

Centerpoint

Volume II Issue 2

A Newsletter for the Tourism Industry

Spring 1994

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Tourism BR&E Works For Cass County Leaders

Cass County recently completed a tourism business retention and expansion (BR&E) program in Minnesota. Typically done for manufacturing businesses, the Minnesota Extension Service's BR&E program is a strategic planning process that helps communities set priorities on local efforts to help existing businesses survive and grow. Facilitated by Dr. George Morse, MES economist, and cosponsored by the Tourism Center, the Cass County effort was the first tourism BR&E program done in the state.

"The BR&E process is well-suited for the tourism industry because there are so many types of tourism businesses. It's success in Cass County was due to the involvement of a large number of community leaders, the Tourism Center and the Minnesota Office of Tourism," says George Morse.

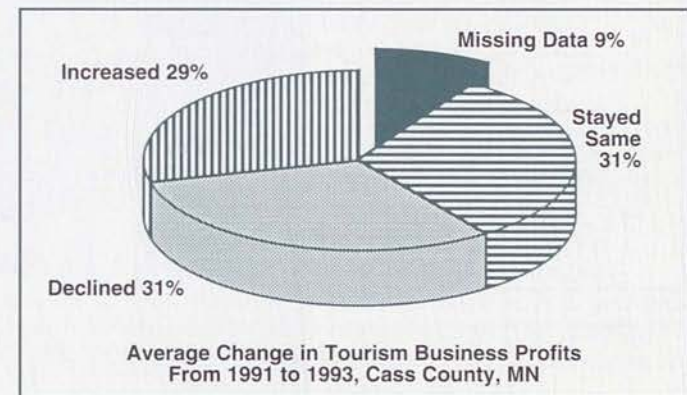
This process most often involves on-site interviews with a large sample of businesses. Cass County leaders chose to instead do a mail survey of 320 tourism businesses in their county following two planning meetings with 52 resort owners. The firms included lodging, restaurants and bars, attractions and recreational services. More than 200 firms, over 64%, responded to the survey.

Survey respondents said that over 65% of their income was from lodging businesses, 18% from eating places, 8% from recreational services, and 2% from attractions. Respondents were mainly family operations with no outside paid employees. Over half of the firms had no paid family employees and only 8% employed at least one person year-round.

Nearly one-third of the respondents reported a decline in profits from 1991 to 1993 as shown in the figure. Seasonal fluctuations in occupancy caused lodging businesses to limit their open season, further lowering profits.

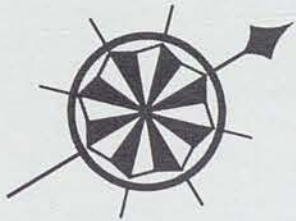
The survey results suggested strategies county leaders could use to help existing tourism businesses thrive. A task force of Cass County leaders developed these recommendations for action:

- Establish a county-wide tourism organization to centrally coordinate projects and efforts to encourage growth in Cass County tourism.
- Establish an outreach program on market and business planning to help county firms learn about state and federal programs on financing options, new management techniques, and customer relations.
- Explore means for tourism firms to extend their business season.
- Expand marketing into the area of family vacation activities and expand activities for children.



The Tourism Center is providing county scholarships for two tourism BR&E projects. The scholarships cover \$2500 of the total \$5000 cost to counties. They will be available on a first-come-first-served basis and require counties to complete an application. Interested counties should contact Dr. Daniel Erkkila 218/327-4490. The complete Cass County BR&E report is available from Jon Hjelm 218/547-3300.

This archival publication may not reflect current scientific knowledge or recommendations.
Current information available from University of Minnesota Extension: <http://www.extension.umn.edu>.



Centerpoint

A Newsletter for the Tourism Industry

Extension Educators Take Tourism Training Back to Communities



Glenn Kreag

Over 25 Minnesota Extension Service educators from across the state received intensive tourism specialization training at a two-day session this February. The specialization training included updates on Tourism Center programs of interest across the state such as the new Tourism Business Retention and Expansion program for tourism service businesses and the Festival Manager Certification course.

