TOURISM--THE NEW WAVE

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Years ago, the wave of industrialization swept over society. More recently, we are told that the industrial era has now been replaced by the information wave.

Today, I would argue that we are well into the third wave--travel and tourism. Nothing else provides the social value that comes from tourism. Travel, business and personal, has emerged as a giant of world-wide significance. The startling fact is that travel continues to grow in spite of economic problems and conflict among nations. The prediction that telecommunication would replace travel has not materialized. Paradoxically, it has stimulated even greater desire to travel.

But, few activities of our time are less well understood. A superficial view dominates that tourism is only something to be promoted. Today, millions of public and private monies are lavished on tourism promotion. Gradually, researchers, scholars and critical observers are questioning this naive perspective. One clue is the redefinition of tourism from only vacation activity to total travel for all purposes (exception: commuting from home to work). Tourism is much more comprehensive than mere promotion.

Tourism is now being exposed as a complicated and sprawling phenomenon of significant social and environmental as well as economic importance. In this discussion of tourism as a new wave
of society around the world, I have identified ten dimensions of tourism that now appear to be most important. Certainly, if tourism is to meet the objectives that many public and private sectors seek, much greater consideration must be given to at least these ten dimensions of tourism.

1. Attractions

Generally misunderstood is the important role of attractions in tourism. Attractions are all those physical places and programs that perform two main functions for tourism. They are strong enough to pull us away from our homes and they also provide us with the satisfactions we derive from travel.

Because tourism would not take place without these travel objectives, we now see several important implications for future planning. For example, parks and recreation areas are major attractions. But, many governing agencies have little understanding of tourists and, more seriously, how to protect resource assets at the same time.

In recent years, great strides have been made to identify and restore prehistoric and historic sites. However, details of how to manage busloads of tourists who seek these sites are not well understood. Also in the last two decades, new commercial attractions, such as theme parks, have been built. But, their location and environmental impact have not been assessed.

How to plan for meetings, conferences and festivals presents special problems of location, size, and management policy. Educational tours to special laboratories, research centers, manufacturing plants, forests and farms is outpacing the planning
for them.

In the future, governments and the private sector will increasingly be faced with policy and planning decisions on attractions.

2. RESOURCES

Another important dimension of tourism often given little attention, are the resources, physical and human, that are the very foundation for tourism. Because tourism consumes so much land area, many jurisdictions play important roles. However, most policies of management come from past objectives which frequently conflict with or omit tourism.

Water is a dominant travel resource because it supports so many outdoor recreation activities. But, water policy and planning in the past have given priority to domestic and industrial supply, irrigation, flood control, and navigation. Will new planning of tourism be included in water resource policy in the future?

Forests are scenic and offer habitat for wildlife. Forested areas provide for camping, hiking, hunting, and in some climates, ski slopes and trails for winter sports. But, forests are also timber producers. How well will forest management in the future adapt to tourism as well as to forest production?

In recent years, we have seen a great change in tourist use of wildlife. Wildlife science and management in the past have been dominated by biological science, issues of species protection, and the management of game for hunting purposes. Conservation education, coupled with new technology and
popularity of color photography, has stimulated interest in non-game wildlife management. This new field has not yet provided the needed information for tourism planning.

Environmentalism of the 1970's stimulated much concern over industrial pollution. However, many environmental issues related to tourism development and operation remain unsolved. Waterfronts and national parks deserve much greater study and planning to solve esthetic and physical despoliation of the environment.

A major resource issue of tourism in most countries is that of finance and operational management. No matter the political ideology, tourism development does have economic costs, both direct and indirect. Every part of the supply side of tourism requires financial backing for development and operation. But biases of financial institutions toward other forms of economic development must be overcome if tourism is to thrive.

These are just a few of the prime resources that in the coming years will need greater consideration by all those responsible for action.

3. SERVICES/FACILITIES

Closely related to trends in attractions and resource policy are the many concerns over tourist facilities and services. This is the component producing greatest economic impact from tourism. Yet, planning for the future deserves much greater attention to how tourist services relate to other actions and especially to resident demand.

One of the most obvious parts of tourism is lodging. However, general information on travel lodging is sparse. Yes,
we have bed counts, but we need to learn much more about the varying preferences among the several travel segments and about location criteria and optimal size data. Just now in the U.S. we are seeing a shift from the single-market huge hotels to smaller and more diversified intimate lodging, such as bed-and-breakfast hostleries.

Camping has changed dramatically, requiring newer commercial park services for recreation vehicle (RV) travelers. Thousands more people are retiring earlier and living longer, providing travel opportunities for RV owners. In southern U.S. large colonies of RV owners settle in the winter. But from a social and economic perspective, no one seems to know just how to plan for this annual winter migration.

