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SUMMARY

Citizen input into planning for tourism-recreation development is difficult to obtain. The experience survey as a method of obtaining citizen input prior to planning for such development was evaluated in the Corpus Christi area.

The experience survey is based upon the assumption that certain individuals (knowledgeables), because of their occupations, training or experience, may be not only knowledgeable about certain topics but also may reflect the collective opinion of many other people they are acquainted with. The survey, by tapping their opinions and knowledge, may provide a cross section of information valuable to the planner.

Subject-matter topics and categories of knowledgeable important to tourism-recreation in the Corpus Christi area were identified as (a) services, businesses; (b) attractions, parks; (c) transportation, travel; and (d) general.

A final list of 44 knowledgeable who could represent the subject-matter interests was evolved from an original list. This list had been compiled with the help of civic and business leaders and persons with area-wide interest and reviewed by authoritative individuals in the area. These 44 respondents were interviewed by a professional interviewer using an interview instrument of 11 questions—seven concerned with characteristics of regional tourist use and four with growth or change factors. Data were analyzed by content analysis to identify consistent response patterns. Concordance of these response patterns with that of a key knowledgeable (director, Corpus Christi Area Tourist Bureau) was determined. Greater concordance occurred among the first eight questions than among the last four.

For the Corpus Christi area, the survey showed general agreement among respondents on the identity of the area and internal subareas; the year round use of the area with significant differences in activities and clientele in summer and winter; a wide diversity of markets and activity concentrations which suggests increased promotion for expanded markets; the watertown amalgam along the shoreline as the dominant major natural resource for tourism-recreation; and the concern that growth of tourism should be encouraged only with caution.

It was concluded that the use of the experience survey and the technique of obtaining concurrence of responses of a key knowledgeable offers to the planner-designer a basis for conceptualizing plans.
EVALUATING AND DEVELOPING TOURISM

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AN EXPERIMENT WITH "EXPERIENCE SURVEY" AS A METHOD OF OBTAINING CITIZEN INPUT FOR PLANNING TOURISM-RECREATION IN AN AREA WAS CONDUCTED IN THE CORPUS CHRISTI AREA OF TEXAS. THE RESULTS SHOW THAT A POPULATION CAN CONTAIN A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF REMARKABLY KNOWLEDGEABLE AND ARTICULATE CITIZENS WHO ARE ABLE AND WILLING TO PROVIDE AN ABUNDANCE OF INFORMATION AND OPINION USEFUL TO PLANNING.

THE TEXAS GULF COAST REPRESENTS A SPECIAL ASSET FOR LEISURE USE FOR MANY PEOPLE LIVING IN TEXAS AND THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. THE GROWTH OF TOURISM-RECREATION IN THIS AREA CAN BE ORDERLY AND IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF ALL VISITORS AND LOCAL CITIZENS ONLY IF CAREFULLY PLANNED.


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Mention of a trademark or a proprietary product does not constitute a guarantee or warranty of the product by The Texas Agricultural Experiment Station and does not imply its approval to the exclusion of other products that also may be suitable.
In an effort to improve citizen input, legislation in recent years has required park and highway agencies to hold public hearings on plans. Although this step allows citizen groups to express themselves about prepared plans and programs, it has several weaknesses. First, it comes too late in the planning process for the needs and desires of the citizenry to be incorporated into concepts. The public hearing is usually held only after all plans have been crystallized. Hence, the hearing becomes simply an endorsement or an empty rejection. Second, hearings are often subject to heavy bias due to especially vocal individuals at the hearing. Special interests sometimes pack the audience in order to gain special favors. Others, having no special interest may not appear on the assumption that their point of view is already accepted. Finally, hearings are of such relatively short duration that they seldom reflect considered and studied opinion and information.

Citizen input into planning is an ideal difficult to accomplish. Citizens of a city or an area are of such diverse characteristics and interests that representativeness is difficult to obtain. Furthermore, laymen seldom have the depth of knowledge of specialists and therefore may have no opinions or may have opinions based only on misinformation. Even so, they are affected by the implementation of plans.

One method that may have value toward obtaining citizen input is that of the experience survey. It is based upon the assumption that certain individuals (knowledgeables), because of their occupations, training or experience, may be not only very knowledgeable regarding certain topics but also may reflect the collective opinion of many other people they know or are acquainted with. By tapping their opinions and knowledge, it may be possible to obtain a cross section of information valuable to the planner.

The main objective of this study is to evaluate the experience survey approach as a means of gathering planning knowledge from the citizens in the Corpus Christi area regarding tourism-recreation development. Therefore, the study tests the use of this method in the planning process as well as provides basic information upon which further planning can be done in the Corpus Christi area.

PROCEDURES

Social science recognizes the experience survey as a technique for obtaining information from large groups by interviewing knowledgeable persons within the group (Sellitz et al., 1959: 55). Such knowledgeable are those who possess specialized knowledge and attitudes because of their occupational experience or avocational activities.

