ARTS AND TOURISM: TODAY, TOMORROW

Clare A. Gunn
Professor Emeritus
Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences
Texas A&M University

Presented at
Leadership Arts Program
Chamizal National Memorial
El Paso, Texas
January 11, 1995
ARTS AND TOURISM: TODAY, TOMORROW

I want to open my talk by violating a basic principle of public speaking--comment about myself. But I have a reason. It’s about art, so please bear with me.

Over 70 years ago, just as soon as I was old enough to hold a pencil, I began to draw. Later, I obtained two degrees in landscape architecture; taught design and landscape architecture in two universities; and others tell me my amateur photography is better than average. I learned music on a violin and was first chair in our high school orchestra. All through the Depression in the ’30s our family’s radio was tuned in to the "Music Appreciation Hour," put on by Walter Damrosch and the New York Symphony. Although music and art have been part of my entire life, they did not become my profession. I cite these personal anecdotes only to show that my career in tourism did not stem from economics or business, but rather from the field of the arts.

But, here lies a paradox. My greatest challenge, throughout fifty years of working with tourism, has been to build a bridge between good design and culture and tourism economics. For years, such an idea was contrary to the conventional wisdom that promotion was the only road to tourism success. Fortunately, I have lived long enough to see a dramatic change today. Leaders of tourism throughout the world are beginning to see how important culture and the arts are—not because of altruism but because they are sound tourism economics.

The arts are part of what is referred to as cultural tourism. The World Tourism Organization back in 1985 created a statement of definition that helps explain the importance and breadth of this topic. Let me quote:

Cultural tourism can.. be defined in broad or narrow terms. In the narrow sense, it includes movements of persons for essentially cultural motivations, such as study tours, performing arts and cultural tours, travel to festivals and other cultural events, visits to sites and monuments, travel to study nature, folklore or art, and pilgrimages. In the broadest sense, all movements of persons might be included in the definition because they satisfy the human need for diversity, tending to raise the cultural level of the individual and giving rise to new knowledge, experience, and encounters.

Even though little research has been done in this field, I would like to cite a few examples of concrete evidence of what’s happening between the arts and tourism. For most of this material, I have turned to Anthony Tighe of the National Endowment for the Arts, who is the nation’s leading specialist in this field. He has gleaned these facts from our best research sources today. Here are some interesting facts taken from his writings:

* Almost 60% of all summer visitors to Aspen attend an Aspen Music Festival Event-and leave over $10 million as tourists.
* Of all US travelers in the country in 1991:
  17% attended a play or concert
  24% visited a museum or art gallery
  25% attended a festival or craft fair
  28% bought local/ethnic food or crafts
30% visited a historic site or building
* If we look at the figures for foreign visitors to the United States in 1993, we find that:
  15% attended a concert, play or musical
  25% visited an art gallery or museum
  32% visited historical places

These figures are based on travelers from Germany, France and Japan. More detail from this study by the US Travel & Tourism Administration shows that of French tourists coming to the US, 63% visited museums or galleries, 55% went to historic or commemorative places, 38% attended concerts or plays, and 35% attended a local festival. Of the British, almost 53% went to historic places, 39% local festivals, 37% museums or galleries and 32% concerts or plays.

* A survey of the two million members of the Smithsonian Associates revealed that they account for 10.9 million domestic air trips, 43 million domestic hotel nights and 4.6 million overseas visits.

* The National Endowment did its own survey a few years ago and discovered some interesting statistics. For the general population, 22% visited an art museum, 17% attended a musical, 13% attended a classical musical event, and 12% attended a play. For the population with graduate level education, these figures went up to 56% (art museum), 40% (musical), 41% (classical music), and 36% (play). It is clear that higher education levels influence participation but even those with lower education levels are certainly significant participants in the arts.

Today's trends among travelers show even increased interest in the arts. The Travel Industry Association of America recently prepared a forecast for next year regarding US travelers' intentions. They said that:
  42% intend to attend cultural events
  37% intend to visit historical sites

I confess that I have not studied the El Paso area's visitor impact due to the arts. But, based on clues from the Tour Guide of Texas for 1993-1994, there must be millions of dollars of tourist revenues already coming to this area due to attractions such as:


These anecdotes should be sufficient to prove today's value of the arts to tourism. I have every confidence that as we learn more about the arts and tourism, we will see even more convincing evidence of a strong and growing relationship.

