

Tourism Destination Development: Overview

Community leaders should understand from the beginning, that tourism development is a long-term process that requires grass-roots leaders and “doers” committed to the process and moving it forward. Minus an intrinsic community desire for tourism and a qualified group of committed people who are willing to learn tourism development strategies and work together, tourism development success will be elusive.

Destination Development Basics

- A destination is: “a place worthy of travel for an extended visit.” “The place may be a locality, a town, or a region, but must be large enough to have sufficient services to attract visitors and small enough to allow for multi-sector coordination.” (Bruce Hazard)

The implication is that the destination has the power to draw people to it because it offers something unique that they cannot find closer to home and for less money. A destination in tourism is usually a region that includes a community that also serves as a key service center.

- Attractions are the magnet that pull people to visit any destination, not the services! People do not visit because of lodging or food, though important and necessary. Attractions can be natural, man-made, cultural, human and/or capital investment resources.
- Attractions within the destination must have the power to keep and entertain people at least four times the length of the trip they took to get there, for the community to benefit from the increased spending of overnight visitors (overnight visitors spend three times more than day visitors).
- A critical mass of services is required to allow people the comfort level they need to stay, relax and spend money!
- Most humans beings in the general population, require that their basic needs (food, lodging, safety, health needs, etc.) are met (on the bottom rungs of Maslow’s hierarchy) in order to feel a comfort level to stay anywhere for an extended visit.
- Visitors expect choices in lodging, restaurants, pubs, entertainment and retail, which requires a destination to have business clusters of each of these sectors.
- Transportation and guide services are critical to visitors.
- Emergency and medical services are necessary to visitors. Illness does not respect vacation time.

- Informational services are needed by visitors 24/7. Facilitated delivery of that information around the clock is important to a destination.
- Quality marketing and promotional materials should be constantly updated and made available to visitors as needed.
- The tourism system is composed of transportation, attractions, meals & lodging, retail opportunities, information, promotion, services and amenities.
- Community tourism planning encompasses all of the above mentioned sectors in order to be effective.
- Two to three anchor businesses lead the way with market pull power, destination marketing, marketing budgets, and branding thus easing the burden for smaller entrepreneurial businesses.
- There are primary destinations that inherently have the criteria outlined previously.
- Secondary and tertiary localities are located within the sphere of influence of a primary destination and may be along the route to the primary destination. They should accept who/what they are and work with the destination to maximize their own benefit.
- Businesses along the route can creatively develop reasons for visitors to stop, get out of their cars and spend money before they get to the primary destination.
 - Be the best at what you do.
 - Create a unique experience that arouses curiosity.
 - Play on the theme of the primary destination.

Important Fact: Not every community has the assets to be a primary destination!

This document is fluid and subject to frequent updates.

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