THE GREAT PLAINS TOURISM CHALLENGE
by Clare A. Gunn, Professor Emeritus
Texas A&M University
University of Nebraska at Kearney
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Few economic or social happenings today offer greater promise than tourism. Regions and nations around the world are seeking new and better ways to reap new benefits from tourism.

It has been my privilege for over four decades to have the opportunity few have--to study, observe, travel, teach and do consulting work in this fascinating field of tourism. Many positive results can be obtained from tourism. This is well documented.

However, my experience has demonstrated that there are several misconceptions of tourism. These tend to be inhibitors, and even barriers, to gaining the most from tourism development. I would like to emphasize just six of the most common misconceptions I find everywhere I go. These endorse the need for better and more widespread education on the many facets and dynamics of tourism.

MISCONCEPTIONS

Misconception 1. That tourism development is the same as industrial development.

* No, tourism distributes markets to products--destinations.
* Therefore, places become very important--not so with manufactured goods.
* Places are different--have unique opportunities.
* Tourism places are more "perishable" than manufactured products.
* Tourism development requires many decisionmakers--industrial development limited to a few CEOs.
* Tourism leadership broader than for industrial development.

**Misconception 2.** That only promotion is needed for growth.
* No, much more is needed; how effective is promotion?
* Often need better tourist information.
* Does promotion agree with supply?
* Often supply upgrading is more important.
* Need to readjust priorities—promotion may not be highest.

**Misconception 3.** That tourism is an industry.
* True, it has a "business" sector, but,
* Business sector is not the "product"—facilitates tourism.
* Tourist business serves 2 markets: resident, traveler.
* Tourism is a complex system, not one industry.
* The system is dynamic—all parts interrelated.
* System is influenced by many externalities.

**Misconception 4.** That tourism is developed and run by business sector only.
* No, it is tri-sectoral:
  a. Governments (e.g. parks, highways, infrastructure).
  b. Nonprofit organizations (e.g. museums, historic sites)
  c. Commercial enterprise (e.g. hotels, restaurants, airlines).

**Misconception 5.** That tourism does not involve resources.
* Often called a "smokeless industry", implying no relation to resources.
* Most attractions: natural or cultural resource based.
* Too often tourism leaders, developers are apathetic.
agonistic toward environmentalism.

* Human resources--very important.

**Misconception 6. That tourism system is running smoothly.**

* Often needs a "tune-up".
  --to improve visitor satisfactions--the real "product"
  --to tap new markets
  --to avoid host-guest conflict
  --to improve business success
  --to balance promotion with product realities
  --to avoid environmental erosion.

**CONCLUSIONS**

* Tourism development is truly unique; may benefit from other kinds of development but requires special understanding, action.

* Tourism development needs much more than promotion: requires analysis and improvement of all other components: transportation, attractions, information, service businesses.

* Tourism development requires long-range vision and planning; cannot be developed quickly and simply.

* Tourism requires greater interaction, cooperation and even collaboration among all the parts within all three sectors.

* Tourism demands greater sensitivity and action toward environmentalism, the very foundation of most tourism.

* Tourism provides many opportunities for a better economy and greater social rewards, but requires better education, better planning, better local involvement, and better design.