Tapping This Resource

If your intention is to make the arts a more powerful source of tourism development, there are two basic fundamentals that need your attention. I base this on many years of
observation and work with communities that seek to improve their tourism.

This simple diagram (Figure 1) says a lot about tourism and the arts. This simple statement is absolutely essential for any action toward future growth. It states that the "push" side of tourism is the DEMAND side--what people out there are really like. As travel hosts, we must accept people the way they are--what they like, what they don't like, where they come from, and many other important characteristics.

The flip side of this equation is the SUPPLY SIDE--all the things that are done locally to accept visitors and provide what they like and need. This is the planning and development side--action that you invest in and manage to meet the demand.

The main lesson from this equation is its balance. If what you offer does not meet the desires and needs of the traveler, you are missing your tourism potential. This relationship between demand and supply is often called "Market-Plant Match." You can't do a lot to change society and the attitudes of travelers but you can do much to improve the supply side of what you develop for your visitors.

**Traveler Trends**

Researchers of travel markets are telling us that we need to be aware of today's trends among travelers if we are to develop the supply side adequately. Even though locally, you may have made some market studies, I would encourage you to consider some of the current trends.

* From consumption to non-consumption. Hunters are doing more photography than killing; fishermen are releasing their catches; more travelers want to enjoy rather than destroy resources. Some of the most vocal environmental protectionists today are the travelers who are disgusted with how some tourist destinations are consuming their resources.

* From commonplace to sophisticated. The ordinary no longer satisfies. Travelers are more experienced and better educated and demand better quality. New categories are emerging, such as ecotourists, alternative tourists, adventure tourists, and certainly, cultural tourists.

* From younger to older. Population demographics are changing greatly. Older travelers are still mentally and physically active and have become the largest travel segment. They have money and seek greater depth of experiences. Their travel preferences are diverse because of past occupations and hobbies.

* From "I-me" to greater interest in others. Today's travelers seek greater understanding of other people of the world. Evidence can be found in the hundreds of charitable organizations that are dedicated to service to others. Many tourists prefer group travel where they can share experiences with others.

* From WASP to colorblind. The travel market is no longer dominated by white, AngloSaxon Protestant tourists. Many ethnic and national groups are traveling and today's travelers are beginning to understand that other cultures have worthwhile values and histories of accomplishments.

* From domestic to international. Increased air travel and rapid increases in the economies of many countries are bringing millions more foreigners to our destinations. These
foreign travelers often have interests quite different from our own.

* From casual to intellectually inquisitive. The ordinary and the shoddy no longer satisfy. Travelers today want to learn more about how things work. They seek deeper information about nature and cultural background.

Every one of these trends suggests increased interest in the arts.

How Does Your Supply Side Match Up?

This brief review of some trends among travelers should make us think about how well our present development meets these trends. Because the supply side is ours to choose, develop and manage, we must examine what we now offer here in our community and the surrounding area.

I find it helpful to define the Supply Side of tourism as made up of five very critical and interdependent components. (Figure 2) Each one is made up of hundreds of establishments that are created not by the commercial sector alone. The many nonprofit organizations and agencies of government, such as the National Park Service, also are important players in what is developed for the supply side of tourism.

Attractions

The power unit of tourism is made up of all the things to see and do--the ATTRACTIONS. Attractions provide two very important functions. They provide the "pull", the lure, the appeal to would-be travelers back home. Second, they must provide satisfaction. The traveler must leave an area with even greater satisfaction than was promised in advertising. An increase in the availability of arts can be a great stimulant for increased tourism.

Transportation

Transportation is an obvious function that must provide convenient, comfortable, and safe movement of people. Today, a critical issue is intermodal travel--fly-drive and linkages between all modes. Consideration of time and distance from traveler origins is an important aspect of transportation and tourism.

Services

It is through services, such as lodging and food, that the greatest economic returns from tourism are derived. However, these are facilitators, not causes--they depend greatly on attractions. An important factor in location of services is their dual markets--local people as well as travelers. Because of higher expectations of travelers today, upgrading of service quality is an important issue.

Information

A major deficiency in tourism development is the lack of good descriptive information for visitors. Coming on the market are new interactive computerized information systems that can give travelers instant guidance on routes, attractions, and travel services. At destination areas, visitors are seeking more complete interpretive centers that contain exhibits,
demonstrations, lectures, and literature about the area. It must be emphasized that most of today’s travel brochures are promotional rather than informative.

