

CULTURAL TOURISM - STRATEGIES AND TRENDS

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“Cultural tourism” represents a phenomenon that has gain wide currency in recent decades. A product of demographic, social and cultural trends, cultural tourism has been identified as a growing and lucrative sector of the tourism industry. Individual organizations and communities have also embraced cultural tourism as a potential economic savior: as traditional mass employment industries continue to downsize, cities and towns have turned to cultural tourism as a particularly “21st century” generator of economic activity and jobs¹. Yet there are the risks involves as well-environmental degradation, strain of local infrastructure, and so call “Densification” or co modifications of treasured cultural resources are some of the potential side effects of increased numbers of tourists to a particular destination.

In fact it is important to gave a definition for the cultural tourism: “*visits by persons from outside the host community motivated wholly or in part by interest in the historical, artistic, scientific or lifestyle/heritage offerings of a community, region, group or institution*”².

Museums should not regard themselves as limited by the walls of the museum building; they should seize all the opportunities available, as part of their strategies of demonstrating their relevance to their nations, regions and communities. Therefore the museums need to be much more sophisticated in their “market research”.

In most of the cases, the concept of marketing, particularly in our case the museum marketing is not well understood. Many museum professionals had answered at the question “*what it is marketing?*” With “*it is getting people to want what you have*”. That belief about marketing is a common one. And it is the core of a lot of the marketing problems many museums have. Before we carry on we have to present the right definition of marketing as was define by the American Marketing Association: “*marketing is the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational goals*”³.

In simple terms, cultural tourism related marketing is successfully communicating with and convincing potential visitors that you have something, that they need or will benefit from, and that you can provide a service or fill that need better than anyone else.

Developing a marketing mindset requires us to look at our audiences as customers, to see our museums through their eyes, and to adapt our facilities and

¹ Barry Lord, Cultural tourism, Tourism management, Toronto, 1995.

² The World Commission on Culture and Development UN-UNESCO, 1995.

³ What is marketing? Katherine Khalife.

programs to meet their needs and wants. Before we present what the cultural products, markets, destination are, it is important to notice that many museums relegate marketing to afterthought status, confusing it with promotion, which it is only one of its components. Exhibitions, special events, educational programs and even new facilities are often completely planned before marketing it is even considered.

That kind of inside-out approach minimizes marketing's importance restricts its potential effectiveness and helps perpetuate the marketing fears. So, in order to be successfully in promoting the image and products of the museum it is important to change the approach from inside –out to outside in.

In a world full of changes museums and heritage sites have had to meet the challenge of being open to entrepreneurial approaches while continuing to meet their heritage preservation and educational mandates.

The development of cultural tourism as a generator of income and a recognized form of tourism has emerged as an objective of both heritage institutions and tourist operators around the world. In this sense tourism operators, like hotels, tour companies, retailers and other become more receptive to new ideas and approaches. Increasingly, they are taking notice of cultural attractions and events as worthy partners in packaging and other cooperative arrangements.

In this sense the museums have to communicate to existing and potential supporters their important role in helping to meet not only the preservation and educational needs of a community, but also wider community needs such as tourism, economic development and downtown revitalization.

By cultural tourism products we refer to museums, heritage opportunities and events. We all know that the better the cultural product the greater the likelihood that residents will spend money within a region, province or country. Even more important is the ability of cultural products to attract or increase the length of stay of long-haul tourists because they bring in new money. In this regard, the reality is that not every cultural product, and certainly not every museum or historic site, is willing or capable of being a significant tourist attraction, nor need they be.⁴

The ability to do so has very much to do with the eight points listed below which serve as a type of check-list to help cultural products to be evaluated or to evaluate themselves:

- Perceived quality of the product;
- Awareness;
- Customer service attitude;
- Sustainability;
- Extent to which product is perceived to be unique or special;
- Convenience;

⁴ Silberger Ted, Business opportunities for museums and heritage sites, Museums Jurnal, Toronto, 6/1997.

- Community support and involvement;
- Management commitment and capability

Just as no every cultural product is willing, ready or able to attract tourists, not every person is interested in culture. In general the profile of the cultural tourist indicate a very common pattern as follows :

- earns more money and spends more money while on vacation;
- spends more time in an area while on vacation;
- is more likely to stay at hotels or motels;
- is far more likely to shop;
- is more highly educated than the general public;
- Includes more women than men
- Tends to be in older age categories.

The bottom line for many cultural facilities and organizations is, first, to understand just how important cultural tourism is and, second, what they have to offer as worthy partners with tourism operators in development of packaging opportunities and cultural tourism destinations.

In general there are three types of partnership and packaging opportunities. The first and most common is among cultural product of the same type. One common example is a passport package among museums or historic sites, but the problem for this product is that is embraced only by the highly motivated visitators, the second form of partnership and packaging involves cultural products of different types. For example: festivals and arts districts. The third, and probably most important form of partnering and packaging, is among ***cultural and non-cultural tourism products*** such as hotels, resorts, retail areas, sports and outdoor recreation, bus tours, amusement attractions, etc. This form of packaging offers the variety of experiences that most people are seeking and greatly widens the market for culture to the adjunct and accidental tourists,

In this sense the **key** to widening the market for the museums, as in our case, is partnerships between cultural and non-cultural attractions or travel motivators. You must identify existing resources in your area and develop packages highlighting natural and cultural heritage with products such as sports, recreation events, restaurants, hotels and retail areas as active partners. And for museum and culture professionals, you must reposition your relationship to other tourism operators to move beyond "what can you do for me" with sponsorships, memberships and donations, to also include "what can I do for you" and "what can we do together." Invite restaurant owners, hotel operators and others in the industry to tour your facility and make them aware of what you can offer so that they can pass this information on to their guests⁵. You must constantly remember that while we may make a distinction between visits to restaurants and sports events, and

⁵ Brown Kathleen, [Tourism Trends for the '90s](#)", Strategic Directions for Ontario's Cultural Tourism Product (1993).

visits to museums and other cultural attractions, tourists do not -- they seek a total experience that helps them understand a location and its people. Partnerships can make this happen.

The opportunities are limitless if everyone recognizes that the benefits or partnership and packaging must flow in two ways.

The key to the success of partnerships and packaging relationships is to bring potential cultural and other tourism partners together.

Today, culture is the very air we breathe. The future is one of cultural interdependence. Museums, both because of their collections and because of their role as community gathering places, can be forces for intercultural communication and understanding.

By embracing cultural diversity, museums will be doing a great deal to prevent themselves from being marginalized in communities and countries that are increasingly multicultural in composition. Finally, in embracing cultural diversity, museums contribute to their own sustainability and to the sustainability of civil society⁶.

TURISMUL CULTURAL - TENDINȚE ȘI STRATEGII

- Rezumat -

Turismul cultural reprezintă un fenomen care s-a dezvoltat extrem de mult în ultimele decade. Turismul cultural a fost identificat ca fiind un produs extrem de lucrativ în cadrul industriei turistice. Organizațiile culturale, comunitățile locale au îmbrățișat acest fenomen caracterizat ca fiind un potențial factor economic generator de activități economice și noi locuri de muncă într-un secol XXI, în care datorită evoluției industrializării, forța de muncă este în continuă scădere. În acest sens, muzeele nu trebuie să-și limiteze activitățile și acțiunile la funcțiile de bază, ci din contră, trebuie să preia inițiativa, prin dezvoltarea unei strategii ce trebuie să demonstreze importanța lor în cadrul comunității sau a regiunii în care își desfășoară activitatea.

⁶ Lord Dexter Gail, Museum and Sustainability: Economy, Culture and community, The Ireland Museum Journal, 2002.