THE NEW RECREATION-TOURISM ALLIANCE

by

Dr. Clare A. Gunn, Professor Emeritus
Recreation and Parks Department
Texas A & M University

Biographical Sketch:

Dr. Gunn, a pioneer educator in tourism and recreation, has published extensively on topics of design, planning, and environmental use. He holds a Ph.D. in landscape architecture, has received many awards including a governor’s citation, and has been named Fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects. His experience of over four decades has included serving on boards of the U.S. Travel Data Center, The Travel and Tourism Research Association, work in six universities and consultation worldwide.

Mailing Address:

Dr. Clare A. Gunn
1602 Glade Street
College Station, Texas 77840

Key Words:

Recreation, Tourism, Overlap, Cooperation, South Africa
THE NEW RECREATION-TOURISM ALLIANCE

Abstract

Although the fields of tourism and recreation have grown from separate roots and are supported by separate organizations, there is sufficient overlap to foster cooperation and even alliance.

Recreation generally encompasses human activity during leisure. Research frequently focuses on behavior and on environmental impacts. Tourism is promoted for its economic impact. Research concerns mostly market characteristics.

But, many areas of overlap are stimulating integration throughout the world. Development and management for recreation and tourism require similar considerations of design and planning. Both fields are influenced greatly by similar externalities of market preferences, promotional emphases, information systems, services, resource foundations, and transportation.

Outstanding is the new research collaboration between South Africa's tourism agency and the nation's recreation association. University scholars in four fields are leading tourism research efforts, directed and coordinated by the South African Association of Sports Science, Physical Education and Recreation.

Former coexistence and even antagonism are being replaced by new cooperation and alliances.
At long last, it appears that historic segregation of the fields of recreation and tourism is being replaced by increased communication, and sometimes even cooperation and collaboration. This new trend is not the result of newfound altruism, but rather a realistic recognition of interdependency. Although the two fields will continue to retain their separate identities and purposes, there is ample ground for networking on mutually significant issues. The purpose of this paper is to put forth some major relationships and to describe an innovative case in South Africa. Perhaps this and other similar discussions will stimulate greater universal integration between these two fields.

Before indulging in advocacy of integration of tourism and recreation, one should understand the distinctively different characteristics as well as overlaps between these fields. Following is a review of well-known purposes and practices of these fields.

Recreation

Recreation is a contrived concept, primarily American, that encompasses many different kinds of activity. Other countries for many years have fostered separate leisure and sports activities, but not usually under the umbrella term of recreation. Outdoor activities such as hunting, fishing, hiking, mountain climbing, snow-skiing, boating, sailing, and canoeing, have been practiced and supported for many years by independent organizations. Universities and colleges identified several recreation programs
such as sports, athletic, and physical fitness, as important adjuncts to an academic education.

As recreation activities were deemed essential to a civilized society, strong advocacy arose for governmental support and provision of recreation opportunity for the general public. Thus institutionalized, the concept of recreation began to encompass specific programs, facilities, and services. Generally, these were provided without on-site fees, being justified as public goods, and supported by public funds. The more that recreation became institutionalized, the more the objectives, facilities, and professional guidance was given definition. In the United States, this was expressed in recreation programs in schools, cities, counties, and states. Outdoor recreation, strongly fostered in the late 1950's, resulted in substantive federal-state input, evidenced by the creation of a federal agency, the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation.

In recent decades, market economy countries have seen a great increase in "commercial" recreation--businesses providing entertainment, and a variety of activities such as at resorts, marinas, fitness centers, major spectator sports, guided river running, theme parks and cruises.

As institutions expanded their interests in recreation, they began to research topics such as recreational needs and preferences, frequency of participation, behavioral and demographic characteristics, and relationships to societal welfare. The concept of recreation has become firmly imbedded in the functions of nations throughout the world. Many examples are cited in the
papers of the 31st AIEST Congress, September 13-19, 1981, held in Cardiff, Wales.

Kaspar (1981:56) identifies many recreation organizations in Czechoslovakia that provide leadership and instruction in game-hunting, bee-keeping, angling, and gardening. He reports that these include memberships of over 700,000. Their scope of interest includes also several broad environmental matters, such as conservation of nature, tree planting, feeding game in winter, supervising the purity of waters and lectures for youth and general public on recreational needs.

Travis (1981:20) cites the trend toward greater study of recreation in Europe. German reductions in work-time have allowed greater home-based and more physical recreation activities. Spanish studies have revealed the economic problems that tend to constrain leisure-time activities for many of their people. Studies comparing British and Swedish recreation reveal great disparities in population segments that participate--many more affluent engage in holiday-taking in Sweden.

International recreation and leisure journals now report results of many studies being performed by individuals in recreational and educational institutions.