Promotion

The function of promotion seeks to entice people to travel. It is usually expressed in four ways—advertising, publicity, public relations, and incentives (discounts, packages, premiums). Critical today is making sure that those attractions advertised are truly available as stated.

Implications of These Supply Components

This model shows these components as integral parts of an overall tourism functioning system. The point is that all are interdependent. No matter what your role may be in tourism, you are dependent as much on others as yourself for your success. Any change in any other component influences you. This fact suggests that much greater cooperation among all actors within tourism is essential.

Planning Your Future

Fortunately today, there are several community tourism development guides available that contain very helpful information. If you have not already done so, I suggest that you benefit from the following publications:

*The Community Tourism Industry Imperative*, by Uel Blank, published by Venture

*Tourism USA*, edited by Glenn Weaver, published by US Travel & Tourism Administration

*Rural Tourism Development Training Guide*, edited by Barbara Koth and others, published by the University of Minnesota Tourism Center

*Community Tourism Assessment Manual*, to be published this spring by The Western Rural Development Center at Oregon State University.

*Developing Tourism in Your Community*, published by the Tourism Division of the Texas Department Of Commerce in cooperation with Texas A&M University.

*Cultural Tourism*, published by Bridget Beattie McCarthy, Portland, Oregon.


As you plan for greater tourism based on the arts, I must remind you of a major caution. Conventional wisdom says that all tourism growth is positive. Research and experience now reveal that tourism is not a free ride—it has costs. Yes, we know that it can produce new revenues, more jobs, and incomes for people. But, we are less than honest if we do not identify the real costs of these accomplishments. First, there may be social costs. Large invasions of tourists can cause traffic congestion, competition with local people for services, and cultural conflict. I just visited Niagara-on-the-Lake, a small historic town of 3,000 people in Ontario, Canada. Because of its special place in North American history, its outstanding attractiveness and its Shaw Festival theater, it receives over three million visitors a year. Many long-time citizens are outraged and many properties are now for sale.
A second type of cost of tourism development may be *environmental*. New establishments use land and resources. Often these new developments destroy rare archeological artifacts, unusual plant and animal life, and scenic appeal of the natural landscape. I have observed both in the United States and abroad pollution of recreational waters from resort hotel sewage. Tourism development need not be this way but unless it is properly located and planned, tourism can be destructive of the environment.

Finally, tourism development does have *economic costs*. Increased burdens on city services, such as water supply, sewage disposal, police, and fire protection may result from growth of tourism. New investment moneys, public and private, will be required to develop tourism. Tourism leaders continue to ask for millions more dollars in promotion. And, there are many instances where new investments in tourism development have so highly increased property taxes that citizens can no longer live in the neighborhood.

I cite these pitfalls, not to dampen your enthusiasm for expanded tourism and the arts, but rather so that you can anticipate them and avoid them through better organization and planning.

**Your Own Supply Quiz**

One of the most important moves you can make toward improving the arts and tourism is to take stock of what you are now doing--how well does your Supply Side match up with traveler trends and interests?

For your guidance on this I have prepared a check list. I suggest that your tourism and arts leaders meet and discuss every one of these questions. The answers can reveal not only how well you are now doing but also needed changes in your tourism Supply development.

**One Last Word**

Now let me return to the main theme of this entire series of seminars--the arts. You have observed by now that I define arts very broadly, all the way from historic homes to scenic drives, as well as the traditional painting and music. To me, the range of human experience in the arts is very broad. The search for some degree of art experience is common to all of us. So, this is my beginning point for art's relationship to tourism--the desire of more people every year to be enriched by exposure to the many forms of art in their travels. My challenge to you today is to do your best to satisfy this desire in the most constructive manner possible.
FIGURE 1. Demand-Supply Balance. The planning of tourism should strive for a balance between demand (the travel market) and supply (development).
FIGURE 2. The Functioning Supply Side. Five interrelated components make up the system of the supply side of tourism.
THE ARTS AND TOURISM
SUPPLY SIDE QUIZ

ATTR ACTIONS

Because attractions are the life blood of tourism, a first step to build arts-based tourism in a community is to make a comprehensive survey of undeveloped art and culture resources. By "undeveloped" I refer to those foundations that have not yet been made into attraction establishments. Raw resources are not attractions. Until each site is developed with access and interpretation for visitors it is not yet an attraction. If you have not already done so, I suggest that you examine the following questions within and around your community.

