RECREATION AND PARKS DEPARTMENT

1-20-82
Date

Memo to: Kay
From: [Signature]
Remarks:

Try this one for size.
This discussion centers on an issue that tourism educators generally continue to ignore. It was excusable twenty years ago when we were stumbling to get tourism education legitimized in the halls of higher education. I cannot excuse it today. The issue is simply the belief by both practitioners in the field and educators in universities that tourism is defined as hotels and airlines and curricula should deal only with "in-house" matters. I argue that this is only half a curriculum.

Every program that flies under the banner of tourism must include the other half—the externalities. There are many factors outside the immediate business site that can spell success or doom to a business. Just because they are more remote and difficult to identify does not excuse our ignoring them. Students are short-changed.

Hoteliers and educators still believe the objective is to sell rooms. Airlines and educators still believe the objective is to sell seats. Actually, neither is correct unless travelers for some purpose actually do travel and then have need for these services. Unless the purpose is understood and fostered, businesses can stumble and fail no matter how good the "in-house" management may be. We still operate and teach under the misconception that the service businesses come first. Unless there are interesting, fun, and worthwhile places to visit, there is no need for the food and lodging services.

In my research and consulting work, both within this country and abroad, this misconception of tourism prevails. It came through loud and clear during the recent World Tourism Conference in Manila. If there is any place responsible for providing enlightenment on this other half of tourism, it is the educational institutions.
What matters should be included in this other half, of the curriculum, the externalities? Here are just a few topics:

* **Resource Development.** There are over 100 agencies at the federal level (National Park Service, Forest Service, Corps of Engineers, etc.) and many at every state level that own and manage vast quantities of important tourist attractions for millions of visitors. What is taught about their policies and regulations, especially trends for change?

* **Transportation and Access.** Without transportation, there is no tourism. Yet, what is taught about automobile production policy, energy policy, and mass transportation policy? What is taught about highway policies and trends and how tourist businesses can interface with decisionmaking?

* **Spatial Patterns.** We still build hundreds of tourism businesses in the wrong places. What is taught about the spatial relationships between attractions, transportation linkage and service clusters? What is taught about the relationship of service businesses and the givens of the destination resources?

* **Organizations, Conventions.** What is taught about the trends in sizes and needs of meetings and congresses? What is their linkage with "touristic" attractions for pre- or post-tours? What is the service business relationship to fostering and maintaining convention centers and arenas?

* **Tourism Research.** Are we giving student training in at least recognizing garbage from good fruit to say nothing of learning how to do good research? Do they know where to turn for research sources? Do they know how to apply existing research information in their business?

* **Consumer Behavior, Preference.** These topics have been around a long time but seldom do we direct teaching to the basics of what people actually do when they travel and what are their preferences.
Narrow concepts of marketing and sales are insufficient. How do riots and political unrest in market areas affect travel?

* Political Science. How much is taught about local, state and federal government and how it operates—especially how these decisions impinge upon their businesses? Seldom are tourist businesses active in local politics and yet are the first to gripe about political decisions. Why?

* Non-Profit Organizations. A growing power, seldom recognized by either tourist businesses or educators are the non-profit organizations that motivate urban redevelopment and historic restoration. Their many actions that foster better esthetics, archeological investigation, development of ethnic customs and stimulation of crafts are critical to much of tourism. But, is this taught?

* City Planning and Management. Few city planners understand tourism and few managers understand city planning. How much is being taught about the engineering and politics of city planning and management, especially that which impacts tourism?

* Environmental Issues. Most often brushed aside are the environmental issues. Yet tourism thrives only on good air and good water. Are we teaching the many issues and problems facing cities and rural areas concerning the disposition of waste and the protection of air and water supplies?

This is just a start. Tourist service businesses, managers—owners, that are not sensitive to these matters can wake up one morning and have no tourist business, too late for effective action. Educators have a responsibility to include these and many other external factors in their programs. If so, the day may come when practitioners will be active in relating to these, rather than reactive, as they are today. As I study the history of tourism, I sense, that the pioneers, such as the motels
of the 1920's had greater interest in these externalities than we have today. Is this progress? Is education doing its job or only half a job?

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