Food services for travelers have been changing, adapting to new market demands. Nutrition and health are of greater concern and new forms of management, such as franchising, are adjusting to new labor conditions. But, there is little information available on location, optimum size and kinds of service to meet changes in demand from both resident and travel markets.

Frequently omitted from travel development are the market interests in souvenirs and other consumer goods associated with travel. Craft items, clothing, camera supplies, camping gear and medicines are sought by travelers. But, the control of quality and general guidance on location and management are growing issues.

Services at resorts seem to be diversifying and specializing at the same time. Again, developers need better data on market
trends to identify the kinds, locations and patterns of resort and entertainment needed.

4. TRANSPORTATION

At the same time that technology has multiplied manyfold the number of travel destinations and the speed to get to them, travel transportation today continues to be plagued by many problems. Needed is much greater cooperation between transportation policymakers and the many facets of the travel system.

For example, many locations with tourism potential remain undeveloped for lack of highway access. Highway location has sometimes destroyed the very resources desired by travelers, especially along waterfronts. Competition between personal car travel and trucking has become a major safety issue in some regions. Highway linkage between airports, cities, and attraction clusters is critical to tourists.

Air travel planners and managers today require much greater sensitivity to the influence of schedules, routes and pricing. Their policies can mean the death or flowering of destinations.

In spite of many sniping commentaries of motor coach tours—"if it's Tuesday, it must be Belgium"—this form of tourism travel is firmly established in the genre of tourism. But, problems remain. Some are too short, some too long. Some are well-narrated, others are badly interpreted. Some are insensitive to the needs of market segments, such as older travelers. Future planning must improve the quality of motor coach tours.
Just now the U.S. is developing better intermodal connections for transportation. In many instances the linkage between air and ground transportation has been badly managed.

As attraction clusters have gotten larger and larger, internal people-movement has become significant. Urban renewal has generated new tourist interest in the downtown areas of our cities, creating a need to keep the automobiles out and allow pedestrians in. The lesson for tourism is that tourists neither enjoy attractions nor spend money while in transit, only on foot.

5. MARKETS

Review of tourism documents of many nations shows a strong interest in marketing but little understanding of markets. What people seek and are able to do on their travels provides the real "push" for the entire tourism phenomenon.

Tourism development and management must keep pace with changes in demographic trends. We find in the United States that the older and very young population segments are increasing while the others are falling back. Changes in age, income, and distribution between sexes can have great influence on what should be developed.

The origin of travelers keeps changing. In some countries the increasing number of middle class travelers is changing domestic tourism. As national economies improve, the balance of origins of travelers changes. We must be aware of these changes if we are to plan for tourism growth.

A fact of societies everywhere is change in taste, also a fact of travel. Even though some activities, such as boating and
swimming are nominally the same, the settings and the style in which these take place do not remain the same. Planning must be sensitive to these changes.

Changes in the economy of sending tourist societies can have an influence on development. In the U.S. both budget and luxury suites of rooms became popular in recent years.

A destination area may have to create distinctively different development for domestic versus international travelers. Hawaii, for example, found that fishing and sports were much more popular with residents than outside visitors.

6. INFORMATION/PROMOTION

Governmental tourism agencies of many countries perform roles of information and promotion. Promotional functions are designed to attract visitors whereas information is provided to guide and inform tourists.

A controversial issue in the U.S. is the use of highway signs. Promoters still advocate roadside advertising whereas others believe the protection of roadside beauty is critical to touring. Increasingly other advertising media are being used but the need for highway directional signs remains.

A continuing problem is getting good travel information into the hands of tourists. Visitor information centers seldom are abundant enough or open enough hours to be of greatest assistance to the traveler.

Advertising of travel destinations is becoming more competitive. This means that the quality must be much more sophisticated. More research information is needed in the
effectiveness of advertising to plan its use most efficiently. Another problem, especially in the U.S., is definition of promotional roles—who should be doing what.

Probably no other function deserves greater attention today than assisting the visitor at a destination. Visitor interpretation centers that contain exhibits, live displays, demonstration, lectures, and even dramas are now increasing in popularity.

7. URBAN CHANGE

Unfortunately, most urban planners do not include tourism in their agenda. The teaching and professional practice of planning is directed exclusively toward residents. Thus planners are usually ill-prepared to plan for visitors. Whenever a nation, region and community promotes tourists, it is incumbent to plan to receive them with the best adaptation to local residents as possible.

Recently, many small and medium size cities have revitalized the downtown core. Where properly planned, such efforts can provide equally for visitors and residents.

Too often however, urban growth patterns have ignored visitors. General zone designations have been based on resident and not visitor movement.

Consideration of access to shopping areas must be given equally to residents and visitors.