The first step in this study was the identification of subject-matter topics and categories of knowledge-ables important to tourism-recreation in the Corpus Christi area as follows:

**Services, Businesses**
- Hotels/motels
- Restaurants and/or restaurant association
- Marina, waterfront business representatives
- Oil-gasoline distributors
- News media publishers or editors
- Realtors
- Developers, development consultants
- Campground, mobile-home park operators/owners
- Financial representatives
- Boating-fishing operators
- Recreation and/or travel management representatives

**Attractions, Parks**
- State parks and wildlife areas
- National parks, refuges
- County parks
- City parks
- Museum, historical, archeological

**Transportation, Travel**
- Public transportation companies (airport, bus, rail)
- State highway district
- Taxicab company

**General**
- Political authorities
- Planning agencies, commissions
- Ecologists
- Researchers
- Recreation, tourism specialists

This list includes those closely involved with either the functions of tourism or with the resources needed for tourism development. It represents those citizens who are well informed regarding tourism and its implications. Although several of the categories listed may contain knowledgeable biased in favor of tourist development (hotels, developers, boating/fishing operations), other categories include citizens with broader understandings of their community and its resources (planning agencies, ecologists, political authorities). Further experience in the application of this method may show the need for restructuring the categories of knowledgeable persons.

A list of names of individuals who could represent the subject-matter interests was prepared with the help of civic and business leaders and persons with area-wide interest. The list was then reviewed by authoritative individuals in the area. The revised list
consisted of 51 names that had been given positive reputational referrals by at least three persons. Seven respondents were disqualified after the interview because it became evident that their knowledge of the subjects requested was limited, extremely biased or inaccurate, producing a final list of 44 names.

The second step was the development of an interview instrument that could be used during a semistructured (unstandardized) interview. The interview format used an interview guide with carefully worded questions but allowed follow-up on specific topics. According to Maccoby and Maccoby (1954: 451), the use of the unstandardized format offers several advantages over the standardized: it permits standardization of meaning rather than dependence upon the more superficial aspects of the stimulus situation; it is more valid and encourages more true-to-life replies; and it is more flexible.

No attempt was made to make precise measures of variation between respondents. It was recognized that they may differ for significant reasons. The intent of the interview was to find cumulative support for patterns of responses from a cross section of knowledgeable sources. Moreover, support was sought for the research technique as a method of revealing information of breadth and depth preparatory to design or planning efforts.

The research procedure utilized an initial telephone request for interview. The introductory statements by the interviewer were designed to a) make clear to the respondent the context, intent and validity of the research effort and b) encourage respondent motivation and willingness to report. This procedure was repeated at the initiation of the actual interview. This was seen as a prime condition for successful data collection.

The personal characteristics of the interviewer were also important to the application of the semistructured interview. Cannell and Kahn (1956: 543) note that the role portrayed by the interviewer should be as a professional researcher who uses clarity in presentation of questions, persistence in obtaining responses pertinent to the objectives of the research, ability to maintain high rapport with the respondent and capability to take accurate and complete notes on the respondent's replies to his questions. The interviewer's ability to deliver apt questions in a manner which will both maintain the respondent's interest and pursue the objectives of the interview format was also vital. In this procedure, the interviewer must pursue in depth new sources of information without straying from the primary format.

Further, the interviewer should be interested and enthusiastic about the respondent's informational offerings even though they may be repetitious in light of previous interviews. The success of this procedure is dependent upon convergent validity based on successive citation of the same general patterns of answers by persons from a broad variety of categories of knowledgeable.

The final step was the interview itself. Following the introductory remarks, the interviewer asked the respondent how he and/or his organization was interested or associated with tourism. This line of questioning helped to establish the framework of interest of the interviewee and his qualifications as a category knowledgeable.

Questions were grouped into two topic areas of concern to this research: characteristics of present regional tourist use and growth or change factors. Questions asked within the two topic areas were as follows:

I. Characteristics of Regional Tourist Use

1. We are trying to determine how broad a geographic area should be included in the Corpus Christi region from the viewpoint of tourist use. What areas would you include in the region? (If any question existed after the respondent described his concept of the regional tourist use, the researcher would ask for clarification about inclusion of particular areas.)

2. What are the main seasons of tourist use in the region?

3. How is tourist use expressed in terms of individual groups, or families, according to the seasons?

4. How is this tourist use depicted according to the different areas throughout the region?

5. What recreational activities do tourists engage in?

6. What are the main sources of these users?

7. Are there any areas of the region which are not now being used but which hold potential for tourist use or development?

II. Growth or Change of Factors

8. Do you feel the tourist industry should grow in the Corpus Christi region?

9. What do you see as major barriers or limitations to growth?

10. What steps should be taken to solve problems associated with these limitations?

11. What do you feel should be the ideal goals for tourism growth in the region?

The data arising from the respondent interviews were analyzed by content analysis methods to identify consistent response patterns. Content analysis for convergent validity was sought to substantiate the agreement or disagreement (concurrency or nonconcurrency) throughout the geographic subunits of the region and between categories of knowledgeable.
Figure 1. The respondents’ image of the Corpus Christi tourism region is identified by the dotted line. Included are several prime recreation attraction areas.
RESULTS

Respondents were not only knowledgeable but also capable of significant decisionmaking capacity within their sphere of business or professional activity. Such attributes contributed substantially to the ease with which respondents were able to grasp the meaning of abstract questions.

This experiment demonstrated that the method of experience survey was workable for tourism development information. Statements were given freely and fully, lending themselves well to analysis of content. Two primary bodies of results were obtained: general convergence of information on the topics of inquiry and the extent of concurrence with information from the local tourism leader.

Convergence of Information

Consistencies or differences in basic thoughts expressed in the interviews were recorded as was related information reported by the respondents. The general convergence of information obtained from the knowledgeable was summarized.

Geographic Scope of Region

The geographic area of the Corpus Christi tourism region was identified according to its natural and manmade recreation attractions and by the facilities and communities supporting these attractions. Identification of the region's boundaries and internal content was consistent.

