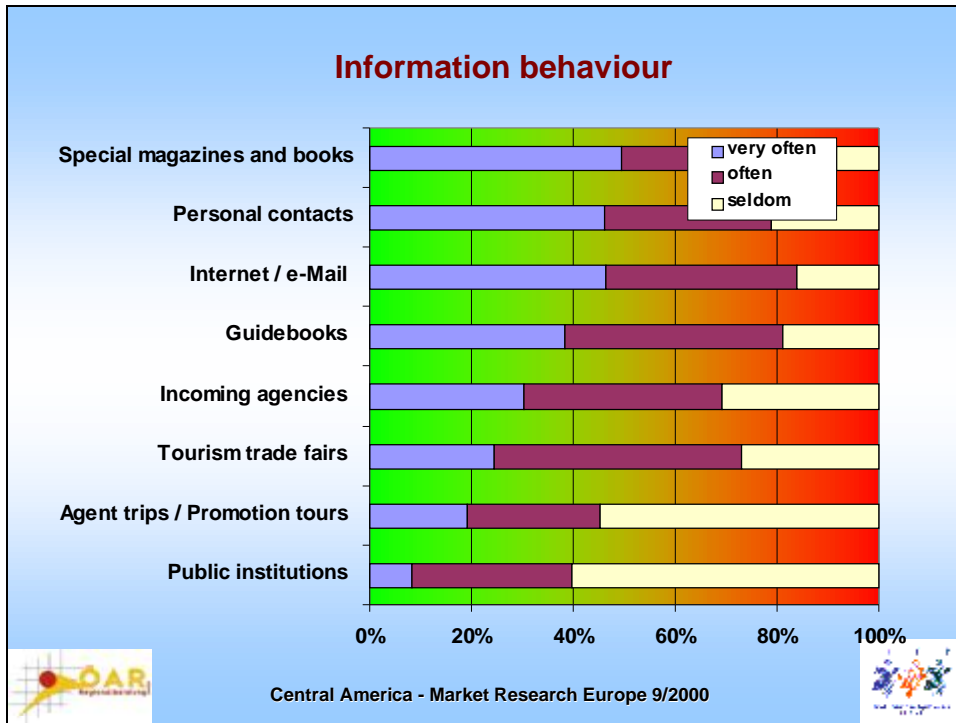


Exhibit 31: Information behavior

Special magazines and books are undoubtedly preferred as information source, followed by guidebooks, personal contacts and internet / e-mail. Agent Trips and promotion tours might be good alternatives, but they are used more seldom. Public institutions like chambers and associations do not play an important role.

**Specialists:** Specialists significantly more often use internet, e-mails, tourism trade fairs, incoming agencies and personal contacts than non-specialists.

**Countries:** /

**Categories:** /

### THE BEST WAYS TO PROMOTE NEW CENTRAL AMERICAN OFFERS

**Question: „In your mind, which sources of information are most suitable to promote new Central American products to European tour operators and travel agencies?“**

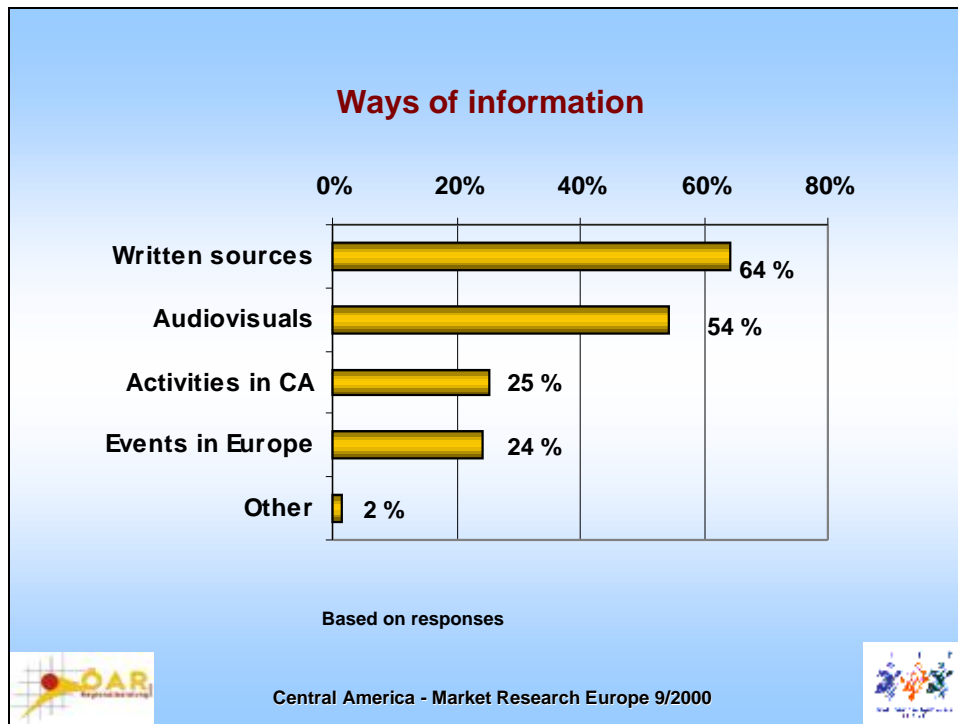


Exhibit 32: Most popular sources of information

European travel agencies and tour operators recommend first of all the use of the **internet** in order to promote new products, bearing in mind the advantage of quick information transfer and the possibility to maintain every given information up-to-date. The internet is increasingly used in travel agencies to search for special information or to get a simple overview of the offers.

