CULTURAL COMMUNITY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

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I would like to open my comments with a story, one told by Anthony Tighe, a program analyst of the US National Endowment for the Arts. (Tighe, 1990) The story begins with the discovery of silver in the hills in 1878 and 12,000 people came to strike-it-rich. But, the government went on the gold standard in 1893 and by 1900 the community shrank to 600. Not much happened to bring life back into the community until four decades later.

In 1945, a Chicago businessman decided to build a vacation home there. He loved the area so much that he restored the old hotel and in 1948 promoted an American counterpart to the Saltzburg Music Festival. Over 2,000 people came to this town with little pavement, one hotel and no air service. The festival kept growing over the years, later adding a ballet and theater company. Now hundreds of thousands of visitors come to enjoy not only the arts but the scenery and winter sports. This is the story of Aspen, Colorado, a dramatic example of cultural tourism development and how it happened.

Today, throughout the world, one of the greatest of travel market changes is increased demand for what can be called cultural tourism. Although scholars as yet do not clearly define cultural tourism, it is usually thought of as the opposite of tourism based on natural resources. In other words, all the human place characteristics are becoming very important for travel destinations. Many destinations, once known only for their hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation, have discovered new tourism potential from their cultural resources.

Evidence of the market interest in U.S. cultural attractions from the U.K., France, Germany and Japan is shown in Table 1. Not only can cultural tourism contribute to the economy of communities, it also fosters a sense of place and pride among local residents more effectively than any other form of economic activity. According to one tourism market researcher, the three reasons people visit cultural attractions are: to experience a different time or place, to learn, and to share with others what they learn and enjoy (Peterson, 1990, 210).
TABLE 1

Percent of foreign travelers who came to activities in the United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>U.K.</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Japan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concerts/plays</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>38.3</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local festivals</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Museums/galleries</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>63.1</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic places</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>54.1</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commemorative places</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archeological places</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military historic sites</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: USTTA, 1987)

WHAT IS CULTURAL TOURISM?

If cultural tourism refers to travel based on cultural resources of a destination, what is included? The more obvious forms are those listed in the table. More than this, a community and a region must be aware that cultural tourism implies exploiting virtually everything about themselves—how they think, how they live, and what they believe is important in their lives. Surely, this includes the past and all that this heritage means. But, it also includes the present. Viewing cultural tourism in this broad way implies very careful planning to make sure that hordes of visitors will not damage the many fragile qualities of a local culture.

Considering where one might begin toward planning for cultural tourism, at least the following five kinds of foundations should be reviewed for their potential.

Prehistoric Life. Archaeologists are much more active today, revealing exciting finds of prehistoric animals and prehistoric man. Visitors are showing increased interest in fossils and other evidence of life thousands of years ago. How early people lived, their clothing, tools, weapons, art, religion, social life and villages continue to fascinate visitors.

Historic Life. Even more popular lately has become traveler interest in heritage and roots. In spite of the growth of theme parks, more and more people are flocking to buildings and sites important to our history. This type of travel has been popular in Europe for many years and is just now becoming a reality in North America. The many eras, such as exploration, missionary activity, fur trade, conflict, and settlement, are far enough removed in time to be of interest.

Ethnicity. Related to history are the rich and varied cultural differences of the many social and national groups who have come to North America. The so-called melting pot hasn’t
melted. Instead, we see a strong revival of Old World ties. Language, customs, arts, artifacts, crafts, beliefs, and social structures are of great interest to travelers.

**Legends.** Fanciful stories and tales are often of greater appeal than facts. Throughout our regions, early mining and timber operations stimulated many tall tales that are intriguing to the visitor. Folk art (printing, sculpture, household objects, scrimshaw), folk costumes, folk dancing, folk literature, folk music, and many kinds of folklore are cited more frequently as objectives of travel.

**Economic Development.** Tours through manufacturing and processing plants remain of strong interest to travelers. Engineering, scientific and technical achievements are also known to draw travelers to sites with these features.

