

Research Article

Tourism Planning: A Case Based Approach

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Abstract: This study is an attempt to investigate the tourism marketing and attraction strategies adopted by various countries. A case study based approach is adopted in this study. On the basis of investigation of tourism development strategies adopted by various countries, suggestions are also made at the end. These suggestions are aimed to increase visitors our tourists' base in a country. These suggestions can be used by any country to increase visitors or tourists. Future directions are also given at the end.

Keywords: Case study, cultural tourism, historical tourism, tourism

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is believed to be one of the cutting edges for economic development (Kolb, 2005), though it is not the only way of economic development yet it plays a vital role in economic development of locality (Kotler *et al.*, 1993). This claim is further strengthened with the report of United Nations World Tourism Organization (2007) which claims that tourism is the largest export earner and important factor in balance of payment of nations. Thus tourism is a sector which should be understood and polished as it could offer high returns. Out of many tourism modes cultural and historical tourism is one of the prominent one (Silberberg, 1995). Rosenfeld (n.d.) tells that tourism offers both tangible (job creation, revenues and increase in number of tourists) and intangible benefits (standard of living). Cultural and historical tourism is such form of tourism where culture or historical sites are presented as product which attracts those tourists who want to learn and see the past cultures, sites, locations, habitants and many more about the historical sites and cultures (Kolb, 2005; Rosenfeld, n.d.). Such form of tourism requires proper strategic planning to attract huge number of visitors and tourists. Visitors' attraction can be defined as "somewhere worth leaving home for" and that is restricted to a specific tourist destination (Booker, 2005). Thus "visitors' attraction makers", those who are involved in planning of the visitors' attraction need to have a good strategic look over the tourism attraction strategies. Hu (1996) says as the products offered by tourism sector are intangible so there should be proper communication medium used to convey the idea of

what is being offered by the destinations. It should include proper advertisement and marketing tools.

Importance of tourism has been witnessed in various parts of the world. Like, it has been noticed that Europe is having highest number of tourists visit with 12% share in GDP, with 20 million jobs and this share is expected to be doubled by 2025 (Commission, 2002). But a research giving common and universally applicable techniques is still not in the eye of reader; this research is aimed to fill that gap. This research will also add value by suggesting strategies that might work for cultural tourism.

STRATEGIES TO DEVELOP CULTURAL TOURISM

Improving tourism industry had been topic of great importance due to significant contribution of tourism sector in economic development of countries. Various methods and techniques are recommended to have a good and effective plan of tourism development. For instance, Georgian National Trust of Historical Preservation recommends few strategies for effective tourism plan: find the right fit, tell your own story of quality and improvement, make your tourism sites come alive, protect and preserve your resources, create a winning collaboration with partners (Green, 2010). Booker (2005) has also suggested few strategies which include: Proper market analysis and research, Clear vision of unique offering for visitors, A powerful brand promise for customer attraction, Personalized target market and Proper strategic analysis backed by proper support and movement towards vision. There is not agreed model for having a good strategic and marketing

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plan for historical sites. Considering the deficiency in existing literature, this study tries to find out the traits that a place should offer to attract visitors' at large number.

Offering something beyond the perception of visitor: Varied economic conditions across the globe have made one standing at distance in perception about locations and sites. This has led to increased need of unique experience offering at locations that have been aimed to visit. Thus a destination should be made such attractive that it offers unique experience for visitors. Offering unique experience is also important as people are more "cash rich but time poor" now (Booker, 2005).

Capture right tourists: Tourism is purely visitor trait and demand based industry. Its success is dependent upon reading the characteristics and demands of visitors. Cultural and historical tourism includes individuals who are well educated, older, influenced by women, cosmopolitan, accountability driven, people who like spending, who like to stay in hotels, diversity driven people, interested in authenticity, people who like art and culture, those who want quality travelling experience (Green, 2010). Thorne (n.d.) concluded that there has been shift in tourism preferences as young people are also inclined towards cultural and heritage tourism.

Orient the customers: Place based tourism is customer oriented, as it is based on demands and requirements of customers in tourist destination (Thorne, n.d.). Booker (2005) also infers that offering best experience to customer is functions of customer choices and meetings those preferences.

Creating inventory of the experience: Creating an inventory for experience is a best way of captivating tourist attraction. Inventory includes five elements or cultural clusters: agricultural and industry heritage, human heritage, the arts, natural and cuisine history. Out of these five human histories is the most important cluster as it shapes up the rest (Thorne, n.d.). Booker (2005) also inferred that presence of supportive services create a good inventory of experience for visitors, which increases value of visit and leads to increase in number of visitors.