The region extended from Aransas National Wildlife Refuge south to Baffin Bay and inland to Lake Corpus Christi and Kingsville, as shown in Figure 1. It was not crisply defined by either city or county political boundaries. While Kingsville was included within the region, Alice, Beeville and Refugio were always excluded.

Both cities and attraction areas were included within the regional boundary. The communities most directly involved in tourist-recreational interests were Rockport, Fulton, Aransas Pass, Port Aransas and Corpus Christi. The recreation attraction areas specifically identified include Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, Copano Bay, Lamar Peninsula, Fulton shoreline of Aransas Bay, Aransas Bay, Rockport-Fulton area, Aransas Bay shore from Rockport to Aransas Pass, Goose Island State Park, North Beach (Corpus Christi), Corpus Christi Bay, Oso Bay, St. Joseph's Island, Mustang Island, North Padre Island, Nueces County Park #1 (on North Padre Island), Nueces County Park on Mustang Island (Holiday Beach), Laguna Madre, King Ranch, Baffin Bay and Lake Corpus Christi. Included within these are specific activity areas, such as the Lamar-Blackjack Peninsula area, the Live Oak Peninsula area, Mustang Island including Port Aransas, North Padre Island and the Corpus Christi area.

Within these major attraction areas the numerous subareas were recognized as being functionally differentiated by natural resource character, activities and types of users and by administrative or management procedures. For example, on North Padre Island the use ranges widely between those areas managed by the National Park Service, the Nueces County Parks Department and the private Padre Island Investment Corporation owned by Budget Industries. In almost every instance, the dominant natural resource features affording recreation are water oriented.

Seasonal and Destination Characteristics of Use

The region was described as having two main seasons of use: winter, extending from December through March, and summer, extending from the Easter holiday period until the Labor Day holiday. Differentiation in tourist types is strongly aligned with seasonal variations while differentiation in destination areas is less precise.

The summer season is begun by youths who migrate to the Mustang and Padre Island beaches during the Easter holiday, during the spring break from school, on weekends and at the beginning of the summer vacation period. This early period also attracts some fishermen, particularly in the bays. It is especially popular with those coming from cooler northern climates.

In summer, the origins of tourist visitors are primarily within Texas, especially the larger cities such as Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth and San Antonio. Houston is the biggest source of summer visitors. Galveston was described as the greatest competitor for many types of summer tourists.

Several respondents pointed out that specific areas within the region have little competition for their particular recreational attractions along the Texas Gulf Coast. For example, two knowledgeable mentioned that Rockport's collection of community interests—art shops, apparel shops, sea coast fishing and hunting and high quality housing on Aransas Bay—is not equaled anywhere in the South except in areas of Florida.

Most of the summer visitors are Texas families, but other visitor groups, such as childless couples and young people, were observed by the knowledgeable. The Labor Day holiday patronage was often described as an extremely diverse mixture of visitor types primarily from Texas.

Padre Island National Seashore is visited by a high percentage of non-Texans and people familiar with other national parks, monuments and national attractions. Nueces County Park on Padre Island and Bob Hall Pier are visited and used much more by local residents from Corpus Christi and nearby inland communities and receive a high percentage of Mexican-American visitors. Padre Island development,
Families and youth groups dominate the summer recreational use of the Corpus Christi area.

such as the Million Dollar Inn and two large condominiums, is patronized by urban Texans and some outsiders who seek beach recreation and higher priced accommodations. Padre Island south of Malaquite Beach is used by campers and beach buggy owners. Occasional surf fishermen utilize four-wheel drive vehicles or even conventional passenger automobiles and pickup trucks to attain access south of the paved roads.

Several knowledgeable noted that the order of priority of use was beach use, shopping and eating out. Impromptu interviews with several of the customers at food service establishments supported this observation. The lack of good restaurants and night spots was cited as limiting the growth of tourism.

Knowledgeable in Aransas Pass and elsewhere throughout the region agreed that Aransas Pass is not actually a tourist town. However, it serves as a dispersal point for tourists going to Mustang Island and for fishermen launching or renting boats for bay fishing. The shrimp boat harbor was cited often as being a tourist attraction. The several motels in Aransas Pass are used primarily by commercial customers who service the nearby industries.

Rockport was cited as a destination tourist community and also as a bedroom community for the industrial development of Aransas Pass. Many visitors from Texas and outside Texas are purchasing vacation and retirement homes in and near Rockport. These people take part in community recreation activities as well as bay fishing, swimming, sailing and golfing.

Growth of a significant artist’s colony was also cited. Several respondents said the trend in Rockport is somewhat toward retirees but that this is not necessarily most desirable for Rockport’s future.

Visitors to Corpus Christi during the summer seem predominantly auto traveling tourists from Texas cities who stay in the local motels, shop, visit the beaches and use motel facilities for swimming, eating and evening entertainment.

During the winter months, the majority of visitors to the region consists of older and retired persons, commonly referred to as “snowbirds,” who originate from the midwestern states north of Texas. Their origins by state include Oklahoma, Kansas, the Dakotas, Nebraska, Wisconsin, Illinois, Colorado, Minnesota and Missouri, with some visitors coming from the Province of Ontario in Canada. Although some visitors come from within Texas, such as the more northerly cities, they are not a large portion of the winter tourist population.