**Other Foundations.** In addition, cultural tourism often refers to places that have developed resources such as quaint or picturesque villages, vernacular architecture, unusual settlement landscapes, and areas where human activity demonstrates dominant themes, such as religion, sports, spiritual landscapes, industry, and education.

**DEVELOPMENT REQUIRED**

At the outset, community tourism leaders must understand the difference between cultural resources and cultural development. Merely having some old homes, archaeological sites, and trails of historic significance is a start. But, until these resources are identified, designed and managed for visitor use they are not truly attractions. In fact, premature promotion can do great damage to these resources, bringing in hordes of people before proper preparation for their visit has been made.

Generally, cultural tourism development falls into two classes--physical development and program development.

**Program Development**

Program development encompasses a wide array of activities based on cultural tourism. Many communities have attracted large numbers of visitors to their festivals, concerts, plays, home tours, ceremonials, celebrations, and exhibitions based on the several cultural resources available. British Columbia lists many such events that already attract many visitors. It must be emphasized that these activities are a very effective way to compete with other tourist regions because they are unique to place.

Because large numbers of visitors for only a few days can put great stress on a community, such events must be well planned, organized and managed. For many communities, festivals have had great spinoff value by stimulating communication and cooperation among people and agencies that had not worked together before. Those responsible for transportation and parking, food service, safety, and rest room facilities as well as those planning for scheduling
and rainy day activities must work together.

Properly planned and managed festivals can pump many new dollars into a community in a short time.

**Physical Development**

New physical development may be necessary to improve economic impact from cultural tourism. Many communities have discovered that even relatively small investments at the start can create strong visitor image. Then, the major and longer-range developments will have more support later on.

Again, it must be emphasized that merely having cultural resources is not enough. They require planning, development and management if they are truly to function as attractions for new visitors. Communities seeking greater cultural tourism should consider the following kinds of development as real opportunities for making it happen. Many of these, I understand, may be eligible for financial assistance from your own British Columbia Heritage Trust.

a. Prehistoric restoration

Communities should contact archaeologists to discover potential for restoration of prehistoric areas. Extreme care must be exercised in developing such sites. Modern-day descendants of these early peoples need to be involved in order to protect the integrity of the earlier culture.

For example, often the most conspicuous artifacts of early peoples are skeletons and artifacts found in burial sites. However, exhuming and displaying these remains may be in conflict with the culture’s beliefs. Other interpretive means can be equally effective in providing visitors cultural enrichment without exhibiting the physical remnants of a society.

The planning of prehistoric sites for visitors should be performed by a team that includes: prospective management, landscape and architectural designers, exhibit designers, archaeologists, representative descendants of early cultures, and local tourism leaders. Critical are locations of drives, parking, visitor center, and interpretive trails.

b. Historic Restoration

Historic restoration has become very popular in recent years and development can take on several forms. Many heritage groups have accomplished much by resisting the destruction of older buildings. These efforts can become valuable for tourism but much more needs doing before they are ready for visitors.

Because not all old buildings can be converted to museums, many have potential for reuse. The exterior and other portions of the structure may be retained and rebuilt but modern
uses—restaurants, shops, performances—may have feasibility.

Special care must be exercised in the planning and design of redevelopment to provide the visitor with impressions of the past in ways that also protect the resource. In historic buildings, for example, rooms may need to be seen only, providing the guest with information by tour guide, literature, or audio presentations.

Authenticity must be balanced with durability of restoration. For an historic fort, for example, 18th century rebuilding may deteriorate rapidly if too literal an interpretation of construction is followed. The theme and image can be conveyed even when more durable modern construction techniques are used. Tasteful redesign can incorporate modern plumbing, electricity, heating and air conditioning, if needed.

c. Living History

Because many aspects of the past of interest to visitors no longer exist, a complete restoration may include trained actors, carrying out roles of living, working and playing as was done in the past. This technique has been accomplished in several locations for living history farms, shops, trades, and craft production, such as carving, pottery, and weaving.