Cash cultural characters: As place is considered as product in cultural tourism, the characters of place helps in conceptualizing the product which has become cornerstone of cultural tourism (Thorne, n.d.). He calls it as a tapestry of place, which contains destined people, its history, cuisine, folk culture, natural and built heritage, language, traditions, museums, festivals, heritage sites etc., which makes a place one like no other. Kolb (2005) concludes that culture along with best tourist services attracts large number of tourists because it offers complete cultural experience. He also

argues that culture should be marketed rather than it should be sold.

Displaying routes in near vicinity: Availability of routes will make explanation of large tapestry of the culture around, which will help in capturing all sorts of cultural cohorts (Thorne, n.d.).

Using technology to highlight the cultural inventory: It has been noticed that cultural tourists use internet as the best medium to select the site to visit. Thus making a display of cultural inventory at web can attract all cohorts of cultural tourists, which can pay off in shape of high amount of dividends (Thorne, n.d.). Recent change in tourism trends is based on three main social changes: increased income level, better infrastructure and technological advancement (Kolb, 2005). Hu (1996) also inferred that technology is and will be a mode of gaining competitive advantage because of its accessibility and use. Thus technology should be main focus of tourism organizations.

Communication and marketing the key: Schouten (2002) conclude that communicating what is there to offer is the first requirement of any strategic plan. Hu (1996) also says as the products offered by tourism sector are intangible so there should be proper communication medium used to convey the idea of what is being offered by the destinations. It should include proper advertisement and marketing tools. Rosenfeld (n.d.) emphasis on the importance of destination marketing in tourism. He gives certain guidelines for marketing:

- Brand, highlight and market city, its locations, festivals and occasions
- Arrange tourist packages
- Assist private tourist companies to establish packages and tour arrangements
- Develop electronic media
- Develop print media
- Promote through government involvement

Appointment of tourist marketing representative abroad: Such idea can be taken from the idea of Indian tourism department which has established overseas offices which aim to promote India as preferred tourist destination. By March 2012 India was having its representative offices at 14 locations across the globe. Same idea can be adopted by Saudi government. The best person to hold the office is the students studying abroad. They can work more efficiently as they know the cultural demands of the country where they are living as well as they know the language barriers to overcome. Thus students can act as marketing representatives as well as resource person to formulate marketing plans (Indian Ministry of Tourism, 2012).

Selecting strategies on the basis of economic health of tourism destinations: Kolb (2005) suggests that economic health of cities/tourism destinations also

influences choice of strategy for tourism marketing. He clinches that there are three major economic situation i.e., strong economic conditions, decline conditions and transition. Lippard (1999) also inferred that economic conditions of a city may directly influence tourists' decision to visit that location.

Market the place as a product: While placing place as a product, it offers numerous benefits as it attracts more than destination's cultural attraction (Thorne, n.d.). Kolb (2005) says that product should be good at all levels: product, experience and service. So there should be combination of urban tourism with cultural tourism. Urban tourism includes facilities, services, locations to enjoyment and leisure etc. Booker (2005) says that each visitors experience with the product or location is brand, better the experience higher will be brand value for it. Rosenfeld (n.d.) also clinches that place promotion is the prime strategy for cultural and historical tourism development in every location. Place has been considered as the product to offer by other researchers as well e.g., Agyei-Mensah (2006) and Evans (2003). Rosenfeld (n.d.) has pointed out some considerations for a cultural product/place. These are:

- Offer something unique
- Offer understandable and enjoyable quality of product
- Arrange physical clustering of activities
- Renovating of historical sites and locations
- Arranging spatial events and festivals that are common and unique
- Developing minority cultural heritage facilities
- Develop handicrafts business
- Multi lingual experience for visitors
- Tailor made plan for visitors about timings of visits

Developing cultural districts: Like industrial districts, development of cultural districts is aimed at dividing locations on the preference of cultural and historical tourism, which enables development of favorable small and medium size enterprises in the desired locations (Rosenfeld, n.d.; Santagata, 2002). Santagata (2002) also divides districts on four bases: industrial cultural districts, institutional cultural districts, museum cultural districts and metropolitan cultural districts.

Creating collaboration with cultural organizations: Kolb (2005) suggests that in order to develop the tourism experience with cultural sites collaboration should be created with cultural organizations. These will resultantly, lead to product analysis with involvement at all levels, which will improve both tourists level and their tourism experience. Booker (2005) also talks about the collaboration of services and management to offer a good tourist experience. He also calls it a "secret weapon" which creates the visit's brand value and increases visitors' satisfaction with

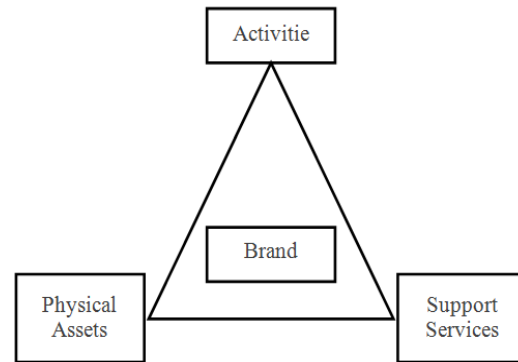


Fig. 1: An integrated visitors' attraction model by Booker (2005)

visit. He has also recommended following model for tourist attraction.