**Written articles** such as travel reports are still among the most successful ways to promote new products. According to all statements, articles in trade journals as well as articles in newspapers and magazines are considered to be successful.

**Documentary films and TV-reports** also play an important role concerning the promotion of new products.

The whole range of statements about the various source of information:

<b>WRITTEN SOURCES OF INFORMATION (37%)</b>	<b>statements</b>	<b>AUDIOVISUALS (32%)</b>	<b>statements</b>
Articles in trade journals	35	Internet	52
Articles in newspapers, magazines	32	Documentary films, TV-reports, videos	34
Detailed brochures	27	Advertising	15
Direct mailings (e-mails,...)	22	CD-ROM	2
Guide books	6		
<b>ACTIVITIES IN CENTRAL AMERICA ITSELF (15%)</b>		<b>EVENTS TAKING PLACE IN EUROPE (14%)</b>	
Professional agent trips	26	Product presentations, workshops (e.g. at the ITB), evening programs with locals	22
Personal contacts, incoming agencies	14	European trade fairs	20
Local tourist boards	7	Roadshows	3
Tours with journalists	1	Presentation in Europe	1
<b>OTHER (1%)</b>			
Competitions	2		
Big reservation center	1		

## 4 APPENDIX

### 4.1 Description of the sample

#### VISITS TO CENTRAL AMERICA

*Question: „Have you ever been to Central America?“*

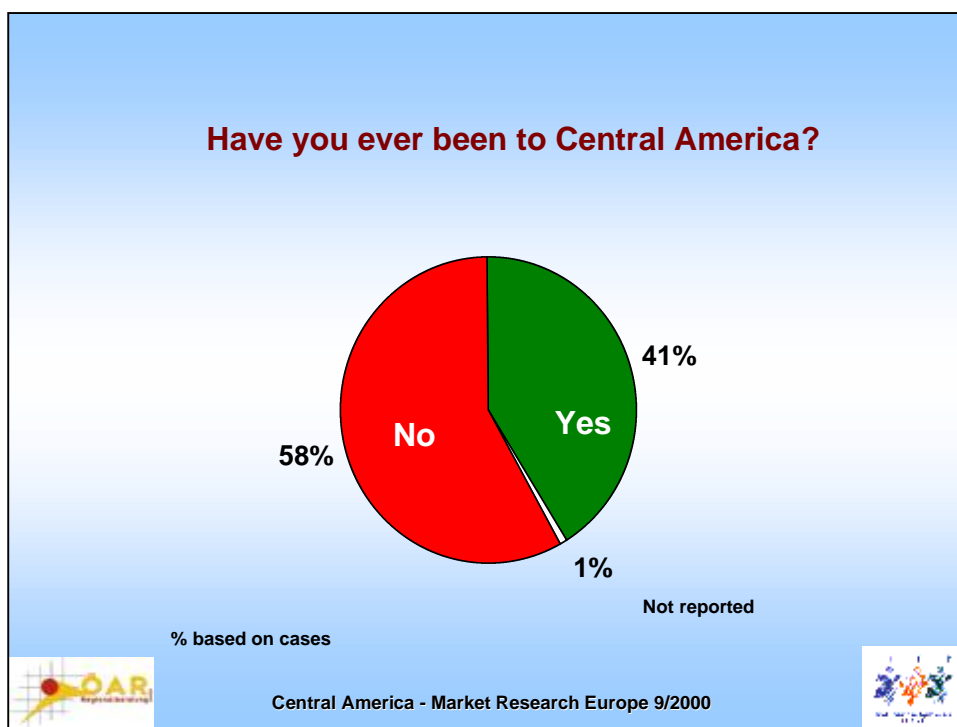
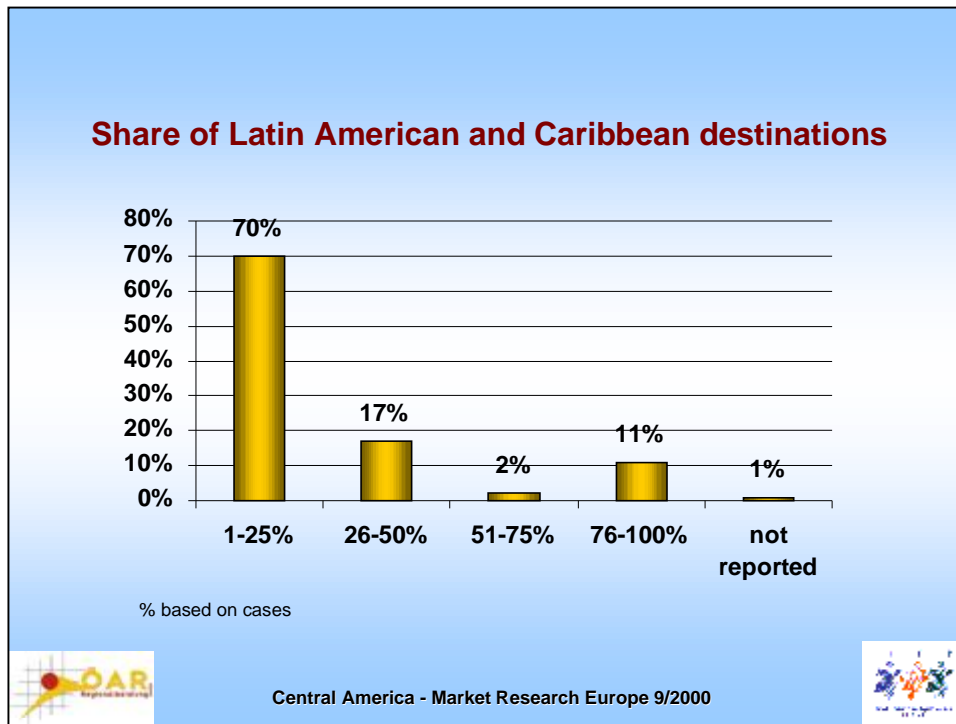