Physical development requires redevelopment of sites and buildings as well as addition of visitor facilities—parking, restrooms, and information. Tour guides are often needed in addition to the role-playing employees. When appropriately designed, other visitor services may be offered nearby—food service, entertainment, sales of descriptive literature, sales of souvenirs and crafts. These revenue-producing services can supplement other sources of income for living history development.

d. Museums

Today, museums have updated their technology and methods to make them appealing attractions for visitors. Instead of massive collections of what for some may be considered old junk, museums now focus on themes and stories, supported by displays of artifacts. The context of museums varies widely from natural history to anthropology and modern man.

The planning and design of museum development may use older buildings or require new structures. Visitor flows from entrance to exit are very critical. Exhibits must be viewed in the sequence planned by the designers.

Again, the planning, design and management of museums requires input from specialists even though the initiative may come from local people.

e. Visitor Centers

Perhaps the greatest growth in cultural tourism development is creating new visitor
centers. Frequently, these function as surrogate attractions, concentrating visitors in a manageable location thereby protecting rare resources.

Visitor centers usually include the following functional areas: lobby, information counter, sales of books and slides, rest rooms, exhibits, displays, dioramas, and auditorium. Live lectures or prepared video presentations provide the visitor with a capsule description of the site and cultural event.

The visitor center should be located so that it does not destroy the aesthetic value of the surrounding cultural sites. Often sites are merely viewed and not actually visited. This concentrates wear and tear and allows management control of visitors.

Adjunct services may include souvenir sales, craft sales, entertainment and food service.

f. Interpretive Tours, Trails

Several cultural sites can be coordinated by means of walking tours. Often, parkways and street systems can be utilized for sequencing a series of historic buildings and sites. The University of Calgary has prepared such an interpretive linkage system for the community of Lacombe. (Jamieson, 1989)

A "Heritage Trail" is well under way in the city of Edmonton. It is designed as an exclusively pedestrian, barrier free promenade between the Provincial Government Centre and the Convention Centre. (Heritage, 1983) This is a tree-lined promenade along the original pathway that connected the early settlement of Edmonton with the Hudson's Bay Trading Post. (Heritage, 1990) The trail is planned to stimulate restoration of several important historic buildings on its path and integrate them into a singularly themed attraction for visitors as well as residents.

As all forms of economic development have become more technical and complicated, visitors are less knowledgeable about them. These places become opportunities for development of interesting tours of processing plants, manufacturing plants, forest nurseries, mining operations, and agricultural processes and production. Development for such tours is usually minimal, requiring access, tour guiding and considerations of safety.

g. Outdoor Theaters

Facts about cultural heritage are of interest to visitors but become much more vivid and impressive when dramatized. For many years, several locations in North America have been popularized by means of outdoor dramas.

Development of outdoor theaters requires several considerations of site and structures. Locations away from intrusions of light, noise and offensive odors are important. Theater facilities and equipment are equally needed. Sometimes, ancillary services are needed, such as
food service and sales of souvenirs, recordings, and crafts related to the cultural theme.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

How do these developments become translated into economic impact in a community or region? Experience is demonstrating two major ways that cultural tourism can aid the economy.

Many attractions of cultural interest are self-sustaining and employ people in their operations. Revenues are obtained from admissions, food and beverage sales, visitor services, and merchandise operations. Through economic multipliers, impact on the community can be very worthwhile.

Perhaps of larger economic value is the stimulation of greater lodging, food service, transportation, and shopping because cultural attractions bring more people to the area. These service businesses, in turn, provide jobs, incomes, and generate taxes.

Although research on economics of cultural tourism is not plentiful, our Bureau of Economic Analysis reported that in 1988 Americans paid more for admissions to performing arts ($4.4 billion) than to sports ($3.2 billion), both of which usually require some travel. (Tighe,1990,4) It is interesting to note that a study of 154 heritage attractions in Canada, U.S., and U.K., showed that cultural attractions with the greatest number of visitors also had the highest prices. (Stewart, 1991, 5) Apparently, cultural tourism reaches into an upscale segment of the travel market. Even if cultural attractions are subsidized and may not make it on their own, they can increase receipts for the community tourist service businesses.