Tourism-specialized educators provide a valuable resource to Minnesota communities as a link between Minnesota communities and the expertise of University of Minnesota faculty in departments such as Agriculture and Applied Economics, Rural Sociology, and the Hubert Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. Their local involvement helps guide Tourism Center activities so they meet the needs of rural communities and the tourism industry.

County-based educators also deliver quality client-tailored tourism programs. Like Bob Sopoci from Cook County, many county extension educators play a key role in county resort tours for resort operators. Others, such as Peg Braaten from

Mahnomen County, Steve Dryzkowski from Pine County, and Wabasha County's Toni Smith, sponsor community rural tourism development programs that attract an array of tourism industry and civic players to learn, interact, and discuss tourism concerns.

Tourism Center Director Bill Gartner says, "Training our educators out in the field not only helps the Tourism Center deliver research-based education across the state but also allows us to respond to the needs of rural communities and the Minnesota tourism industry."



Extension Educators

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SHORT TAKES...

Tourism Center and Minnesota Office of Tourism Collaborate... A recently signed agreement will provide more effective program delivery to state tourism industry members. The agreement calls for the organizations to meet regularly to discuss existing and planned programs in an attempt to eliminate program duplication. A statewide tourism research agenda will also be developed.

Tourism Organizations Appoint Bill Gartner... This January, Bill Gartner was appointed President of the CenStates Chapter of the Travel and Tourism Research Association for 1994. Gartner has also been elected Secretary of the International Academy for the Study of Tourism from 1994-1996. The Academy limits its membership to only 75 members.

Mark Your Calendar for the CenStates TTRA Conference... The CenStates Chapter of the Travel and Tourism Research Association (TTRA) annual conference will be held September 7-9 at Cragun's Conference Center in the Brainerd Lakes area. The conference, *Applications: Making Research Work for You*, will focus on research issues, techniques, and methods for small businesses and tourism organizations such as CVBs. Topics are aimed at helping communities and businesses use research to increase business. The event promises to provide a wealth of ready-to-use information. Watch your mail for upcoming conference details or call the Tourism Center for further information.

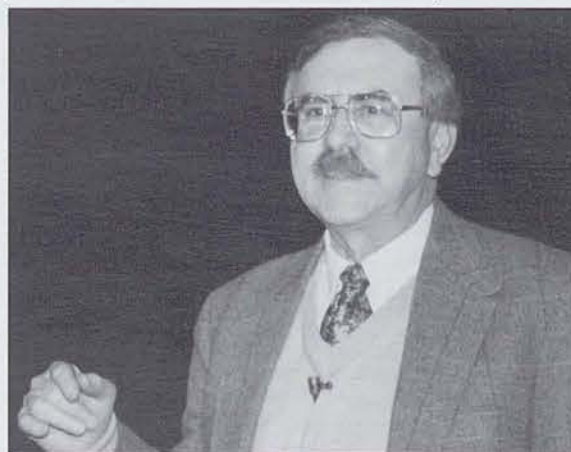
Tourism Taxation, Service Quality Topics of 1994 Lecture Series

The Tourism Center's Lecture Series provided the industry and the academic community a chance to hear leading tourism educators discuss relevant and diverse topics. The kick-off speaker for the series was David L. Edgell Sr., Ph.D., Senior Travel and Tourism Administrator with the Department of Commerce, and former Acting Deputy Undersecretary of Commerce for Travel and Tourism. Dr. Edgell addressed future challenges and alternatives for tourism in the twenty-first century. He identified nine specific issues of the 1990s to be addressed in order to "think quality, act globally" to integrate the benefits of tourism with people and destinations.

In February, Donald Holecek, Ph.D., from Michigan State University's Travel, Tourism and Recreation Resource Center, looked at travel and tourism taxation. He discussed its potential impact, the desire of governments to

tax tourism, and the potential benefits and problems of tourism taxation.

March saw the Lecture Series go on the road to Duluth. Richard Perdue, Ph.D., University of Colorado-Boulder, explored the research issues and questions associated with service quality and consumer satisfaction in the travel industry.