The winter snowbirds were described as being predominantly rural people living in colder climates. One respondent said they were from the “wheat country.” They are typically limited spenders who are living in the more economical apartments, motels and recreation vehicle parks. They prefer locations in or near the small communities bordering the bays as well as in Port Aransas and Corpus Christi. The most important attractions to most are the combined aspects of mild winter climate and good fishing off
local piers in the bays and at Port Aransas, although the availability of community services and community recreation facilities was cited as being an important asset to them. During autumn and winter, many visitors engage in bird-watching. Knowledgeable in Rockport and Corpus Christi noted that activities sponsored by community and civic organizations for older adults were an important interest feature. One respondent noted that a possible reason that winter visitor origins were concentrated only in the midwestern states to the north of Texas rather than being dispersed across the nation was because of competition from California and Florida.

Numerous respondents also noted that the proximity of the Mexican border and the milder climate of the Rio Grande Valley affect winter tourist traffic through the Corpus Christi region. To some extent the availability of Mexico for side junkets acts as an added attraction to wintering on the Corpus Christi coast. The Valley's milder climate encourages many snowbirds to move farther south as the weather becomes progressively inclement during January and February.

Factors Enhancing Growth of Tourism

Several natural resource factors were reported as enhancing the growth of the present tourism industry in the region. Foremost among these factors is the "unspoiled ecology of the region's waters and wild areas." Several of the respondents indicated that the bays are among the least polluted along the Gulf of Mexico and that the barrier islands are as yet un molested to any serious extent. The danger that this unspoiled condition could deteriorate was a concern to almost everyone interviewed, however.

The barrier islands were also cited as major assets of the region. One person,whose office handles numerous requests for tourist information, said that 60 percent of the people who write to his office want Padre Island information. The lure of a large accessible and relatively untouched island on the coast is a big attraction.

Other major attraction factors mentioned were deep sea fishing, the bird populations, the mild winter climate and the city of Corpus Christi. Single-purpose groups are attracted by deep sea fishing and the unusual bird populations, but others prefer the cities.

The knowledgeable indicated that among tourists who were familiar with the area there was a great deal more specialization in expressed preferences than among those who came for the first time. The newcomer wants to see it all and is likely to drive from his mainland lodging to the islands and through other communities. On the other hand, the person who has
visited the region typically wants more of a special area and its associated attractions or activities. Tranquility was one of the important assets mentioned with respect to Rockport throughout much of the year and with respect to Port Aransas during the fall and winter seasons.

Current and Planned Projects

Several projects being planned or underway were cited as possibly being important to the growth of tourism.

1. A new reservoir on the Nueces River is planned for municipal water supply and recreation. The reservoir project is controversial and has not been approved. The Bureau of Reclamation proposes to build the reservoir with the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation providing some monies for shoreline recreation development. While one knowledgeable remarked that the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation has said the reservoir would be a great attraction near the salt water Gulf, another knowledgeable noted that continued impoundments on watersheds which nourish the estuarine system could severely inhibit the coastal estuarine productivity.

2. The restoration of North Beach, or Corpus Christi Beach as it is sometimes called, will consist of protecting and rebuilding the beach and developing various contiguous park facilities. This development has been studied by the Corps of Engineers, and Congress authorized the project December 1970. Restoration of the beach will be funded on a fifty-fifty basis with federal money and local funds. Development of beach and park facilities will be done completely by local funding unless other funds can be obtained. The total cost of the beach restoration is estimated at $1,520,000, and the cost of the park facilities is estimated at approximately $500,000.

3. Plans for the development of the Cayo del Oso include hotels, marinas and associated facilities. The development area is "tract C" near the mouth and adjacent to Corpus Christi on the "Blind Oso" which is west of the University of Corpus Christi. About one-half of the present shallow water area would be left, and one-half would become "made land." About 650 acres in the tract and about 5,100 acres in the entire Cayo del Oso are considered for development presently. Ecologists and conservationists object to this project on the basis that while the loss of shallow silted areas of the Oso is small, it is an area exceedingly important as a biological nursery ground.

4. The Plaza del Mar Convention Complex was presented to the public once as a public bond issue.
and lost. It is anticipated that a project of reduced cost will be presented to the public again. The facility's cultural benefits will be stressed rather than its convention capacity. However, it will be an important convention complex and is expected to be important to tourism, generally. A proposed convention center serving up to about 300 persons was also mentioned as an important asset for Rockport.

5. A master plan has been prepared for the future use and development of the Padre Island National Seashore. Considerations of interest to the respondents are the development of additional park facilities in the Malaquite Beach area, the context of use of the remainder of the National Seashore and the question of development of a park road down the length of Padre Island to the Mansfield Cut. Various concerns were expressed throughout the study with regard to the road. While part of the function of the road would be to provide control on the island, it was cited by several persons as likely to infringe seriously on the island's ecological maintenance and semiwild environment.

6. The Padre Island Investment Corporation which controls Padre Isles Development has developed a large hotel, two condominiums, a nine-hole golf course and a major seawall in front of the motel and condominiums. The organization is also developing a recreation housing community which it estimates will reach 40,000 in 20 years or more. It feels the impact of the development will be one of the strongest single factors in regional growth. The organization's present property covers about 5,300 acres on the north end of Padre Island. Additional facilities of the development will include another 18-hole golf course; a marina, the first phase of which will be 200 boat slips; a hotel; additional condominiums; and a yacht club. Community water and sewage facilities and recreation facilities such as tennis courts and an olympic pool will be developed gradually to meet the community’s demands.