* Are there opportunities for increasing the number and variety of dance productions?
* Have prose and poetry with localized themes been identified and made readily available to visitors?
* Have examples of vernacular and historic architecture been identified, restored and opened to the public?
* Can musical productions with local themes be increased?
* Can opera and theatrical productions of unique local value be increased?
* Can more museums of painting, sculpture, and photography be established?
* Are there adequate places for viewing and photographing the beauty of wildlife?
* Is there potential for scenic byways and tours?
* Is the community as attractive as it might be or are there too many areas that are ugly and need improvement?
* Is local folk art encouraged and can visitors find crafts representing the unique qualities of the area?
* Are special ethnic groups given full opportunity to perform and display their arts?
* Are children encouraged in schools to learn local art traditions and develop their artistic creativity?
* Are all organizations related to the arts stimulating the tourism opportunities of their programs?
* Are all funding sources for the arts well understood and utilized to the fullest?
* Are local governmental officials fully aware of the value of arts to tourism and support its development in their policies and actions?
* Are the several art-related attractions combined into themed tours?
* Has the potential for new festivals and events been explored?

When the potential for these and other new or expanded attractions has been inventoried, the next step is to identify the most logical agencies and organizations to take action. Design competitions and publicity on these opportunities could attract investors from all three development groups--commercial enterprise, nonprofit organizations, public services.
Then, following design, construction, and management, these new attractions can be promoted, thereby increasing the volume of visitors and improving economic impact.

TRANSPORTATION
Several questions should be raised regarding existing transportation and access to and within the area. Satisfactory experiences of visitors depend greatly on this function—a bad travel experience can negate all other aspects of a trip. Here are some questions to consider:

* Can the market origins of travelers reach your destination readily and easily?
* Are local transit systems, such as buses and taxis, efficient and attractive for visitors to use?
* Do street and highway planners consider visitor needs on all decisions of road and street improvements, controls and signage?
* In congested areas at peak use should alternative modes of people-moving be considered?
* Are street linkages among tourist attractions, services and facilities attractive and do they give a good impression of the community?

SERVICES
Visitors interested in the arts require much the same quality of services as other travelers. If arts are to thrive as a significant part of tourism, the following questions need to be asked:

* Do the guest rooms of hotels and motels contain information on local arts?
* Are the staffs of lodging and food services trained to guide tourists toward art and cultural attractions?
* Does the decor of travel service business support the arts—local paintings, photographs?
* Are the service businesses cooperating on expanding and establishing more art-oriented attractions?

INFORMATION
Probably the greatest deficiency within tourism development today is the lack of adequate information available to visitors. It is worthwhile to investigate the present level in your community and surrounding area with the following questions.

* At travel entry locations, are there visitor centers that contain descriptions of attractions and services and thow to find them.
* Is there adequate signage (such as "?" or "i" used in other countries) to lead visitors to these centers?
* Are guidebooks on the arts plentiful and easily accessed?
* Are all guidebooks accurate and kept up to date on open hours, prices, and other needed information?
* Do all art-oriented attractions have well-trained tour guides?
* Are self-guided tours adequately labeled and described?
* In potential traveler origin locations, is descriptive literature about the arts in your destination readily available?
* Have new interactive computerized information kiosks been installed in strategic locations in your community?
* Have new descriptive video devices been installed in car rentals?
* Are traveler emergencies dealt with quickly, courteously, and efficiently?
* Is traveler information on the arts readily available in tourist service businesses, such as motels, hotels, restaurants, and car service stations?
* Have hospitality programs been presented here?

PROMOTION

In today’s competitive tourism world, promotion continues to be a major function of tourism agencies. Research on marketing, such as market segmentation and conversion studies, are suggesting that new approaches to promotion are needed. Following are a few pertinent questions to be asked about local promotion.

* Have the promotional programs among the several players--attractions, service businesses, cities, counties, state--been coordinated to avoid duplication and conflict?
* Has the effectiveness of advertising programs been tested by means of conversion studies?
* Is advertising on the local arts placed in the most productive media to reach travel prospects?
* To what extent is publicity used to promote the arts in your area?
* Are public relations employed to promote the arts?
* Do tourist businesses offer incentives (discounts, premiums, packages) to promote visitors to local arts?

Prepared by
Dr. Clare A. Gunn, Professor Emeritus
Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences
Texas A&M University