Donald Holecek

Dr. Jafar Jafari wrapped up the series with his presentation on tourism as an academic discipline. Dr. Jafari, an internationally recognized tourism educator, presented a model for an interdisciplinary approach to tourism to strengthen the growing recognition of tourism as an academic field.

The lecture series was funded in part by the Carlson Endowment as part of the Tourism Center's commitment to provide quality research-based education to the industry. Videos of each lecture are available for rental through the Tourism Center. Contact Cynthia Messer at 612/624-6236.

For the Asking ...

Q: Will sustainable development impact tourism and, if so, how?

A: Since much of our tourism activity relies on a natural resource base, tourism may be affected by more emphasis on setting sustainable development goals. Sustainable development refers to the use of our resources for any purpose in such a way that they will not be diminished for future generations. There are both positive and negative impacts of such a concept for tourism. In areas where there is a high volume of tourism impacting the natural resource, limits to tourism may be needed. The most notable examples of this are in the most popular national parks such as Grand Canyon or the Everglades. The crush of visitation is degrading the resource, forcing more and more limitations to try to restore a balance. Recently imposed limits to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness are a response to this same problem. On the other hand, taking steps to avoid resource degradation, such as the efforts to maintain the pristine quality of Lake Superior, will help secure its attraction quality for tourism into the future.

Sustainable development concepts are not a means to prevent development. They are a way of recognizing that we must provide for our economic needs and preserve the building blocks of resources that support our existence. In the long run, tourism, along with other activities, should benefit from responsible implementation of sustainable development methods.

For the Asking is a regular feature of *Centerpoint*. Readers should direct brief tourism questions to the Tourism Center, 116 Classroom Office Building, University of Minnesota, 1994 Buford Ave., St. Paul, MN 55108. Center faculty will answer questions in each issue.



Off the Top

The Tourism Center is involved in a major collaborative project in Ghana, West Africa, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). We are working as part of the MUCIA team (Midwestern Universities Consortium for International Activity, Inc.) with Conservation International, the Smithsonian Institution, and the International Council on Sites and Monuments. Our main role is to help local populations plan for tourism development and assist in the promotion and marketing of the destination. There are several reasons why we are involved in the project.

The University of Minnesota has the specialized expertise needed for a project of this nature. There are not as many academic tourism programs in the U. S. as you might think. Our Tourism Center is considered one of the best. In addition, we benefit greatly from the learning and exchange of ideas that occurs in such a collaboration. Inasmuch as the Tourism Center is committed to providing new ideas and educational material for Minnesota's tourism industry, the Ghana project provides unique opportunities for learning. The work we are doing in Ghana allows us to test the newest thinking about appropriate tourism development. As we learn which strategies work best and reformulate those that are less successful, we will be able to transfer this information into a Minnesota context.

While tourism in Ghana has been primarily business-focused and centered in the capital, Accra, many significant tourism attractions are located near rural villages. We are attempting to organize and enhance the rural tourism efforts by performing a quality assessment exercise. Communities and individuals analyze their tourism industry in terms of SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats). This process is ideally suited for use with Minnesota tourism dependent businesses. The Ghana project will allow us to refine the process to make better use of it for Minnesota businesses and communities.

We are also studying the socio-cultural indicators of change resulting from tourism development. Too often tourism development can dramatically and irreversibly change local residents' *sense of place*. By identifying and monitoring such indicators to determine how fast change is taking place, modifications can be made to avoid such adverse effects.

Minnesota has many communities struggling with the issue of tourism development as an economic development strategy and the resulting potential for major socio-cultural change. The lessons we learn from our work in Ghana will help us address these issues at home.

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ENDOWMENT UPDATE

The Endowment has been used to support the 1994 Tourism Lecture Series. Travel expenses for Dr. David Edgell as well as promotional expenses for the series were supported with Endowment funds.

Two \$2500 scholarships will be paid for by the Endowment for counties wishing to conduct a tourism Business Retention and Expansion Program. The total cost per county for a tourism BR&E is \$5000. (See cover story)

The Hotel and Restaurant Program at Crookston has used \$100 in Endowment funds to pay an honorarium for guest speaker, John Wetterlund.

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MINNESOTA EXTENSION SERVICE
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