PACKAGING AND MARKETING CULTURAL HERITAGE RESOURCES

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There has been a burgeoning interest in our cultural heritage over the past ten years. It is even more noticeable in the field of tourism where a revolution is taking place. In the past, countries like Canada have marketed their beautiful scenery while basically ignoring their cultural heritage. This is clearly evident in Canadian advertisement campaigns, except for Quebec, which is the oldest province in the country and perceived as such by many tourists.

Holidays are focusing more and more on content to keep pace with the changing demands of tourists. There is a pressing need for new approaches to marketing tourism as tourists are increasingly demanding quality experiences different from home.

There are some important findings which have contributed to Canada's willingness to change and involve itself in cultural tourism by linking together culture, multiculturalism and tourism. Some processes were established recently to develop cultural resources which could be packaged, promoted and marketed in a sustainable development context.

In the early 1980s a number of conferences were sponsored in different Canadian centres. They dealt with culture, the arts and tourism. Studies and meetings emphasized that their inter-relationship could bring economical benefits which would flow on to cities, regions, and provinces. In 1985 the newly elected government sponsored a national conference in Ottawa. In 1986 the government published the US Pleasure Travel Study which was significant in terms of the cultural aspects of the Canadian tourist experience. The information related to American travellers vis-a-vis Canada as a destination. One million dollars was spent investigating American tourism trends, and following that study, theories and products to market in the United States were developed. Yet, the Canadian government has no mandate or budget for domestic tourism. The provinces are each doing their own tourism promotion and marketing. The US Pleasure Travel Study revealed that American tourists like a 'touring trip', want diversity and variety, and like to move around within a region rather than to be tied to one place in particular. The touring trip is a mix of a number of individual products. It is an extended trip, lasts on average eight days, is usually prepared one or two months in advance and makes use of a large variety of information necessary for trip preparation.

These results were significant and Canada saw a real opportunity for developing touring trips. But what were the motivations of such travellers? There were 49 per cent who believed that being able to experience different cultures and ways of life would be important to their decisions about tourism destinations. There were 55 per cent who believed that points of interest and places noted for their history would be of particular value and 41 per cent who believed that night life, embracing cultural activities, would be important factors in choosing destinations. Of the top 20 activities which Americans would pursue in their chosen destinations, attending festivals, ethnic events, visiting museums, galleries, science exhibits, all ranked highly. One main point emerged. Americans perceive Canada's scenery, buildings and culture as foreign. Canada's people, culture, heritage and ethnic mosaic make it substantially different from the United States. The study revealed that Canada attracts tourists who value the cultural factor (Tourism Canada 1986).

Canada had never promoted its unique cultural heritage. Yet here was an opportunity to market these resources to tourists. Tourism Canada, the Secretary of State for Multiculturalism and the Department of Communications signed a Memorandum of Understanding which reflected this fact:

The Canadian government must now take the initiative to develop effective and productive liaison between tourism and culture. There is a need to take advantage of Canada's cultural diversity and assets through increased tourism activity (Tourism Canada 1988).

The Memorandum was created to give strength to the cooperation between the three departments in order to undertake joint projects in economic development, culture and multiculturalism to increase tourism revenue. A strategy was developed in three stages. The first stage was designed to collect and analyze information on the tourism, cultural and multiculturalism sectors as well as to establish a database for product and market development planning. The second stage was field work promotion of five projects: 'Toronto for the Arts', 'Montreal Cultural destination', 'Your ticket to Winnipeg', 'Vancouver/Victoria cultural tourism', 'Highland Heart Campaign'. These pilot projects were designed to promote Canadian cultural products and destinations in the United States. The third stage was the
organization of a national conference on ‘Making Connections’ to allow participants from the three areas to get to know one another and develop a coherent promotion and marketing plan. Workshops on successful Canadian projects and international festivals were represented. Some nine thematic workshops dealt with major areas. As the Chairman of the ICOMOS National Committee on Cultural Tourism, I gave a workshop entitled ‘Heritage and Tourism: developing a sense of place’.

