PLANNING GUIDELINES
FOR NATIONAL AND REGIONAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

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(Presentation Copy)

It is a pleasure to be back in Venezuela after my first visit, twenty-four years ago. It was then that your Division of Natural Resources brought me in to study your national parks, a very important segment of your tourism.

I have been fortunate to have studied and worked with tourism for my entire career of over four decades. In addition to teaching tourism in major universities, I have also had the opportunity to visit and do consulting work throughout North America and over a dozen countries elsewhere. This experience has convinced me that tourism is one of the most valuable economic and social activities known to mankind.

But, a major challenge facing tourism everywhere today is to improve our ability to manage tourism and improve its development. The present preoccupation with promotion tends to de-emphasize the need for new and better quality of things to promote.

For this presentation, I would like to put forward for your consideration two major changes, that if implemented, could dramatically enhance the many benefits of tourism in any nation or region. These changes are managing tourism as a system and discovering new opportunity.
MANAGING TOURISM AS A SYSTEM

Many regions of the world already have made great strides in their development of tourism. However, the 1990s are presenting new challenges. Economic, social, and environmental changes are demanding that traditional approaches to tourism need improvement. One of these is what I call "site-only" decision-making. Tourist businesses and park agencies necessarily concentrate on their own site locations, building designs, and management for internal operation. Even though these are essential, they fall short of reaching objectives -- their own, and those of the region and nation. The reason: lack of managing tourism as a system as the tourist actually uses it. The many parts of tourism development are more closely interrelated than is popularly considered.

A parallel can be drawn with an electrical system. Just as it consists of a generator, transmission lines, and end uses of great benefit and enjoyment, so it is with tourism. Attractions at destinations stimulate travel over transportation networks. By means of activities and services, we gain enjoyment and enrichment from the experience of travel. But, in either system, when any part breaks down, the entire system fails to meet its purpose. For tourism, this breakdown of the overall system often results in less than desired economic impact, social conflict, and environmental degradation.

An example may illustrate the point. A recent study of tourism of a South Pacific Island revealed hotel occupancy of less than 50%, less than 10% repeat business, and low guest satisfaction. All this was in spite of magnificent mountain scenery, marvelous beaches, and relatively uncongested development -- items the travel market survey listed as highest priority. In spite of good design and management of some individual properties and a reasonable amount
of promotion of the island, tourism was failing because of lack of planning and managing tourism as a system. The mountain scenery was not protected and was being eroded, spoiling its beauty and damaging wildlife habitat. The sea was being polluted with sewage from hotels. There were virtually no developed attractions that utilized the abundant cultural and natural resources. Tourism movement was strangled by a monopoly on transportation. Opportunities for tourism growth were abundant but it was being stagnated and even reduced because the system was breaking down.

This is not an isolated case but rather is symptomatic of the need for new policies and new organizational structures everywhere -- to plan for integrating the many parts of the overall tourism system. This can be done at the same time that individual integrity of development is maintained. The solution does not call for autocratic centralized planning but rather better cooperation and collaboration of actors already in place.

**DISCOVERING NEW OPPORTUNITY**

My second point today is to describe a technique we have found useful in discovering areas of the greatest future potential for developing tourism. It utilizes geographic analysis to identify locations best suited to the establishment of new and expanded attractions and other supply side development.

The following slides will assist in explaining what is meant by the need for greater emphasis on tourism as a system and the establishment of better development.
1. The foundation for all tourism development is the balance between market demand and development of the supply side. Investigation at a national or regional scale may reveal need for major improvements in the supply side to match current demand.

2. This diagram illustrates the major components of the supply side of tourism: attractions, transportation, services (hotels, restaurants, etc.), promotion, and information. All of these components and all of their many parts are dependent upon each other. Any change in one affects the others. However our agencies, organizations and businesses are focused primarily only on their own part of tourism. This suggests the need for better communication and cooperation among the managers of all the parts of the system.

3. This diagram illustrates how the tourism economy is dependent upon supply side development. Immediate economic impact is through the service businesses--hotels, restaurants, retail sales. But, these services depend upon the provision for visitor activities that meet travel market expectations. These activities take place in areas and on sites that are developed. Such development, in turn, depends greatly upon the resource base. I have found it useful to reverse this sequence.