Exhibit 33: Have you ever been to Central America?

Less than half of the interviewed travel agents and tour operators have already been to Central America. Among those having been to Central America the average number of visits is about five.

## THE MARKET SHARE OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

**Question: “How big is the share of Latin America / the Caribbean in your business?”**



**Exhibit 34: Market share of Latin America**

Exhibit 42 shows the market share of offers to Latin America in % of all worldwide offers of the interviewed travel businesses. In 70% of all cases the market share is lower than 25%.

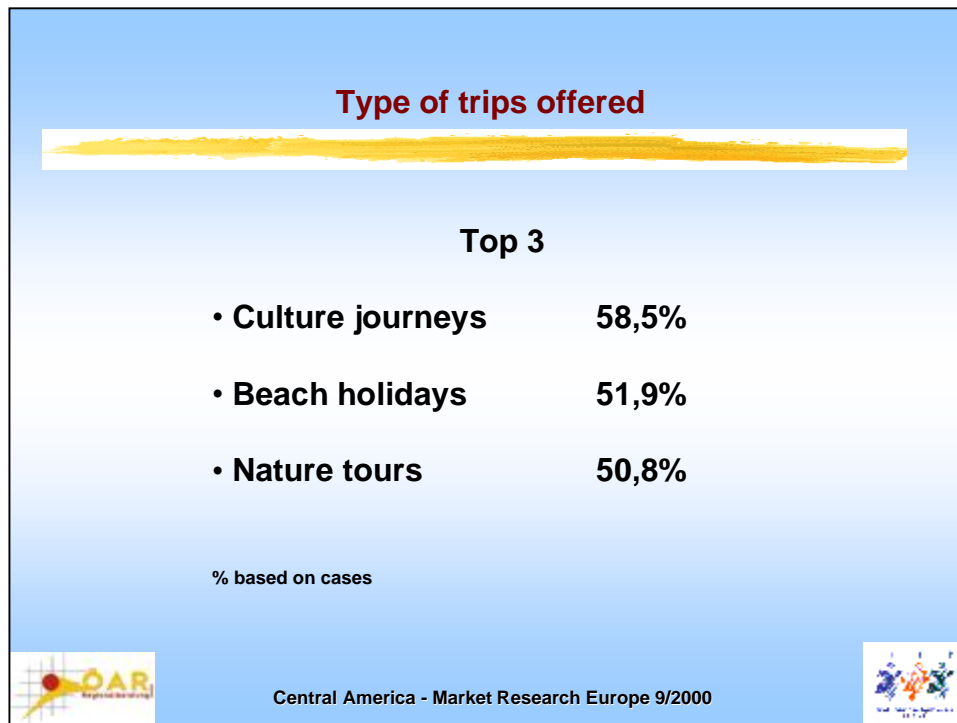
**Specialists** /

**Countries** Only three out of 30 interviewed travel agents and product managers in France have already visited Central America themselves. This may suggest, that in France the personal interest of the interviewed sample or the interest of their companies, concerning tours in tourist destinations, is very low. It has to be taken into account though, that the French speaking market has an attractive offer of exotic, French speaking countries in Africa and in the Caribbean. Therefore it could be expected, that French tourism and travel experts are more specialized in those destinations.

**Categories** /

**TYPE OF TRIPS OFFERED**

**Question: “ How would you describe the type of trips you are offering? What is the major purpose?”**



**Exhibit 35: Type of trips offered**

All types of trips are covered by the chosen sample. Most statements account for the types of trips mentioned above. Most businesses offer culture journeys and beach holidays, every other respondent offers nature tours.

**NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES**

**Question: “ Number of employees?”**



**Exhibit 36: Number of employees**

The sample contains both big tour operators with more than 100 and very specialized small companies with less than 6 employees. Especially the travel agencies are often very small businesses.

## 4.2 Questionnaires





