



Working Together: The Visitors' View

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Point of View

- Many years of talking with travelers to understand their motivations for travel and their decision-making processes.
- Have worked in 47 states, five Canadian provinces – and for the US and Canadian governments on tourism issues.
- Have conducted thousands of studies and interviewed hundreds of thousands of people about travel.



Point of View (continued)

- Not here to report on specific studies.
- Rather to provide anecdotal insights about the issue of collaboration from the traveler's perspective.



Reasons for Collaboration

- Creating critical mass
- Building on similarity of tourist appeal
- Targeting similar market niches



Creating Critical Mass

- Really strong tourism destinations need a large number of attractions and accommodations.
 - Waikiki, HI
 - Acapulco, Mexico
 - Orlando, FL
- Tourism will grow exponentially as the mass of attractions and accommodations reaches and exceeds critical mass.



Creating critical mass (continued)

- There is no magic number to define critical mass. It happens when the traveling public perceives that –
 - There is a sufficient number of places to stay that would suit their needs, and
 - More than enough things to do to have fun, be entertained, or learn something new.
- The image of the destination must also be one they and others have heard of and desire.



Cross-Border Issues

- As an area is considered a single tourism destination across the border, the larger the critical mass of attractions and accommodations.
- Niagara Falls clearly has a cross-border attraction – The Falls – but if it is not regarded as a cross-border destination, it may not develop needed and appropriate critical mass as a single destination.



Cross-border issues (continued)

- Marketing the cross border destination as a single entity to meet all of the visitors' needs for a vacation area will strengthen the area's appeal and build its image as a single mega destination.
- Today it is often viewed as two destinations – the Canadian side and the American side – with quite different images.



Cross-border issues (continued)

- Another way to work together across borders is to share accommodations, referring visitors to properties on the “other side” which might have rooms.
- This can be dangerous politically! But it makes sense from the view of tourism marketing.
 - Rochester-Red Wing, MN



Building on Similarity of Market Appeal

- Crossing state borders is almost as difficult as crossing national borders to build tourism.
- When cities nearby but in different states have the same market appeal, they can be marketed together to enhance the area's appeal.
- But state governments have not been able to work together that way.



Building on Similarity of Market Appeal (continued)

- The private sector must often take over to promote two areas in different states together. Tour operators can package them together where state tourism offices have not been able to promote anything outside their borders – even if it would mean larger tourism revenue for each.
- The same process would work for cross-border development.



Building on Similarity of Market Appeal (continued)

- Areas can work together to provide similar experiences to tourists visiting a region. Those experiences might include:
 - **Participatory experiences**
 - Winter sports – cross-country skiing, snowmobiling;
 - Outdoor sports – camping, fishing, hiking;
 - Culinary tourism – wineries, dining;
 - Voluntourism.
 - The region's experiences can be tied together with trails and combinations of places on each side of the border.



Building on Similarity of Market Appeal (continued)

Learning experiences

- Educational classes;
 - Hands on learning – cooking, crafts, etc.;
 - Historic learning – anthropological digs, guest curator experiences.
- Learning themes which tie the areas together, focusing on joint history and experiences rather than separate ones will work to build cross-border interest.



Building on Similarity of Market Appeal (continued)

Observational experiences

- Historic site visits;
 - Museum visits;
 - Popular and cultural performances in a variety of venues;
 - Fairs and festivals;
 - Scenic drives.
- Creating trails across the two areas to tie them together, emphasizes shared experiences and values.
- Newport-Bristol, RI



Targeting Similar Market Niches

- Tourists seldom know when the political designation changes. Counties are understood only by locals. States or provinces make little impact on travelers.
- National borders are more distinctive – requiring official check points and a certain level of fear among tourists as well as currency exchange.



Targeting Similar Market Niches (continued)

- But the two areas are more similar than different. In the cross-border area, we share –
 - Weather and climate;
 - Language and culture – with a few differences;
 - Natural resources – woods and water experiences as well as cities.



Targeting Similar Market Niches (continued)

- The experience offered on both sides of the border is similar and appeals to similar market niches.
- Participation, learning and observation can be sought and found on both sides of the border.
- Those who seek such experiences can be marketed to using a single approach and the communication can sell the area – not just one country's vacation.



Examples of Cross-border Tourism

- Currently, Maine and New Brunswick are marketing the “Two Nation Vacation” with sites to see and activities in both Maine and New Brunswick.
- Roosevelt Campobello International Park is a specific example of the two nations working together on behalf of a tourism destination. The Park is managed by a joint commission with members appointed by the U.S. President and the Canadian Prime Minister.



Risks of Collaboration

- Political “unrest” – leaders who fear loss of control if we cooperate with other jurisdictions – especially across national borders.
- Benefits must be shared in proportion to dollars and work expended. An unfair collaboration will alienate those who give more than they receive.
- Leadership must be shared so that those on both sides feel they are contributing significantly to the collaboration.



One Final Note: Data Comparability

- In transportation planning, experts from each country work together frequently to develop a plan that meets the needs of both countries.
- Recently, we worked as the tourism part of the consulting team led by Wilbur Smith which was charged with researching and planning new transportation routes to connect Atlantic Canada with Quebec and Ontario, traveling through Maine by car instead of the much longer Trans Canada Highway route and alternatives such as air, sea and rail.




Data Comparability (continued)


- Transportation statistics from the two countries were reasonably consistent, relatively easy to work with.
- Tourism statistics were impossible to reconcile from each of four states and five provinces.
 - Days vs. nights
 - Purpose of trip
 - Definition of tourist, trip, etc.
- We need to work towards comparability in each country – then across the border.



In Sum . . .

- Reaching critical mass of accommodations and attractions will be facilitated by working cross-border.
- Building on similarity of appeal will yield a stronger destination than either area could create alone.
- Targeting comparable market niches is recommended since the resources are so similar.

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- Collaboration is not without its risks. There will be difficulties in developing a plan and in implementing it.
 - But the rewards will far outweigh the risks by creating a larger total visitation to be shared by those on both sides of the border.

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- But, we need to think about producing comparable statistics across the border so we can plan and assess the effectiveness of the tourism development and marketing undertaken.