Generally, the tenets of recreation include:

* activity engaged in during leisure
* activity for pleasure, enjoyment, or personal enrichment
* most often physical activity, but also passive
* largely the responsibility of government, but increasingly by the private sector
* outdoor, holiday, and vacation recreation usually require travel
* studies of recreation needs, preferences, activities
* studies of environmental and use capacities

**Tourism**

Tourism now generally encompasses all personal travel except commuting. As stated by Mathieson and Wall (1982:1):

Tourism is the temporary movement of people to destinations outside their normal places of work and residence, the activities undertaken during their state in these destinations, and the facilities created to cater to their needs.

Until recently, most tourism research was performed by businesses who kept a proprietary hold on the results. In the last few decades, scholars have turned their attention to tourism research methodologies and applications. Results are then presented at public conferences and published in journals available to the public at large. It wasn’t until 1987 that the first tourism research handbook was published (Ritchie and Goeldner, 1987). The forty-three chapters are grouped under eight major headings: a managerial perspective; fundamentals of tourism research; national, regional and municipal perspectives; some disciplinary perspectives; an industry sector perspective; assessing the impacts of tourism; data collection methods of particular relevance; and special marketing applications.

Because tourism was seen early on as having economic benefits, the main thrust of tourism agencies worldwide became promotion.
Governments have increasingly provided huge financial support for promotional programs. In recent years, greater interest in markets—those who travel—has emerged. Studies are identifying geographical, demographic, and general behavioral characteristics of travelers.

Most recently has the concept of market segmentation—subdividing into homogeneous subsets (Kolter, 1972:166)—been applied to the field of tourism. This concept gives promotional agencies the opportunity of focusing promotional messages to key segments of the market.

In many nations, three sectors are involved in tourism development. Governments are heavily involved in transportation with many nations owning and controlling highways, railways, airlines, airports, taxies, and buses. In some instances, they own and manage attractions such as parks, museums, and arenas. Often, service businesses are either developed, owned, or managed by governments. In market-economy countries, several components of tourism—lodging, food services, travel agents, automobile and bus manufacturers, airplane manufacturers, fuel production, entertainment, advertising, publishing travel literature—are performed by commercial enterprise. And, throughout the world, nonprofit organizations are increasingly developing many aspects of tourism.

Generally, the basic tenets of tourism have become:

* travel from home to destinations
* expenditure of monies during travel
* promotion of travel by public and private sectors
* stimulating economic impact from tourism
* hospitality service businesses
* catering to both business and pleasure travel
* studies of market characteristics

Recreation and Tourism Overlaps

In spite of these many characteristics that seem to set the fields of tourism and recreation apart, there are sufficient overlaps to suggest great amounts of cooperation and collaboration.

Perhaps the greatest overlap between these fields occurs within the arena of human activity. Much of traveler activity fits the definitional scope of recreation. Tourism destinations are heavily involved in providing recreation opportunities for their visitors. In fact, virtually all of outdoor recreation demands travel—hence, it becomes a part of tourism. Hunting, fishing, hiking, mountain climbing, snow-skiing, water-skiing, boating, swimming, bird-watching, picnicking, golf, and many more are listed in studies of recreation and occur frequently in tourism development and promotion. Correlation between tourism and work-leisure modes are described in detail by Whittles (1989:18). And Butler-Adam (1988) researched black-white recreation and tourism patterns in South Africa. He identified several obstacles to black participation including denial of access to facilities and transportation in spite of similar recreation preferences among the two races.

Another dimension of overlap occurs at the physical development level. National parks throughout the world have increasingly become travel destinations. Even though managerial philosophy and
policy have been focused on resource protection and recreation, their function for tourism is just now being recognized. Much controversy has focused on tourism impacts on the environment. But, good planning and design are demonstrating that resources can be protected at the same time masses of visitors can be handled (Gunn 1988a).

Perhaps least understood are the interdependencies of the two fields and therefore, the need for greater organizational ties. Managers and developers in both fields are impacted greatly by changes in market preferences, transportation, promotional emphases, information systems, lodging and food facilities, and competition from other attractions (Gunn 1988b). The dynamics of these interrelationships demand much greater interworking between researchers, practitioners, and organizations.

Emerging as a major function of both tourism and recreation is interpretation. Its function is to assist the visitor, to accomplish management goals, and to promote public understanding and appreciation (Sharpe 1982). As recreation and travel markets have become more urbanized and distanced from their historic roots, the need for interpreting natural and cultural resources has increased. Visitor centers with exhibits, dioramas, lectures, audio-visual presentations, and demonstrations are in demand as never before. Performing and fine arts are now assisting visitors at destinations in their appreciation and enrichment. Both recreation and tourism are now benefiting from better understandings of human ecology by means of interpretive programs (Machlis and Field 1984:157).
South Africa--A Case of Tourism-Recreation Collaboration

Outstanding is the relatively recent collaboration between the federal tourism agency and the nationwide nonprofit recreation organization within the Republic of South Africa.

