Chapter 15

Regional Sustainable Development: Cultural Tourism in the Southern Jalisco, México

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the potential of cultural tourism in the municipalities that comprise region 6 of the State of Jalisco, territorially delimited in the South of Jalisco. These municipalities are tested first to identify the demand for cultural tourism to determine the profile of the cultural tourist under the assumptions that tourists especially motivated by culture tend to travel longer distances than most tourists. It discusses the motivations and satisfactions of cultural tourists in order to establish the potential market in accordance with the characteristics of the target market in the southern region of Jalisco. Any operation of cultural tourism companies should make the strategic diagnosis, which explains the use of SWOT analysis as a tool for strategic planning of cultural tourism enterprises. Finally, we propose some development strategies of cultural tourism in this region of Southern Jalisco.

INTRODUCTION

There is an increasing awareness of the importance of culture, arts, festivals, natural and cultural heritage sites and folklore. Cultural diversity is the basis of cultural and heritage tourism. Cultural tourism has been at the center of the tourism industry in Europe and now other countries are beginning to develop their own activities (Nzama, Magi, & Ngcobo 2005). Cultural tourism is a tourism product in itself and can give significant contributions to regional economic development. Development implies the design, marketing and promotion of new cultural and heritage tourism products and activities while creating a safe and user-friendly atmosphere for visitors and local communities.

Despite the fact that the Southern Region of the State of Jalisco in México is considered one of the most culturally rich in manifestations and expressions in Latin American literature, painting, etc., cultural DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-8699-1.ch015
tourism is almost non-existent. Local communities tend not to be actively interested in cultural tourism related issues and do not understand what the benefits could be. Moreover, there exists a lack of reliable data on cultural tourism for the Southern Region of Jalisco.

Cultural tourism is neither common nor universal. Although organizations, governments or communities may not consider cultural tourism as part of their core interests, they appreciate and understand the consequences and possibilities of tourism (Jamieson, 1998). There is also scarce data and information on practice of cultural tourism activities. Social dynamic changes occurring in the Southern Region of Jalisco make it difficult to obtain useful information as a reliable input for the design, implementation and effectiveness of cultural tourism policies.

The objective of this study is to address the lack of cultural tourism activities and infrastructure in the Southern Region of Jalisco. An aim of this exploratory study is to collect inputs on whether the Southern Region of Jalisco can be transformed into a cultural tourism destination. The concept of cultural tourism can be formulated after understanding the cultural activities offered by a community, considered as an asset to the regional economic development. Cultural tourism is an option to create employment, to improve the quality of life and to implement poverty eradication initiatives.

As a marketing strategy, cultural tourism is one of the latest buzzwords to attract visitors to cultural sites. Cultural tourism destinations offering cultural products and services linked by geography, townships, folklore, history, celebrations, art experiences and performance can be marketed to local and foreign visitors. Cultural tourism in the Southern Region of Jalisco can offer potential benefits to regional economic development and to visitors as well, because of the presence of adequate resources. An integrated approach involving all stakeholders must be inclusive and participative to ensure sustainable, holistic and efficient cultural tourism ventures.

The term of cultural tourism is heavily influenced by professional approaches referred to a concept rather than to a particular set of objects, articles or products. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) defines tourism as comprising the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes (WTO, 2000:4). Cultural tourism is defined as the movements of persons for essentially cultural motivations, which includes study tours, performing arts, cultural tours, travel to festivals, visits to historic sites and monuments, folklore, a pilgrimage (WTO, 1985).

The concept of cultural tourism encompasses a wide range of views embracing full set human expressions and manifestations that visitors undertake to experience the heritage, arts, lifestyles, etc. of people living in cultural destinations. Heritage tourism is usually considered to be cultural tourism. Heritage tourist: refers to tourists visiting places of traditional, historical and cultural significance with the aim of learning, paying respect to recreational purposes (Nzama, et al., 2005).

The term cultural tourism encompasses historical sites, arts and craft fairs and festivals, museums of all kinds, the performing arts and the visual arts and other heritage sites which tourists enjoy visiting in pursuit of cultural experiences (Tighe, 1985). Heritage tourism as a synonym of cultural tourism is an experiential tourism related to visiting preferred landscapes, historic sites, buildings or monuments and seeking an encounter, involvement and stimulation with nature or feeling part of the history of a place (Hall & Zeppel, 1990).

A cultural tourist is a person who stays more than 40 kilometers away from home for at least one night and has attended a cultural venue, which will include visiting an art gallery, museum, library,
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