

Cultural Tourism Destination Elements and Attributes: An Interpretive Planning

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Abstract

Tourism destinations involve a diverse of key components, elements and attributes that allure tourists to visit the destinations which fulfill their needs on arrival. The facilities and service quality of these key components and elements influences the traveler's decision-making process in choosing a destination to travel. The purpose of this research paper is to study the key elements and attributes of cultural tourism destinations and to understand the interpretive planning process of cultural tourism destinations.

Keywords: Cultural Tourism; Destination; Elements; Attributes; Interpretive Planning

1. Introduction

Anyone who travels doesn't need an explanation or a reason to visit a particular destination. Although culture becomes a key element in decision making process of a tourist whether to visit that destination or not. The reason behind this aspect is that the components and attributes involving anything from prominent cuisines or age-old customs and principles to marvelous heritage and entertainment practices constitute the culture of that destination.

The conceptualization of a tourism destination can be characterized as the "sight/sense of a region" for tourists they would like to visit, even though perception of visiting that "region" in the minds of tourists could differ from a large continent to an island or even a heritage location. Nowadays, the geographical and peculiar diverseness has become a colossal and the tourism destination's tranquility got so complicated that the geological categorization becomes rare to cover all the characteristics incorporated in a destination. With such kind of considerations, Smith (Macintosh et. al., 1995) a categorization of six tourism destination types based on the knowledge, understanding, willingness and enthusiasm of tourists.

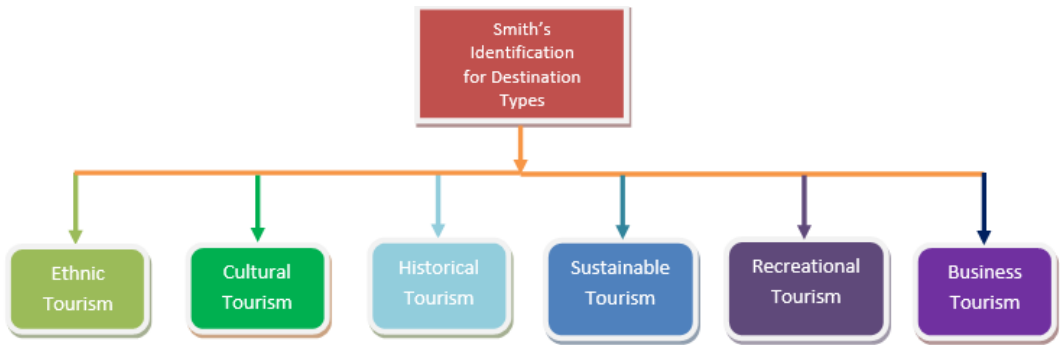


Fig 1: Classification of Tourism Destinations based on Tourist Experiences & Attractions

Source: Adaptation from; McIntosh et al., 1995; Davidoff et al., 1998& Ozdemir, 2008

A cultural tourism destination is a geographical region that comprises of manmade resources, natural resources interconnected with events of historical nature, community activities and individual aspects. Cultural destinations have existence in association to their cultural settings: as textures and history of cultures, they are important aspects of local recognition. Cultural tourism destinations are prominent cities, villages, towns and resorts which are recognized and well known for maintaining their history, authentication and heritage of that particular destination or culture of that particular region or country. Cultural tourism destinations could also be particularly linked or connected with the UNESCO cultural and heritage sites.

2. Cultural Tourism Destination Components: Elements and Attributes

Generally, a cultural tourism destination incorporates a series of components (*elements & attributes*) which draws the attention of travelers to visit the destination and on arriving at that particular destination these components also satisfy the desires of tourists. These principle components of a cultural tourism destination can be put into the categorization of 'the must sees or the must dos' and other few elements. The distribution, characteristics and quality of these components influences the traveler's decision-making process selecting a destination to visit. The principle components of a cultural tourism destination are classified in fig. 6 and are also thoroughly discussed.