The synthesis showed interesting trends and a clearer profile of the average tourist in Canada. Tourists in general are more ‘intelligent, have travelled more, are looking for authentic cultural experiences and hope to find a different way of life’. This reflects the attitude of people in the world’s industrialized countries. People have begun to collect experiences as consciously and passionately as they once collected things (Toffler 1980). This search for quality experiences and diversity is growing and changing from ‘visits to sites and monuments’ to ‘more interactive experiences’ (Holloway 1986).

According to Tourism Canada (1988) the cultural experience can be defined as a set of symbols and codes which permit individuals to cope with their environment. Culture in this sense is a kind of mental map which provides meaning for individuals. The quality of the cultural experience largely depends on authenticity. However, many studies show that reconstruction of monuments is not a handicap to the experience. The function of a pseudo-authentic site is solely didactic and pedagogical. It must be perfectly displayed and presented. It must admit that it is a reconstruction. In many cases it will stimulate the imagination but will not necessarily evoke strong emotions or the feeling of traverser le temps.

The touristic value of a modern community lies in the way it organizes social, historical, cultural and natural elements into a stream of impressions. (MacCannel 1975). Tourists tend to ‘consume’ culture in the global sense of the total system of meaning and symbols associated with a society. The high culture tourist is in the minority and forms a very small market segment. Heritage is a stronger tourist attraction than the performing arts. Tourists are more interested in the heritage resources than the performing arts resources of a tourism destination (Tourism Canada 1988, p. 23). Built heritage is visited during vacations and there is a diversity of visitors depending on the specific monuments. Tourists’ tastes have evolved. For example, in 1971 most people in France were interested in visiting cathedrals and churches. Now, castles and old villages are attracting the majority of tourists (Patin 1989). Tourists look for ‘real’, ‘authentic’ villages still inhabited by native residents. Prehistoric sites are attracting more visitors. They are also attracted to well publicised sites which incorporate special events and festivals because of their symbolic meaning. Visitors like to walk and hike to sites, enjoy the surrounding environment and buy documents concerning the sites (Patin 1989).

Heritage is, of course, only one of many tourist attractions. Other elements include sport, the environment and hiking trails. Heritage adds quality to the tourism product. As we have seen, the arts, culture, and multiculturalism are complementary inducements to travel. Travellers are seeking variety and meaning in their tourism experience. Heritage is one of these components. For Canada, a key problem is to identify and create mechanisms to facilitate the snowballing levels of cultural and symbolic consumption of travellers (Tourism Canada 1988). Cost-cutting promotions, targeting, packaging and cooperative alliances between the sectors are necessary tasks to be performed.

Cultural product development

The benefits derived from the heritage and tourism industries will be greatest if development proceeds with the active maintenance of the cultural resources as a prime consideration. It is essential that cultural heritage resources are enhanced, and not financially exploited.

Basic requirements are needed to develop a product which respects the cultural values and environment of a place. These include a knowledge and understanding of:

- the nature of a site, an event, a tradition and how it is rooted in its place or environment (Madounier 1988);
- the kind of ‘pull’ factor it possesses, how it becomes part of a system, relates to other elements and enters the synergy.

The cultural product, rather than being isolated as an attraction in itself, needs to be integrated into successive layers of attractions. A holistic view of cultural resources and tourism development is necessary when dealing with non-renewable resources.

Cultural resources are best developed through a process of participation. This trend is growing. Cities and towns have been linked for many years and the exchanges created are always beneficial for any type of development. Euroter, European rural tourism, plans to create links, collaboration and agreements between various European regions to allow conservation of rural heritage as well as to create cultural tourism products based on rural culture and resources.

In 1966 France created the Natural Regional Parks which were new ways to revitalize regions vacated by young people. The principle was to learn more about
the resources of an area, create different tourism packages and use the economic benefits to keep people in the region. Each park developed a charter to express its objectives and the means to reach these goals. An interest in conservation, coupled with a new dynamism, lead to numerous types of initiatives. For example, many interpretation centres which presented trades, traditions and ways to make certain local products, were introduced. Markets which had disappeared were recreated. High quality products, identified by the park logo were successfully reintroduced. Tourism grew and many new facilities were created. This often involved the reuse of old buildings for tourism development. The government granted special loans to encourage such development. This process involved the participation and involvement of many local people.

