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Collaborating to Address Cultural Tourists' Interests for Experience

This paper considers contemporary practices designed to provide cultural tourists with experiences in art and culture. These opportunities were collaboratively developed through partnerships formed with tourism and art and cultural organizations having an interest in providing cultural tourism opportunities to visitors. Examples from four cities (i.e., Philadelphia, Portland, San Diego, and Tacoma), and two western regions (i.e., Pacific Northwest and California) are given to illustrate trends in collaborative efforts to promote art and culture. Benefits for visitors and partnering organizations and communities are discussed.

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Despite challenging economic times, growth in tourism opportunities continues at a steady pace (Getz, 1997; Moscardo, Faulkner, & Laws, 2000). Historically, efforts by organizations that promote tourism destinations have been directed toward *places* visitors would want to frequent. Examples of such place-related destinations include oceans and lakes, mountains, cities, regions, performance halls, and historic sites. Though the emphasis for such marketing practices has been on *locales* more often than on *experiences*, current practices offer evidence that this trend may be shifting.

More recently there is evidence that marketing efforts are designed to promote the cultural amenities specific or unique to certain place-related destinations. These kinds of tourism opportunities not only offer visitors opportunities to experience the art and cultural fabric of locales, they are also designed to bring about communication between visitors and members of the cultural core of the experience itself.

The emergence of these art and cultural experiences can, in part, be credited to the increasing popularity of cultural tourism. Cultural tourism is growing and changing (Moscardo, 2000; Walle, 1998) and it has been shown that cultural tourists are more likely to produce greater economic benefits to local economies than are other types of tourists (see Getz, 1997; Shaw & Williams, 2002). As cultural opportunities become more popular, tourism professionals must be willing to collaborate in order to create experiences that will attract the savvy cultural tourist to their destinations. The purpose of this paper is to present examples of specific tourist opportunities presently being promoted through partnerships that illustrate the convergence of culture and place.

Converging Culture and Place

At the 2003 Americans for the Arts Conference, four tourism professionals shared art and culture marketing strategies in their cities presently being offered to tourists by their organizations. Each example evolved from collaborative efforts by local organizations directed toward adding experiential dimensions to place-related destinations not previously marketed to visitors. Each also recognized the importance of incorporating multicultural elements associated with the cultural core of the place-destination; a factor valued by culturally motivated tourists.

A city of neighborhoods, Philadelphia is marketing itself through a recently established Neighborhood Tourism Network (NTN) that takes visitors “beyond the colonial icons of center City’s historic district” in order to introduce them to where Philadelphians live, work, and play (www.gophila.com). NTN consists of seventeen organizations that represent many historical and ethnic associations from throughout the city in partnership with the Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation. The wide variety of visitor experiences include Taking a Stand for Freedom (first person accounts and musical presentations related to African American’s experiences); Voices of Chinatown; Latin Soul, Latin Flavor; Philadelphia’s Civil Rights Struggle; Mummers & Mozzarella (South Philadelphia); The Sound of Philadelphia (musical heritage); Exotic Cuisine & Esoteric Culture (West Philadelphia); Philadelphia’s Jewish Heritage; Mural Arts Program; and various Walking Tours.

Portland, Oregon, is traditionally known for its evergreen forests, waterfalls, gardens, and hiking trails. More recently, and in partnership with various community groups, the city’s Visitors Association (POVA) describes Portland as “enriched by the combination of many cultures.” (www.travelportland.com). To illustrate these cultural opportunities, POVA has

published a series of Heritage and Culture guides and website promotions designed to increase visitor awareness about opportunities such as tours, events, music, foods, galleries, and businesses for various multicultural groups (i.e., African American, Chinese American, Hispanic American, Japanese American, and Native American). POVA is also marketing World Cultures of Portland through their Cultural District Tours program, and recently produced their Gay Portland Resource Guide for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered visitors.

Art + Sol is “the heart of everything cultural” in San Diego (Art & Sol, 2003). Eleven of San Diego’s leading arts and cultural organizations partnered with the City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture, San Diego Magazine, San Diego Convention & Visitors Bureau, NBC 7/39, and American Express. The San Diego Art + Sol Guide is published on a regular basis in order to provide visitors with up-to-date information on cultural offerings in the area for theatre, museums, symphony, opera, science, Broadway plays, and the like. The Summer/Fall 2003 issue features two cultural itineraries targeting specific demographic groups known to have interests in art and cultural experiences; San Diego Pride, for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered visitors, and Literary San Diego, a review of the city’s attractions that would be of interest to literary enthusiasts.

Through its Economic Development Department’s Culture and Tourism Division, Tacoma, Washington, is developing cultural tourism opportunities around a landmark piece of public art. In its initial stages of development, the City of Tacoma, in partnership with native son and world-renowned glass artist Dale Chihuly, recently completed construction of a 500-foot pedestrian bridge that connects the Museum of Glass with the Washington State History Museum. It not only created a vibrant new gateway into downtown Tacoma, but it also houses

three new installations of glass art. The Chihuly Bridge of Glass was the site for Lumino City, a summer event designed to market Tacoma's newest cultural tourist attraction.

Extending Culture and Place

Collaborative efforts can also be extended beyond city limits. In the Pacific Northwest, visitor's associations from two states (Oregon and Washington) and the province of British Columbia have partnered with Amtrak rail service to promote the cultural offerings in five cities and two countries. (www.culturalcascades.com) Noticing that besides forests, rivers, waterfalls, hiking trails, and beaches, the northwest was also a "cultural hotbed bubbling with limitless opportunities" to discover art and culture. Collaboratively, marketing efforts include promoting a variety of cultural arts experiences including theatre, visual arts, performance, culinary arts between Eugene, Oregon and Vancouver, British Columbia.

The recently established California Cultural Tourism Coalition (CCTC) is another example. The purpose of this partnership between arts and tourism organizations is to celebrate and advance the state's rich arts and cultural heritage by promoting increased tourism opportunities through a comprehensive marketing program designed to showcase California as the number one cultural travel destination in the nation (California Arts Council, 2004, p. 2). Initiated by the California Arts Council, the CCTC includes the state's Division of Tourism, State Parks, and the Convention and Visitors Bureaus of San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego, the Metropolitan Arts Commission from Sacramento, San Diego, and Los Angeles.

Implications: Benefits to Collaborating

In presenting these examples of contemporary cultural tourism practices, several benefits for visitors and partnering organizations and communities can be identified. Promoting cultural experiences can be attractive to visitors who are less interested in site-specific attractions; who

may extend their stay and spending in order to experience the art and culture of an area; and who may be motivated to return to a particular destination because of art and cultural offerings.

Partnering organizations are provided opportunities to honor local history and diversity; build community identity; and cooperate in partnerships that increase opportunities for communication among art and cultural professionals representing multiple interests.

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