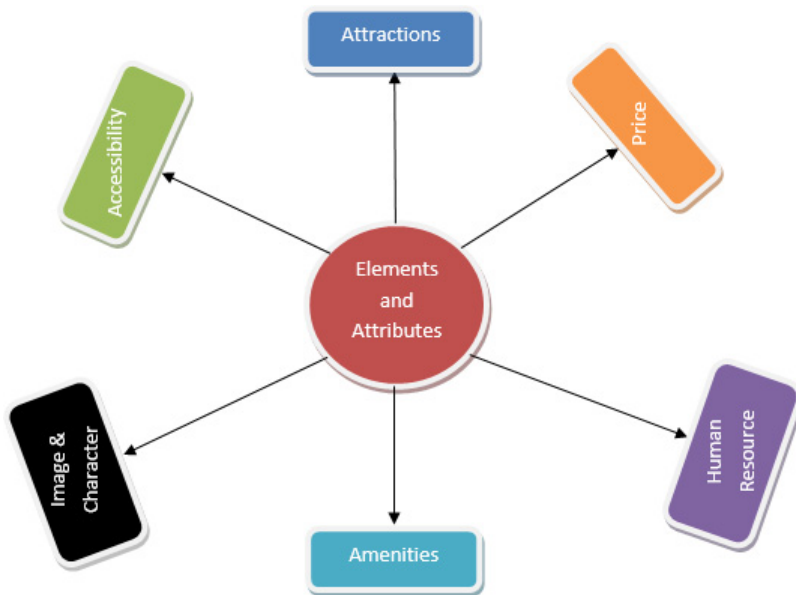


Fig 2: Basic Elements and Attributes of a Tourism Destination

Source: Adaptation from UNWTO, 2007

Attractions: The focal point for the motivation of a traveler to visit a destination remains always the attractions at that particular destination. These include resources of nature, manmade, culture etc and can be in the local territory e.g., natural and manmade parks, cultural and historical locale, and also can be the attractions popular in a local community including the local facilities and services e.g., local culture, traditions, heritage etc.

Public and Private Amenities: A number of various amenities (*public & private*) facilitating the stay of travelers at a particular cultural tourism destination includes infrastructure, accommodation, road side services and facilities, public and private service operators and catering services.

Accessibility: To travel to a particular tourism destination there are a range of accessible services and facilities through which visitors can travel. These services and facilities include rail, road, air and cruise ships as they provide tourists help and support in reaching the selected destination easily. There are also some specific circumstances and conditions that should also be considered as accessible resources at the destination including visa requirements, ports of entry and also some specific conditions for the entry in a territory.

Image and Character: To allure and attract visitor to a particular cultural tourism destination, the quality image and distinctive characteristics of a destination plays an important and unique role. A number of resources can be utilized in the promotion of destination image such as (marketing, branding, travel media, e-marketing). A variety of

characteristics providing support and help in building cultural destination incorporates its uniqueness, sights, scenes, environment quality, safety facilities and services and the harmony of local community in general.

Price: In cultural tourism destination’s competition with other tourism destinations, the pricing of various facilities and services play a prominent role in visitor’s decision-making process of choosing a destination to travel. The elements and attributes of pricing linked with the costs of transportation to and from the destination and also the costs of accommodation, attraction, food and travel facilities. A traveler’s decision-making process may also depend on the other characteristics such as economy and currency exchange.

Human Resources: Human resource is an essential element of the travel industry as well as of a tourist destination. The relationship and connections with local communities plays an important role in the destination planning and management as tourism is an employment generating industry. The people associated with the manpower of tourism and destination building is well versed and familiar with the benefits and responsibilities related to the growth of tourism business. These characteristics features of a cultural tourism destination are important aspects of destination management strategies and should also be managed accordingly.

A number of researchers have included a wide range of elements and attributes of a cultural tourism destination in their research studies and the same have been summarized in the below table:

Table:

	Sofield 1998	Anderson 1997	Richards 1996	Janiskee 1996	Glasson 1994	Peleggi 1996	Philipp 1993	Jin Huh 2001
History/ Tradition	x				x			
Monuments/ Monumental Ruins			x			x		x
Historical Buildings		x	x		x	x	x	x
Culture Villages	x					x		x
University/College					x		x	
Museums		x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Galleries		x	x				x	x
Traditional Scenery	x						x	x
Arts (Music/Dance)	x		x	x			x	x
Architecture	x		x					x
Handicrafts	x		x	x		x	x	x
Theaters		x	x		x			x
Festivals/Events	x	x	x	x				x
Old Town (City)			x			x		
Historic People		x	x					x
Religious Places			x			x	x	x
Food		x		x			x	x

	Sofield 1998	Anderson 1997	Richards 1996	Janiskee 1996	Glasson 1994	Peleggi 1996	Philipp 1993	Jin Huh 2001
Shopping Places		x			x		x	x
Information Centres						x		x
Atmosphere/ People					x			x
Indoor Facilities					x			x
Accessibility					x			x
Expensiveness					x			x
Accommodations								x
Tour Packages								x
Guide								x
Souvenirs								x