7. The La Quinta Hotel being built in Corpus Christi is located on the site of the old Nueces Hotel. The 200 rooms of the La Quinta Hotel will do much to replace the loss of the Driscoll Hotel being razed to make space for new office buildings. One knowledgeable said there is assurance that the developer will build an additional tower if business justifies it.

8. The idea of a parkway developed from the Oso bay area up the Oso Creek was cited by only one knowledgeable. This is an important ecological area and has high recreational potential. The parkway would be primarily an open space and scenic route but would lead to the important “Karankawa Indian area” (potential state park) and significant clay dunes.

9. The fishpass presently being dredged across the southern end of Mustang Island is sometimes described as an important asset to the sport and

Neatness to Mexico was named as an incentive for tourist travel through Corpus Christi.
The unspoiled waters and wild areas were named as major factors enhancing tourism growth.

Deterioration of the natural assets now threatens the appeals of the area, respondents believed.
commercial fishing potential of Corpus Christi Bay, but more often it is considered a political fiasco and biologically and structurally unsound.

The fishpass is estimated to cost $3.5 million and would provide for exchange of Gulf water with the bay waters which generally become more saline during the dry summers. It was noted, however, that funds for construction of the fishpass canal, riprapping of channel sides, extension of the protective jetties and redredging to maintain the channel until it becomes more stabilized are less than specified by engineering estimates. Hence, the jetties which had been recommended to extend 1,400 feet into the Gulf are only 700 feet long, thereby reducing greatly the potential life of the fishpass. Further, its success as a water exchange pass in conjunction with other passes along the coast is also dubious as "there is inadequate tidal exchange for operation of the fishpass." Costs to keep the pass open after its completion are estimated variously from $50,000 to $100,000 per year. One knowledgeable noted that Yarbrough Pass remained open only about a month after its completion. Another noted that the Corps of Engineers had to dredge the Matagorda Ship Channel up to 7 months of its first year until they had achieved some stage of stabilization.

10. Another project suggested by several persons is development of a major aquarium attraction to depict the various marine and fresh-water species of the region in an educational format. One person suggested that it be located on Mustang Island, but others felt it should be located in Corpus Christi away from possible damage by hurricane winds and waters. At either location, it was conceived as a regional attraction to tourists and as an educational museum-like facility for the resident public.

11. A project regarded as having great potential significance to Mustang Island and to the region, but which has not yet reached an active stage of development, is the Mustang Beach housing and condominium resort on Mustang Island. The Mustang Beach project was begun 5 years ago but has never had a marketing or financing program. It was initiated by various owners including the W. T. Piper Corporation of Lockwood, Pennsylvania, as a model fly-in housing resort complete with airport. The landing strip was developed along with initial canals for the housing development; several lots have been sold, and five houses were built by lot purchasers. Part of the development concept included promotion of aviation with hotels, a marina and other facilities appropriate to the housing resort. Tight money, loss of interest in the project, construction difficulties and the limited capacity for cash sales of properties brought the project to a halt. The property owned by the development includes 900 acres south of Port Aransas, and property leased from the State of Texas totals 235 acres. Only 240 acres of the development are being developed for residential purposes at this time. The project is reputed to hold high potential for the future if it can be resumed.

Ecological Characteristics and Tourism

Several ecological concerns related to tourism were reported. The ecological stability of portions of the region and especially of the islands can be directly affected by development efforts. Tourism is cited as a "clean" industry offering fewer problems of air pollution and less direct runoff of noxious waste materials than many manufacturing industries, extractive industries and agriculture. On the other hand, respondents believe that development efforts along the bayshores, within the watersheds of streams which nourish the bays, and especially on the islands, can have immediate and important detrimental effects on the region's ecological stability.

It was suggested that several areas are prime for tourism but also are ecologically fragile or at least highly subject to tourist development deterioration. These include the bay shores which afford most direct view and access to the fishing and water use areas, the land areas adjacent to the waters which are subject to rapid runoff of waste and silt-laden waters after rains, and the islands themselves.

Bay shores were cited as especially critical because developments involving dredging of shallow water areas, recontouring and channelization of shores often resulted in direct harmful impact on the shallow water nursery and feeding areas of the bays. Maintenance of the ecological quality of these shallow areas is critically important to the continued production of waterlife of the bays and, in the broad sense, of the Gulf itself.

The land areas adjacent to the bays and streams feeding the bays may be subject to disturbance of protective vegetation and soils during development periods—a process which results in runoff of silt and debris and leads to an abrupt impact on the bay waters. Further, according to some respondents, if such areas are not protected by planting adequate vegetation, controlling waste effluents and controlling other harmful effects, they can continue to deteriorate.

The islands have been described as a dynamic strand, continually but barely maintaining themselves against the destructive forces of nature and man. The Gulf side of the islands is especially subject to such forces. The dunes, the islands' main wall of defense against hurricanes and other storms, may be readily damaged by dune buggies, construction projects and even by pedestrian traffic. Several knowledgeable persons stated that while the Gulf side and the dunes areas are the first line of interest for many first-time visitors to the region, those who stay for any length of time find that the back sides of the islands are more comfortable, more stable and more hospitable to man's residential efforts. The beach and dunes
Although bay shores offer great development potential, they are ecologically fragile, according to the respondents.

Waters nearest developments are most subject to sewage and erosion damage, the informants thought.
areas are most corrosive, most directly attacked by hurricane winds and waters, noisiest and least comfortably in the long run. They are evidently the prime area for controlled day-use along the beaches, but ecologically too fragile for man’s other uses.