The majority of urban amenities such as parks, plazas, museums and theaters, are equally worthy and useful to visitors as well as residents. The question is are visitors considered for
the support, design, and management of urban amenities?

Equally important are public policies on the development of the city's infrastructure—water supply, waste disposal, streets, police, fire protection. If a community decides to accept masses of tourists, it must be prepared to properly engineer and rearrange this added burden of infrastructure.

8. EDUCATION/TRAINING

Although there are many hotel and restaurant training programs around the world, there are very few educational offerings directed toward both the sending and the receiving of tourists.

We thought everyone knew how to accept leisure and turn it toward satisfying ends for the individual. But, now we know that all of us could stand some help. Gradually, new programs are emerging for productive use of leisure time. But, still to be developed are educational curricula, and at all levels, for understanding tourism.

Especially needed are two kinds of training at the high school level. First, young people need to be given training in the many occupations related to travel. Second, they also need to learn how to travel—how to get the most personal satisfaction from travel.

At the college and university levels, there should be many more programs throughout the world devoted to the many facets of tourism. Needed is multidisciplinary education to utilize specialized fields important to the planning, developing, and managing of tourism. Only with many new departments and teaching
programs can we hope to meet the growing demand for managers, policymakers and technicians.

But, education should not stop at the formal level. Existing managers and those who contemplate tourism careers would benefit from continuing and extension educational programs.

The question then arises: who is training the teachers? At Texas A&M University we developed one of the few programs at the graduate level and discovered there was a strong demand for this education. Needed are more university programs for the masters and doctoral degrees to qualify more teachers of tourism.

9. RESEARCH

Neither the market nor the supply side of tourism is being researched sufficiently to assist decision makers with adequate information.

Many nations gather some travel data such as origin, length of stay, age and sex. But the managers of tourist businesses and pertinent government agencies seldom have access to this data. Furthermore, it is often prepared on a sporadic rather than annual basis which is most valuable for determining trends.

Very rare is research of the supply side of tourism—the attractions, services, transportation and information. Annual reports on the number, kinds, quality, and issues for each component of supply are essential for planning.

Related is overall market research. Ideally this should provide information on market-product match but too often is focused only on promotion.

Even more scarce is research study of tourism policy and
regulation. Many governmental programs, policies and regulations affect tourism and yet seldom are they studied. In many instances, there are conflicts, overlapping, and voids. Stronger land use controls to avoid resource degradation are usually needed.

10. GOALS

Thus far, economic improvement has been the primary motivation for most areas and nations to promote tourism. Experience is now demonstrating that reaching this goal is not as easy as anticipated. Actually, three other goals are equally important.

First, a tourism imperative is the goal of visitor satisfaction. Too often in the past, promoters have stressed the things and places of tourism, never making evaluation on how good the travel experience really turned out to be. With current changes in markets, particularly rising sophistication, it is essential for all areas to make sure the final product is successful in providing for visitor satisfactions.

Second, the past development of tourism has virtually ignored the resource foundation upon which it is built. No nation can expect to have enduring and competitive tourism without consideration and protection of natural and cultural resources. Instead of adversarial positions between conservationists and tourism developers, there should be strong cooperation and even collaboration. Certainly, resource protection must be a tourism goal.

Third, too often tourism has been treated in a superficial
manner. Promoters and tourist service businesses are viewed as solely responsible for tourism. In many instances, this approach has resulted in local conflict and less than anticipated rewards. Instead, tourism must be consolidated with the entire community. Because tourism involves nearly every facet of a community—physically, socially, politically, economically—many public and private sectors must be involved from the start.

Finally, tourism can have positive economic impact as a worthwhile goal. However, even this goal must be tempered by the realities of economic costs, potential resource erosion, possible visitor dissatisfactions, and possible community upset. Only through planning that is inclusive and cooperative can these potential problems be avoided. Then, and only then, tourism can increase jobs, incomes and taxes paid for support of public programs.

CONCLUSIONS

What can we conclude from a realization of some dimensions of this third wave—tourism?

First, it can give us great optimism. The propensity to travel is strong and continues to grow. Very few indicators suggest anything contrary to even greater growth.

But, in order for a nation to plan and develop tourism properly, it must evaluate its entire tourism system. Undoubtedly, such an evaluation will suggest that first priority must be given to increasing the number and quality of attractions.

An assessment of resource potential will need to be made if
new tourist destinations are to be found and existing ones redeveloped. Only when a critical review of both market segments and supply resources is made can development be given planning direction.

Finally, this new wave of tourism must receive heavy inputs of innovation and creativity and by many sectors. Past trends have demonstrated the dynamic, animated and often capricious nature of travelers. This requires new and different responses by the developers, managers, and policymakers of tourism. Even though some fundamentals may be consistent, the manner in which they are interpreted and carried out requires constant vigilance and creative action.