In recent years, serious political and racial issues in this progressive industrialized nation stimulated foreign powers to exact stringent economic sanctions against the country. Although this action may have stimulated erosion of apartheid, it dramatically reduced tourism within the country. Access is more circuitous and the image of a troubled land has dampened traveler interest in this interesting and beautiful destination.

As a consequence, the South African Tourism Board (SATOUR) sought assistance in performing research that could result in stimulating improved tourism. Meanwhile, the South African Association of Sports Science, Physical Education and Recreation (SAASSPER) had grown in stature to encompass many professional researchers and practitioners throughout the country. Their meetings, congresses, and membership interests included many topics of recreational behavior and activities at resorts as well as within communities. Their professional journal demonstrated understanding of research methodologies as well as pragmatic application to tourism.

In 1986, based upon familiarity with each other's roles, these two agencies agreed to collaborate on a tourism research effort. SATOUR has now appointed SAASSPER as its "official research agent."

The justification is stated (Research 1988):
SAASSPER is a professional organization that concentrates mainly on research and training in recreation science and related fields and coordinates research actions in an intra- and interdisciplinary manner. Most researchers in the field of recreation science and tourism are members of SAASSPER, or already have contact with the Association.

The infrastructure that is necessary in order to coordinate research in a national context therefore already exists, and this is why SATOUR decided to involve the Association as partner in its research programme.

The statement of the research aim is as follows:

To create a permanent body to identify and utilize skilled resources that will serve the tourism industry on a continuing and long-term basis by collecting, processing, analyzing, interpreting and making available relevant information; as well as by coordinating tourism research at the national level so that the industry’s decision and planning may be based on a sound foundation.

More specific objectives demonstrate the long-term depth of relationship between these two bodies. Intended is research at the local as well as national levels. Concern over resource utilization is included. It is intended that all research results
will be widely disseminated and that their use will be promoted. The scope is to be broad enough to lay the foundation for a national tourism plan.

A National Committee for Tourism Research has been formed under the chairmanship of Dr. Piet Rautenbach. The actual Tourism Research Coordination Unit is under the direction of Carl Fouche of SAASSPER.

Four fields have been identified and university researchers have been named to direct the studies in these fields. Professor John F. Butler-Adam, Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Durban-Westville, heads the field of Internal Tourism. The area of Natural Resources, Facilities and Infrastructure is headed by Professor P. S. Hattingh, Department of Geography, University of Pretoria. Dr. Jacobus N. Steyn, Vice-Rector of Cape Technicon, Cape Town, heads the research in Marketing and Business Audit. Finally, Financial and Statistics Analysis is directed by Professor A. P. Zevenbergen, Bureau for Financial Analysis, University of Pretoria. Over time and as new needs arise, other specialists will be engaged to carry on needed research.

At the outset, several research topics were identified and work has begun on them. Included are:

National Research Register (continuous updating)
A data base of public accommodation facilities
A socio-economic profile of the tourist
Accessibility of facilities at public accommodation facilities
Development of a tourism flow pattern model
The manpower and training needs in the tourism industry

An investigation into the role and share of hunting in the tourism industry

Perceptions of foreign tourists of South African tourism infrastructure as well as the motivation for visits to the RSA

The impact of legal limitations on the tourism industry

Conclusions

Because both recreation and tourism, as concepts, are multidisciplinary, there are strong arguments for cooperation and even affiliation. Even though these fields have had separate origins and are now fostered by separate organizations and constituencies worldwide, much integration is already taking place.

Research of traveler and visitor behavior and environmental impacts is being utilized by both fields to a greater extent today, but there are few mechanisms available to stimulate greater joint scholarly effort.

There is much similarity in the planning and design of places and facilities for tourism and recreation. Yet professionals have not taken strong leadership roles to integrate tourism and recreation development.

In spite of common management principles and practices, there remain many obstacles to sharing management skills. Probably turf protection is the greatest barrier. Too often, park and resource managers and tourism developers foster more antagonisms than cooperation. Gradually, however, innovative leaders of both fields
are finding mutual benefit from coaction.

Organizations oriented to recreation and tourism are beginning to see advantages of cooperation. By means of sponsoring joint meetings, research, and projects, the fields are becoming integrated. The current joint research program in South Africa is a dramatic illustration.

Finally, many educational institutions are offering integrated tourism and recreation education and training. Tourism and park management programs in colleges and universities are being augmented by courses from each field. Future researchers, practitioners, and teachers will benefit from these understandings of strong relationships between the two fields.

Certainly, alliance is now replacing coexistence and separateness of the past.
REFERENCES