In the early 1970s Riviere elaborated the concept of eco-museum. The museum is no longer perceived as a building. The entire area is now regarded as a museum. The curators are closely associated with the museum culture and manage its heritage. This movement is now part of the new museology. In 1977 France experimented with the program les pays d'accueil (host region). The objective was to contribute to micro-regional development which takes into account problems raised by rural tourism development. These structures demonstrated very clearly the efficiency of collective efforts and local cooperation to research and organise a coherent and balanced plan for accommodation and social activity. In 1984 the decision was made to create quality tourism products as well as promote and sell them. Nineteen regions signed an agreement with the government to organize and market hospitality and leisure activities. These regions create charters to guarantee the quality of their products as well as their environment. There are rules governing all levels of promotion and marketing. The pays d'accueil is a catalyst between those who create products and the marketing and distribution network. A national commission was created in 1984. It allows participants at its national meetings to share techniques and philosophies in order to increase the quality and the diversity of products.

These projects are generally directed toward hospitality and leisure activities which could evolve into heritage and cultural products more than at present. Heritage is an element of modernity which can create a synergy with economic factors. Many examples can be chosen to demonstrate the future of cultural tourism. The harmonious development of our cultural resources is bright as long as we remain innovative.

There are examples of groups of people developing, enhancing and preserving resources in France, Great Britain, the United States, Canada and Germany. They have generally grown quickly from marginal activities into marketable cultural tourism product enterprises.

Sylvanès Abbey, a Cistercian abbey in Aveyron, was saved from ruins 14 years ago. An association of friends of the abbey was formed. It now offers a large diversity of events and receives over 60,000 visitors annually between February and November. It received help from the Association for the Development through Training of Counties, which itself is sponsored by European Social Funds. In Cathar County, one tiny village with 146 inhabitants created T'Estival medieval, in which a dialogue with history was created through cultural manifestations, and popular fiestas. One of the successful cultural products developed was ‘Medieval Meals’ which is the catalyst of the festival. However, it is only one element of the entire package developed by the local population. It will be integrated into a kind of ‘cultural circuit’ which will greatly enrich the experiences of the tourists.

In Canada, there are three pilot projects which have been inspired by the European eco-museums and the natural regional parks. They are located in the following places: on Vancouver Island in the Duncan-Chemainus area; on Manitoulin Island where native communities are involved in the development and marketing of new products and in County Lanark, situated near Ottawa, the nation's capital city. These projects were started following the publication in 1988 by the Heritage Canada Foundation of a strategy for cultural tourism development. The program is called Heritage Regions and has tremendous potential.

The Canadian Parks Service is designing a new marketing strategy. The main objectives are to encourage Canadians to support parks; to pursue an optimum balance of park supply and demand; to forge links between preservation and use of the unique Canadian cultural and natural heritage. This is sustainable development. The last objective is for the programme to provide quality experiences for tourists.

The relationship between culture and tourism is very promising in terms of potential development and marketing opportunities. Cultural heritage preservation and the built heritage have only recently been considered as part of the global effort toward touristic development. Courses such as Cultural Resources Management, and Heritage Marketing are now being offered in Canada (University of Victoria), and in Great Britain (University of Birmingham). Pacific Area Tourism Association (PATA) was the first organisation to initiate seminars on heritage conservation and tourism. Two very important conferences took place in 1981 and 1983. Conservation projects...
combined with touristic development appear to have been very successful in Asia. Increasingly, tourism professionals are looking at the way tourists can make use of heritage sites.

Cohen (1988) emphasized the importance of authenticity in tourism marketing. The 'emerging authenticity' comes from cultural novelty. Marketing or commercialisation do not necessarily destroy the meaning of cultural products although they might change or add new meanings to old ones.

There is a danger in using an economic rather than a cultural rationale in the way we develop products. Danger lies in the marketing and promoting of cultural resources without planning for their sustainability. Visitor numbers should not be the yardstick for successful tourism.

The principle for packaging and marketing our cultural resources should be based on harmonious development to conserve and enhance our environment and provide enriching qualitative experiences for tourists. This requires a concerted effort from us all. The benefit will be that we will be more aware, more understanding and more creative.

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