Another feature of island ecology emphasized frequently is the incapacity of the land to absorb heavy pressures of high density development. The shallow soils, limited soil depth to the water table, arid vegetative balance and the shortage of fresh water combine to deter easy development and to limit the ecological tolerance of the islands for development.

Local Attitude Toward Tourism

Several knowledgeable expressed concern over local attitudes toward tourism. This attitude was described as ranging from enthusiasm for the economic input from tourism realized by local businesses to public disinterest in tourism and outright disdain for any public expenditures to support or augment local or regional tourism. They described business and political leaders as being ready to lend strong support to tourism as the region’s budding industrial replacement for the declining oil industry. The general public, however, was described as disinterested in tourism.

One illustration was the public’s denial of the convention center bond issue in Corpus Christi. Some suggested that the failure was due to the incomplete presentation of the issue before the public. It is possible that the denial was a reflection of only a resistance to higher taxation and had nothing to do with tourism, but some citizens may have seen the influx of outsiders as competing with their opportunity to use local services and resources.

Six knowledgeable, including four political leaders, noted that county and city governments need to build tourism as a major regional industry, if only for economic reasons. One mayor stressed the fact that cities and counties need to structure land zoning programs, utility developments and also public support in a manner which would favor the tourist industry as an economic and social asset for the future. He and others explained that the growth of the region as a retirement center could have a negative impact because older persons with limited incomes are reluctant to support public expenditures for tourism. Even though retirees may have come to the region initially because of many of the same climatic attractions and recreational opportunities that attract tourists, they do not readily support public cost designed to enhance tourism.

Knowledgeables of the Corpus Christi area were concerned that some of the Mexican-American people feel tourism is not wholly beneficial to them. One person indicated that the Mexican-American leadership had reacted unfavorably toward tourism and feared that “the gringos will build tourism on the backs of our people.” Others throughout the region indicated there is a social cohesiveness among Mexican-Americans which “limits their open-working attitude.” This should be researched further.

Goals for the Future

The knowledgeable recognized various other opportunities for as well as barriers to tourism throughout the region and specific areas. Several, however, were consistent in stressing the relationship of tourism to the overall environmental quality of the region. In the words of one person from Aransas County, “I’d like to see slow, orderly growth along the same lines as are evidenced now.” He explained that he would like to see nothing happen that would be so big that the community could not absorb it. He and others exhibited less interest in mushroom growth than in orderly redevelopment and expansion.

Several knowledgeable mentioned their concern for regional coordination of tourism efforts and suggested that a development agency for area-wide tourism-recreation might be appropriate. One respondent said the only way to achieve balance and control (of tourism development) would be through a high-level agency with adequate legal regulations, such as zoning, or by means of voluntarily restrained and well-planned development that is also economically feasible. Many of the respondents expressed recognition of the regionality of social, economic and ecological problems related to tourism.

Concurrence with Local Tourism Leader

By means of content analysis, concurrence of responses of knowledgeable with the responses of the local tourism leader (key knowledgeable) was obtained. The response pattern for the key knowledgeable, Director of the Corpus Christi Area Tourism Bureau, was used as a base. Deviation or agreement with the opinions and information from this respondent was then determined. The primary response pattern of this key knowledgeable is as follows:

1. Regional Boundaries: The Corpus Christi tourist region is shown in Figure 1.

2. Dual Season: Two primary seasons were identified: summer visits by Texas residents and visits by persons from the Midwest (referred to as “snowbirds”) during the winter. A short but intensive visiting period comes from Texas youths during the spring.

3. Summer/Winter Types: The summer-visitor Texans made shorter visits, were better spenders and were comprised mainly of families, while winter visitors made longer visits, spent less and were mostly older couples and groups.

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4. **Subregional Components:** The total region was subdivided into Port Aransas, Rockport, Corpus Christi City and North Padre Island.

5. **Water-Oriented Activities:** Water-oriented activities dominate tourism-recreation use and were primarily differentiated into three patterns: family pattern, youth pattern and winter, older-age pattern typically described as "snowbird" activities.

6. **Texas-Midwest Origin:** Origins of users were primarily Texas cities for summer users and the northern midwestern states for "snowbirds" and others throughout the year.

7. **Areas with Development Potential:** The areas having greatest development potential (and implied use attraction potential if developed) were Mustang Island and Cayo del Oso Bay and the Aransas Bay shore from Aransas Pass to Rockport.

8. **Growth Attitude/Respondent:** The attitude toward tourism growth was very favorable.

9. **Limitation—Public Attitude:** The unfavorable local resident's attitude or nonsupportive attitude for local or regional tourism was a major limitation for tourism growth.

10. **Limitation—No Convention Facilities:** The lack of convention and hotel facilities was a deterrent to tourism growth.

11. **Limitation—Bad Climate:** Constraints imposed by the soils and climate on physical development of the land also limited tourism. This condition was obviously related to strong concerns for maintenance of the region's ecological stability.

12. **Limitation—High Insurance:** The high cost of insurance coverage, particularly on the islands, was believed to be an important limitation upon tourism growth.

13. **Solution—Promote Better Attitude:** Encourage more favorable local and regional attitudes toward development.

14. **Solution—Develop Convention Facilities:** Promote the building of adequate convention facilities.

15. **Solution—Expand Tour Facilities:** Expand tourism-serving facilities throughout the region.

16. **Solution—Develop Attractions:** Increase the number of attractions, especially on the islands.