HOW TO DEVELOP CULTURAL TOURISM

Communities and regions can accomplish improved benefits from cultural tourism development by following a few basic steps. But, one can expect that this kind of development will require team action, will take time and may require considerable new investment. However, ample examples show that even with these considerations, cultural tourism development can be an effective tool to diversify the local economy. From the start, communities should avail themselves of all possible sources of technical and financial assistance, such as from the Heritage Canada Foundation and British Columbia Heritage Trust.

The following summary briefly outlines six key steps in the process of creating greater economic diversity and impact through cultural tourism.

1. Review of Markets

Any community or region seeking improved tourism must obtain current information on traveler characteristics. If market data are already available from provincial and federal sources, they should be utilized. Even so, this should be supplemented by simple surveys at the local
For cultural tourism development, answers to key questions will help developers. Where do travelers already come from? What is the ratio of regional to long-distance markets? What activities do they now engage in within your region? And, most important, what other activities would they and their friends and relatives come to do if available?

All tourism development is highly dependent on today’s markets and trends toward the future.

2. Review of Cultural Resources

Seldom have community tourism leaders and organizations made a thorough screening of their own resources. This need not be a time-consuming nor costly effort. The main hurdle to overcome is deciding to do it. A local volunteer team with only minimal technical assistance is usually astounded at the many resources right at hand. This step is not merely a listing of existing cultural activities. On the contrary, it is a search for locations and characteristics that may have potential.

Again, the kinds of resources to identify include:

- Prehistoric Life
- Historic Life
- Ethnicity
- Legends, Lore
- Economic Development

This step is usually an exciting adventure by local people because for the first time they see their assets in a new light. Residents tend to become jaded by familiar scenes and settings. Only when attention is focused on resource potential are many new opportunities discovered.

3. Gap Analysis

This third step requires a comparison of the findings from studies of markets and resources. The intent here is to discover "gaps" between. Often communities have become complacent about their traditional travel attractions. This step requires a critical examination of how well the existing supply meets tourism demand. The many kinds of new cultural travel market trends often are being missed because development has not yet caught up with them. At this stage in the process it is likely that a list of opportunities for developing cultural resources have already revealed themselves.

4. Discovery of Opportunities

The results from step 3 can now be analyzed for opportunities of projects for cultural
tourism development. Again, these opportunities can be classified into the two categories of programs and physical development.

Has the study of resources suggested opportunities for new festivals and events? It may suggest expansion or modification of an existing festival. Have some critical dates in the area’s history been forgotten? Do they have potential for new celebrations? Could local talent be tapped to stage a heritage drama if given some professional assistance? Could an exhibition of local economic and scientific accomplishment be held?

This is a brainstorming step that should not be inhibited by questions of barriers such as cost, who’s responsible, or whether it’s feasible. Rather, this is an open-ended search for opportunity, allowing input from a wide cross section of the community or region, not just a few tourism leaders.

A significant outcome of this exercise will be the realization that virtually all of these opportunities for cultural tourism development are equally valuable for residents. This truth is due to the fact that development is here defined as resource protection as well as resource utilization.

5. Staging

Not all opportunities can be tapped at once; some take much longer and have much greater cost. The long list of opportunities needs to be examined for priorities. The very first stage should include only those projects that have the greatest visibility, relatively small investment and short-term accomplishment. For example, holding a heritage festival may identify culture as a potential tourism resource in a community and stimulate further projects of restoration and redevelopment with more permanent economic value.

6. Feasibilities and Search for Sponsors

After opportunities have been identified roughly, they need to be examined more carefully regarding their feasibility. This step involves testing the opportunities against the policies, goals and objectives of three kinds of developers—commercial enterprise, nonprofit organizations and government agencies. (Often, projects are developed jointly between these three sectors).