4. Therefore, it would seem that if the resource base were analyzed, certain areas would have greater potential than others. In the next few minutes, an approach to such an analysis will be explained. It includes identifying key factors such as the natural and cultural resources, the transportation systems, and the location and characteristics of cities. The thesis is that the zones of greatest potential are locations where these factors converge.
5. The process for doing this is comparatively easy and inexpensive. It has been applied successfully in the United States for state tourism plans for Oklahoma, Washington, Delaware, and South Carolina, most of these in cooperation with Price Waterhouse and the Office of Government Services.

Most of the information for this macro analysis is already available. The major steps include:

1. Reviewing information on key factors—the distribution and quality of natural and cultural resources, transportation, and cities.

2. Mapping each factor, by computer.

3. Weighting the several factor maps.

4. Overlaying the factor maps, revealing areas of greatest convergence of factors.

5. Interpreting these maps and developing recommendations for appropriate project development.

6. An example of the application of this technique may assist in its understanding. It was applied to a 10,000 km² area in South Carolina. Illustrated here is the transportation network, three principal cities, and primary travel entrance points.

7. By computer, the several factor maps were overlaid to produce two composite maps—one for development directed toward markets interested in natural resource-based activities and one for development for markets interested in cultural resource-based activities. (The complete paper illustrates how these factor maps were weighted.)
8. The next few slides are typical views of each of the factors that were studied and mapped. The region contains an abundance of water resources suited to outdoor recreation-focused travel. There are three major reservoirs...

9. and, many streams, including several beautiful waterfalls.

10. The forests, wildflowers, and wildlife were studied and their general distribution was mapped.

11. Because of its importance for scenic appeal, photography, and mountain recreation, the topographic change was studied.

12. Existing natural resource tourism development, such as public parks, was identified because it provides a strong indicator for future expansion.

13. Near the reservoirs and beneath the water surface are many sites of prehistoric significance, especially the locations of native American villages.

14. The many historic buildings and sites were studied and mapped.

15. Locations of significant economic development were identified because of their potential for plant tours and business travel objectives.

16. Cities make up an important factor because they are focal points for travel services and contain basic infrastructure of water supply, waste disposal, police, and fire protection.

17. Finally, the transportation network was identified, with particular reference to access and capacity.

18. The Greenville-Spartanburg airport had just been expanded.

19. All these factors were mapped showing generalized areas of high, medium, and low importance. This illustrates the macro map of water resources.
20. When all six factor maps are overlaid, the result is a composite map showing areas of potential—(red) highest, (blue) medium, and (yellow) low.

21. Then, professional experience and interpretation were applied to the computer-generated map, resulting in this generalized map of tourism development zones based on natural resource foundations. The study process provided insight for recommended project development. For example for Zone "B", the study identified potential for development of new lakefront resorts, new marinas, new scenic drives, and new commercial RV parks. It should be pointed out that the white areas represent zones with very little foundation for tourism development.

22. A similar computer-generated composite map was produced for cultural-resource-based development.

23. This was then interpreted, producing several zones with the greatest potential based on cultural resources. In Zone "A" for example, a local tourism leader saw new opportunity to cooperate with other communities in the zone to develop new historic and prehistoric attractions.

24. Overall tourism development potential zones are the result of adding these two zone maps together. This geographic distribution suggested not only areas of greatest potential but also the opportunity to develop new tours relating the zones together.

25. It must be emphasized that this is merely one technical approach to assist in identifying tourism development opportunities. Several important implications must be highlighted:

1. These zones suggest the need for new cooperation and collaboration because they often overlap political jurisdictions.
2. Because both demand and supply factors continue to change, the zone boundaries need to be adjusted regularly.

3. To be most effective, this approach should be integrated into other overall development plans.

4. Each zone must be studied in greater detail to determine if tourism capacity has already been reached. Some areas, even with the best design solutions, may not be able to support more tourism without environmental degradation or social conflict.

5. In order to provide the best balance of business success and environmental protection, professional planners and designers should be engaged.

26. In conclusion, my experience of working toward better planning for over four decades confirms the need for regions and nations to examine more carefully their potential for future tourism development. And, this potential is highly dependent upon two major actions:

* First is the need to interrelate the many independent parts of tourism into a better managed overall system. When this is done, everyone benefits--the traveler as well as the host.

* Second, by some means, the zones for best potential development need to be identified. Then, all development sectors have a much better chance for success, the visitor can be offered better and more satisfying activities, and the resource base can be given better protection.

I hope these concepts and approaches will prove useful to you in the future.
27. Certainly, Venezuela and all other regions around the world have an abundance of undeveloped cultural resources.

28. as well as natural resources that offer potential for tourism, but only if properly planned and managed.