17. **Solution—Conserve Natural Resources:** Conserving and enhancing natural resources throughout the region would increase tourist appeal.

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The barrier island dunes are especially subject to ecological deterioration, the respondents said.
18. **Goals—Control Growth, Plan:** Gradual, controlled and programed growth was necessary and desirable to long-range and sound tourism development in the region.

The same points made by the key knowledgeable about the Corpus Christi region were presented to the entire panel of knowledgeable. The purpose was to discover whether the response of the primary respondent was representative of the responses of the entire panel of knowledgeable. The results of concurrence are shown in Table 1.

Greater concurrence occurred among the first eight questions (average 85 percent) regarding characteristics of tourism in the area than among the last three (average 54 percent) that pertain to limitations, solutions, and goals.

The least amount of concurrence appeared with two questions on limitations. For example, of the total of 44 responses, only 92 percent agreed with the primary response pattern on the issue of “high insurance costs” as a deterrent to tourism. About 40 percent agreed on the issue of the lack of convention facilities.

The highest concurrence (66 percent) appeared with two issues: “encourage a favorable attitude” and “expand tour facilities.” A close second, agreed upon by 64 percent, was the idea of developing attractions.

Some unexpected response patterns are revealed in Table 1. Several of those occupational types expected by researchers to show strongest concurrence, especially in assessing limitations and making recommendations (items 9 through 18) did not do so: a town realtor, a newspaper editor, a marine service businessman, a town chamber of commerce and a town political leader. On the other hand, individuals in categories that normally might be expected to be biased against the opinions of a tourism leader generally supported the same recommendations and limitations: a biologist and representatives of a national park, a county park, a city museum and the Corps of Engineers.

This approach to obtaining insight into the tourism of the area shows that the leader of tourism development is supported strongly on his evaluation of the area’s touristic use, concept of region, origins of tourists and the location of the area of greatest potential. However, it also shows a general lack of concurrence on the limitations, solutions, and goals for development in and around Corpus Christi.

**CONCLUSIONS**

It is possible to obtain a wealth of information about an area and its potential for tourism by means of the experience survey—content analysis of data derived from interviewing knowledgeable persons in the area. Furthermore, the technique of obtaining concurrence of information with the responses of a key knowledgeable proved very useful. This offers a new option to the planner-designer—a basis upon which he can conceptualize plans. If he chooses to recommend concepts that are in accord with the consensus of knowledgeable in the area, he is virtually assured of support for these concepts. If, however, he chooses concepts contrary to local thinking (which may be valid for other goals; for example, national need) he does so with knowledge.

This approach, however, is not without pitfalls. It assumes a very competent and professional interviewer. Not everyone has the skill and training to perform this role. Unless an interviewer can establish rapport, present material clearly, maintain the integrity of the inquiry, record basic responses accurately, stimulate respondent reaction and remain objective, he may obtain a very inaccurate measure of citizen opinion and information. Furthermore, the selection of the respondents can greatly influence the results. Presumably the check offered by referrals eliminates this potential error, but some important respondents may be eliminated because they are not well known or because critical categories are overlooked. The method may be affected by the influence of current issues. An overly strong negative or positive opinion may be more the result of current opinion about a specific issue than about the basic element involved. However, the diversity of categories of respondents may serve to correct such a problem. Even with these potential problems, this approach provides a forum for gaining insight into both public opinion and the leadership of subject-matter interest that shapes such opinion.

For the specific Corpus Christi area, several conclusions regarding present and future resource use for tourism and recreation can be drawn.

The experience survey revealed general agreement on the identity of the area and internal subareas. This attitude toward geographic cohesiveness suggests a reasonably solid base for planning the area as a unit.

The use of the area is virtually year round but with significant differences in activities and clientele between two major seasons, winter and summer. Winter use is primarily sight-seeing and fishing by retirees and farmers from the north. Summer use includes many active water sports by families and youth mostly from within Texas but also from other states. A significant spurt of activity by youth takes place during their spring vacations from school.