Increasingly, cultural resource attractions are becoming self-sustaining financially, making them appealing to business entrepreneurs. Stewart’s study of cultural attractions revealed that the rule of public subsidy was a myth. (Stewart, 1991,2) In fact, he reports that the per capita gate revenue was 34% higher for non-subsidized attractions. He states further..."we found no obvious relationship between the quality of the interpretive experience and the type of ownership." Commercial facilities demonstrated greater rewards to management for achieving self-sufficiency.
Certainly, in all instances possible, commercial feasibility should be the first criterion for investigating potential cultural attractions because they create less burden upon public resources.

A very popular action group in cultural attractions is the nonprofit sector, such as historical societies, heritage societies, art societies and performing arts associations. In both the United States and Canada, the legal classification of nonprofit allows considerable revenue production. But the caveat is the use of revenues to enhance the product rather than the accumulation of wealth. Revenues for nonprofit cultural attractions are usually generated from food, products, and collector items as well as from admissions and donations. Each organization has its own goals and policies.

A very large sector for cultural tourism development in both countries is that of public agencies such as national parks, provincial (state) parks, heritage agencies, and local government agencies. Museums, historic sites, archaeological sites, outdoor theaters, heritage parks, and living museums are often considered a part of the public weal and justified by public policy.

The point of this step is to search out possible sponsors from each of the three sectors. Reports, public meetings, and publicity regarding the opportunities found in Step 4 can be utilized to attract the right "fit" between projects and sponsors.

CULTURAL TOURISM PRINCIPLES

Although there is little question about the value of cultural tourism development, it must be entered into wisely and carefully. Otherwise, it can drastically damage local quality of life. Even though progressive change is inevitable, it should be sufficiently adaptable so that it is not disruptive. It may be found that cultural resources are even more perishable than natural resources, requiring even greater planning for sustainability.

Described here are just a few of the more important principles that should be of help to those areas developing cultural tourism.

Clustering

For several reasons it is desirable to cluster several attractions of a similar theme if possible. It makes them more competitive with other destinations. It gives them stronger promotional impact in the marketplace. Many minor attractions, when clustered by physical or program means, complement each other to form a viable critical mass. Clustering can create an attraction complex that takes longer to visit, provides greater visitor satisfaction, and increases economic impact.

Resource Protection

Very critical to cultural tourism is protection of the resources for development. Physical
resources, such as sites, buildings, structures, landscapes, artifacts, and archaeological sites demand protection and restoration. But, even more sensitive are the life style, cultural qualities, beliefs, policies, and traditions of past and present people. These values can be eroded by tourism, or, through proper planning and management, can become the foundation for enjoyment and enrichment by visitors. For example, the rich and colorful past of aboriginal peoples can be very enlightening and educational when properly handled. Or, without sensitivity and good taste, descendants of these peoples can feel they have been overly exploited by others. Certainly, anthropologists and representatives of these special populations must be involved in all such cultural tourism development.

Interpretation

The functions of interpretation, originating in national parks, are well adapted to all kinds of cultural tourism. Because visitors are usually unfamiliar with the background, extent, and significance of cultural attractions, they need interpretive assistance. This help must be better than mere memorized narratives by tour guides. Trained professional interpreters do more than just describe; they paint stimulating mental pictures associated with the artifact, event, or building so that the visitor learns as he enjoys. One accomplished interpreter has identified key elements in a successful interpretive program: fun, ego-involving, value-loaded, responsive, and pertinent (Sontag, 1986, 82).

Integration

Cultural tourism must not be considered in a cosmetic manner; it must be developed as an integral part of all local social, economic, and environmental life. No form of tourism has deeper community and area roots. The stamp of past heritage is visible and a part of today. Cultural tourism is not merely the prerogative of history buffs; it involves everyone and every thing in the area. When the many sectors recognize the potential of cultural tourism and cooperate on planning, developing, and managing, it can become one of the most rewarding accomplishments ever undertaken.
REFERENCES