This model explains that provision of better physical assets, supportive services and better activities opportunities can increase the brand image and ultimately number of visitors at the location (Fig. 1).

All round link and support: It is not only the support from selective departments; rather there should be link and support from all levels including staff, investors and stakeholders (Booker, 2005). Rosenfeld (n.d.) tells that the services and support offered should include:

- Enhancement of mediating services like tourist offices, tour operators, internet services
- Better and accessible transportation (both inter and intra city)
- Supporting restaurants
- Tailor opening hours of all services
- Educate staff who is providing services
- Educate about local cultural norms and values and communicating those values in impressive manner
- Train people to be supportive and collaborative to visitors
- Create collaborative link between public and private organizations

Case studies:

Croatian experience: Fox (2002) and Jelincic (2002) while looking at various countries and their tourism strategies, few points have been identified. For example Croatian cultural tourism is having following distinctive characteristics:

- Decentralized tourism management system involving private public sharing in management and plans for tourism development.
- Destination image has been created through physical transformation and development programs, beauticians programs, preservation works.

- Using local distinctive movements that enable residents of one area to highlight the unique and distinctive characteristics that one location offers.
- Strategies to develop successful tourism brand (using various cultural characteristics to offer something unique and celebrating all features of tourism).

Nigerian experience: Esu and Arrey (2009) while identifying the factors that affect the customers satisfaction level with cultural tourism concluded that.

The main factors attributing towards satisfied experience are:

- Organizations of trip and facilities
- Promotional strategies adopted
- Shopping and supportive services (facilities, refreshment and food) experience of tourists
- Friendly behavior of locals towards visitors
- Infrastructure of the tourist destination
- Ambience of the environment
- Safety and security

Bangladesh experience: Ahmad *et al.* (2010) conducted research in Bangladeshi tourism sector and found following factors contributing towards attractive tourism experience of visitors:

- Standards of services and destination
- Scenery and beauty of destination
- Services like lodging, transportation, food, shopping, adventure
- Knowledge of locals about history of locations, folks, stories etc
- Security for tourists

Georgian experience: Green (2010) highlights few strategies adopted and recommended by Georgian historical and heritage authorities to increase potential number of visitors. It includes following steps:

- Inventory and assessment of potential
- Outline the enhancement strategy
- Gather support from partners
- Develop financing
- Determine management capacity
- Develop plan
- Market-market-market

Experience from United States of America (New Jersey): New Jersey task force (New Jersey Heritage Tourism, n.d.) is using following four strategies to increase number of visitors in New Jersey:

- Develop a management and partnership system to support and advocate for New Jersey's heritage tourism industry

- Develop heritage products and infrastructure
- Enhance the state-owned heritage sites as centerpieces for heritage tourism
- Build a strong marketing network

Australian experience: OECD (2009) reported following important points about tourism planning in Australia for historical sites:

- Site characteristics including site location, site enhancement, site structure
- Interaction between local and state government to develop tourism
- Operational environment development (location branding, rejuvenation of the location, illustrative policies, future projects)
- Continuous perspective
- Long term perspective

Chinese experience: Sarker *et al.* (2012) investigated the factors that are important to attract high number of tourists. Their findings found following key determinants:

- Product (location) quality
- Fair prices
- Quality of place and available services
- Marketing product (location), its characteristics, its quality, its price and unique features
- Supporting People at location
- Physical assets present at the site

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

From literature and cases discussed in the previous sections it can be concluded that in order to promote tourism in a country following main considerations should be made.

Place should be marketed as a product, it should be featured for its prices and features; there should a supportive system present from all stakeholders which includes local government, state government, people, staff etc.; increase value of locations and sites, use best possible marketing tools (including both online and offline tools); increase security system both for sites and tourists; increase facilities presence at site, better infrastructure, increase knowledge of local communities in order to entertain visitors.

These findings are common for all the countries and almost every country has planned to attract more and more tourists adopting these strategies. In order to increase visitors and tourists base emphasis should be made on all these aspects.

Future directions: Future researchers should have an analytical look at these factors and an analysis should be made to see whether these are implemented with true later and spirit or not? This will help all tourist

departments to have a look at challenges in implementation phase and will highlight areas that need further improvement. Future researchers should also increase study base by including more and more countries in the study.

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