The wide diversity of markets and activity concentrations suggests that promotion and development of appeals for expanded specific markets could be increased—that the area is not limited to only one market and leisure interest. At the same time, this also suggests the need for careful planning of the
| Primary response pattern | City planning | Regional planning | Nueces County parks | Nat'l Park Service | City parks | Private planning | Area tour operator | City engineer | City museum | County political | County Chamber of Commerce | State parks | Island hotel owner | Island Newspaper editor | Marine Service | Town Chamber of Commerce | Town political | Town planner | Town political authorities | County developer | Island developer | Island planner | Marine scientist | Town banker | Town developer | City motel manager | City utility manager | Island land owner | City Banker | Corps of Engineers | State political authorities | City financial officer | City newspaper editor | Ecologist | Percent Responding |
|-------------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------|----------------|------------------|--------------|-------------|----------------|-------------------------------|-----------|-----------------|------------------------|-------------|------------------------|----------------|-------------|------------------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|
| 1. Regional boundaries | +            | +                | +                  | +                 | +      | +              | +                 | +            | +           | +              | +                              | +        | +               |                       | +           | +                      | +            | +           | +                      | +              | +               | +                  | +            | +               | +                 |
| 2. Dual season         | +            | +                | +                  | +                 | +      | +              | +                 | +            | +           | +              | +                              | +        | +               |                       | +           | +                      | +            | +           | +                      | +              | +               | +                 |
| 3. Summer winter types | +            | +                | +                  | +                 | +      | +              | +                 | +            | +           | +              | +                              | +        | +               |                       | +           | +                      | +            | +           | +                      | +              | +               | +                 |
| 4. Subregional components | +            | 0                | +                  | +                 | +      | 0              | +                 | +            | +           | +              | +                              | +        | +               |                       | +           | +                      | +            | +           | +                      | +              | +               | +                 |
| 5. Water-oriented activities | +            | +                | +                  | +                 | +      | +              | +                 | +            | +           | +              | +                              | +        | +               |                       | +           | +                      | +            | +           | +                      | +              | +               | +                 |
| 6. Texas-Midwest origin | +            | +                | +                  | +                 | +      | +              | +                 | +            | +           | +              | +                              | +        | +               |                       | +           | +                      | +            | +           | +                      | +              | +               | +                 |
| 7. Areas with development potential | +            | +                | +                  | +                 | +      | +              | +                 | +            | +           | +              | +                              | +        | +               |                       | +           | +                      | +            | +           | +                      | +              | +               | +                 |
| 8. Growth attitude/respondent | +            | +                | +                  | +                 | +      | +              | +                 | +            | +           | +              | +                              | +        | +               |                       | +           | +                      | +            | +           | +                      | +              | +               | +                 |
| 9. Limitation: public attitude | +            | +                | +                  | +                 | +      | +              | +                 | +            | +           | +              | +                              | +        | +               |                       | +           | +                      | +            | +           | +                      | +              | +               | +                 |
| 10. Limitation: no convention facilities | +            | +                | +                  | +                 | +      | +              | +                 | +            | +           | +              | +                              | +        | +               |                       | +           | +                      | +            | +           | +                      | +              | +               | +                 |
| 11. Limitation: bed climate | +            | +                | +                  | +                 | +      | +              | +                 | +            | +           | +              | +                              | +        | +               |                       | +           | +                      | +            | +           | +                      | +              | +               | +                 |
| 12. Limitation: high insurance | +            | +                | +                  | +                 | +      | +              | +                 | +            | +           | +              | +                              | +        | +               |                       | +           | +                      | +            | +           | +                      | +              | +               | +                 |
| 13. Solution: promote better attitudes | +            | +                | +                  | +                 | +      | +              | +                 | +            | +           | +              | +                              | +        | +               |                       | +           | +                      | +            | +           | +                      | +              | +               | +                 |
| 14. Solution: develop convention facilities | +            | +                | +                  | +                 | +      | +              | +                 | +            | +           | +              | +                              | +        | +               |                       | +           | +                      | +            | +           | +                      | +              | +               | +                 |
| 15. Solution: expand tour facilities | +            | +                | +                  | +                 | +      | +              | +                 | +            | +           | +              | +                              | +        | +               |                       | +           | +                      | +            | +           | +                      | +              | +               | +                 |
| 16. Solution: develop attractions | +            | +                | +                  | +                 | +      | +              | +                 | +            | +           | +              | +                              | +        | +               |                       | +           | +                      | +            | +           | +                      | +              | +               | +                 |
| 17. Solution: conserve natural resources | +            | +                | +                  | +                 | +      | +              | +                 | +            | +           | +              | +                              | +        | +               |                       | +           | +                      | +            | +           | +                      | +              | +               | +                 |
| 18. Goals: control growth; plan | +            | +                | +                  | +                 | +      | +              | +                 | +            | +           | +              | +                              | +        | +               |                       | +           | +                      | +            | +           | +                      | +              | +               | +                 |

+ — Indicates concurrence with the primary response pattern.
- — Indicates nonconcurrence with the primary response pattern.
0 — Indicates no response to question or that a particular option was not cited by particular interviewees.

TABLE 1. CONCURRENCE OF ALL KNOWLEDGEABLES WITH PRIMARY RESPONSE PATTERN
resources to avoid conflict, such as between those of differing ethnic origins, differing socioeconomic class and differing activity interests.

The water-land amalgam along the shoreline is dominant as the major natural resource for tourism-recreation. The “backland” is not as intensively used, forcing concentration of use upon the water’s edge. This suggests that careful examination of the shoreline zone is needed to determine the bearing capacity for recreational use. It also suggests that the backland should be researched for greater potential use. Sites accessible to the beach, but not directly on it, may have many advantages of protection from the corrosive characteristics of the open beach, identified by many respondents as a limitation. The respondents cited the relatively unspoiled natural resource base as the greatest asset of the area.

One may conclude that the use of a key knowledgeable—one who is professionally oriented to tourism development—is valuable only when concurrence with other knowledgeable is obtained. For example, in this study other knowledgeable agreed basically with his analysis of the region, its tourism use, the sources of tourists and the subareas having the greatest potential. As might be predicted, however, his bias toward tourism and the specifics of limitations were not always shared by other knowledgeable in the region.

While the respondents believed that tourism was a “clean” industry and probably offered least comparative damage to natural resources, they also emphasized that growth should be encouraged only with caution. Concern that the damage to fragile and irreplaceable resources possibly may be greater than the economic and social impact of increased tourism suggests the need of and support for major programs and plans for systematic allocation of resources to this use. At present no organization exists for the creation, coordination and implementation of such plans.

A final conclusion pertains to the scope of the approach reported. It must be emphasized that the results of an experience survey can provide a very important element for planning—insight into social and environmental impact. For area design and planning, however, investigation of other factors, such as investment potential, market analysis, tourist enterprise feasibility and creative attraction innovations based upon the resource assets and liabilities, is equally important.

REFERENCES


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