Source: CHARTS Project Partnership and National Institute for Research and Development in Tourism, Romania (June, 2014)

3. Interpretive Planning and Management of Cultural Tourism Destination:

Interpretive planning of a cultural tourism destination is a combined procedure of marketing and management which recognizes and creates a memorable tourist experience and includes concepts, media channels, viewers and analysis processes (Harpers Ferry, 1998; NPS, 2000; Ham, 2005). Planning for tourist experiences is an essential element of basic tourism and management plans of a cultural tourism destination. Interpretive planning and management is a diverse range of procedures that supports in connecting individuals memorable experiences with some important circumstances and happenings taken into consideration, at the same time economic gains for local economies, responsible utilization of local resources and the standards of tourist facilities are also taken care of. With these circumstances the process of interpretive planning and management of a cultural tourism destination thus should involve a range of essential attributes and elements such as:

- The rationale and purpose of cultural tourism organizers and heritage planners to provide enlightening facilities and services.
- General information and understanding of viewers and resources involving particular range of evaluation processes and procedures.
- Selection of media channels.
- Steps for the assessment and implementation approaches.

Interpretive planning and management of a cultural tourism destination has to be kept focused on the best tourist experience in a comprehensive way and allocate tourist services thoroughly. If tourists are not provided with the best services including proper information, direction and functionality of these services, it is unlikely that they will return. The visitors do not want to perceive that they may get lost, not able to experience the attractions or other activities being offered at a particular cultural destination. Hence,

interpretive planning process should take into consideration the services at a destination and facilities related to tourism such as transportation, catering, shopping, accommodation information and principle characteristics associated with the destinations tourists are travelling to (Owen et al., 2004; Colquhoun, 2005).

In order to put the cultural resources within the reach of mass tourists apart from conservation and protection comprehensive measures are taken into account to provide a standard visitor experience. Here the role of a Destination Management Organization comes into play which supports and implements the activities of tourism planners to provide tourists with quality experience of the services and facilities provided at a particular cultural tourism destination.

As a collective process, destination management and interpretive planning involves national and local government, local authorities, cultural planners and few institutions, local communities, private operators, volunteers etc. cultural tourism destination planning and management involves a diverse range of processes and procedures that focus on sound and effective tourism experience with essential services, happenings and events and also it helps in reviving economic benefits for local economy, sustainable and responsible utilization of local resources and providing a quality visitor experience.



Fig 3. Roles of the Destination Management Organization in Interpretive Planning and Management of a Tourism Destination

Source: Adaptation from Destination Consultancy Group, 2012

Interpretive planning of a cultural tourism destination services enrich tourism experiences by integrating components of education, satisfying audience's demands in a tourism setting which favors educational interventional entertainment to subdued observations (Schauble et al., 1997; Prentice et al., 1998; Anderson, 1999; Packer and Ballantyne, 2001).

The principle concerns in an interpretive planning and management of a destination includes the planner's expertise in mastering human perception techniques of obtaining and preserving information; to adjust through analytical information procedures by utilizing scientific measures and in choice of words and terminology to be used to provide knowledge and information to the visitors in different tourism contexts (sites, collections, trails, websites etc).

Strategies, plans and approaches that supports in conserving precious resources of a tourism destination can be drafted by the managers and planners, keeping in mind their capability, objectivity and potential of controlling important components of both indoor and outdoor cultural spots.

4. Conclusion

Tourism bring a wide range of benefits, involving improvement in local economies, employment opportunities for local community, protection and conservation of culture and heritage through educational resources and management and helps to support research and development of good environmental practices. Tourism can also improve the life quality of locals at a destination with the improvements in infrastructure, improvements in intercultural understanding and the importance of local cultures, heritages and traditions. The main purpose of planners, interpreters and managers of a cultural tourism destination includes the responsibilities of improving the harmony of local communities; understanding and proper knowledge of culture, heritage and traditions of the destination being visited; developing awareness among the tourists and hosts; minimization of environmental and social impacts and developing unanimity in local economy/ equal opportunities to the local population/ legality.

According to the current trends in managing a cultural tourism destination, it appears that one of the most significant trend of developing cultural tourism leads to inception of 'creative tourism' which better assists in the needs of developing cultural tourism responsibly and sustainably in today's tourism industry. Thus, on the basis of fragileness of a cultural tourism destination we firmly have to emphasize that only strategic/responsive tourism planning and interpretation procedures can have the ability of taking into account the sustainability principles in managing a cultural tourism destination and its carrying capacity.

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