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Recommended Citation

Steffen, Barbara D. (1997) "Tourism as an Instrument of Peace--Is Cross-cultural Preparation the Answer? Rationale and Methodology," *Visions in Leisure and Business*: Vol. 16 : No. 1 , Article 4.
Available at: https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/visions/vol16/iss1/4

TOURISM AS AN INSTRUMENT OF PEACE--IS CROSS-CULTURAL PREPARATION THE ANSWER? RATIONALE AND METHODOLOGY

BY

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ABSTRACT

Communication and work with members of other cultures is essential, especially in the tourist industry. Individuals have their own customs, values, and traditions and it is difficult to overcome them to see the importance of other cultures. This judgmental view is the root of difficulties in relating on equal terms with people of another culture. Cross-cultural awareness and communication skills are useful in helping to overcome cultural differences and to develop tourism as an instrument of education and peace.

INTRODUCTION

The glowing image of tourism as an instrument of peace, of fostering better understanding between the inhabitants of this global village we live in, is badly tarnished in some areas of the world, if not eroded completely. Despite the idealistic goals for tourism set forth in the 1963 United Nations Conference on International Travel & Tourism (42), a great deal remains before tourism can be a factor in fostering cultural understanding and bringing peace to the world.

Tourism, for people confronted daily with its excesses, can become an emotional issue. It is viewed as a destroyer of traditional cultures and devasting to the environment. But tourism is also a major factor in the world economy and for many smaller countries, the only income generating industry. Tourists need to recognize the impact their behavior and presence has on the receiving destination--its people and their environment. Steps should be taken to prepare them for their travels, to make them into responsible tourists and to counteract the negative image of tourism held by many. The responsiblity for this action falls on the tourism industry for despite periods of recession, oil crises, political unrest and devastating wars, international tourism continues to grow. In 1983, the World Tourism Organization noted, "Within a short time tourism will be a socio-economic phenomenon, capable of exercising decisive influence in the world" (28). That time is now. How positive this influence is depends on the extent of the preparation and planning for tourism on the part of

governments and on the part of the tourism industry.

Cross-cultural preparation has long been an effective method for preparing sojourners, a term used by cross-culturalists for those living and working for extended periods in other cultures. It is not a new concept. Since 1950, the Washington International Center in Washington, D. C. has provided seminars and workshops for foreign exchange students and international visitors to facilitate their adaptation to living in the United States. Subsequent programs have assisted diverse groups such as Peace Corps Volunteers (15), U. S. Navy personnel (36) and business people (17) with the tools to interact successfully with other cultures. Evaluated extensively since its first use in the 1950s, cross-cultural preparation has been proven a successful means of adaptation to another culture (6). Which gives rise to the question, can the tourism industry utilize this methodology successfully to prepare the industry workforce, as well as tourists for their encounters with other cultures, and what would this preparation entail. The discussion that follows will be limited to the tourism industry and will present a rationale for cross-cultural preparation that includes tourists, the industry's workforce and future workforce, the students in tourism and hospitality programs.

RATIONALE FOR CROSS-CULTURAL PREPARATION

In the nineteenth century, thanks to Thomas Cook, group tours became increasingly popular throughout the world attracting travellers who sought new experiences and were drawn by the concept of an accompanied tour. The desire to visit other lands and other cultures has not diminished in the twentieth century. But as Turner and Ashe (41) noted in the Golden Hordes, tourism reached a new dimension. We entered the era of mass tourism in the sixties with the introduction of jumbo jets capable of transporting large numbers of pleasure-seeking tourists greater distances and in less time than ever before. Along with technological advances in transportation came increased leisure time and a mobile society which contributed to the growth of modern tourism--tourism of the masses who want to travel, have time to travel and importantly have the money to travel.

Areas of the world that were once remote have become accessible. No longer isolated, many of the non industrialized countries have now become the playgrounds for both upscale and budget tourists seeking the three "S's" sun, sea and sand, seeking a touch of "exotica", seeking to escape. However, the excesses of mass tourism have eroded the welcoming mat extended so enthusiastically in the past by many of those countries who look to tourism as their economic savior. For whereas, tourism has been described an "an industry built on dreams where the sun must always shine and the natives must always be friendly" (33), the reality is the sun doesn't always shine and the natives can frequently be hostile, particularly when faced with ever increasing numbers of tourists descending upon them.

Tourist expectations cannot always be met, notably in regard to weather, but relations between residents and tourists can achieve a balance. "Hosts and Guests" can become the beneficiaries of cross-cultural interaction in the global village the world has now become by preparing them for their encounters. Tourism, not only a means of communication but an agent of change, can introduce new ideas, values, beliefs and lifestyles which may appear threatening to

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the receiving culture. Tourism can also be perceived as threatening to the environment, upsetting the delicate balance of population and ecology. For the tourist, interaction can foster negative stereotypes of the country visited and its people. The challenge which presents itself for both governments and the tourism industry is a reconciliation of the negatives and positives of tourism and initiating the means to achieve this reconciliation.

Cultural understanding is not achieved by mere interaction between cultures. The daily news keeps us current on the tragic clashes between cultures with long histories of contact. The spector of ethnocentrism in the world must be dealt with before peace can be achieved. Ethnocentrism blinds us to the values and strengths of others and "lies at the root of our difficulties in relating on equal terms to people of another culture" (20). Cross-cultural preparation enables people of different cultures to achieve mutually beneficial experiences and to become sensitive and non judgemental of others with differing lifestyles, customs and values.

Without preparation, most of us remain absorbed with our own culture, with our own being. We remain secure in the superiority of our own culture on the one hand, and on the other, repelled or threatened by cultures we regard as different. Yet we may consider ourselves to be culturally knowledgable. However, truly intercultural persons are not those who merely know people of other cultures and are well travelled but those whose view of the world transcends their own culture. Adler (1) describes the intercultural person as "the person who is intellectually and emotionally committed to the fundamental unity of all human beings while at the same time recognizes, legitimizes, accepts and

appreciates the fundamental differences that lie between people of different cultures."

Cross-cultural preparation is essential for anyone who leaves the confines of his home these days, much less the confines of his country. Whether tourism becomes a negative or positive force depends upon the individual and the preparation that individual receives. For many people preparation to visit another culture is little more than obtaining practical information, purchasing a language phrase book and identifying some cultural do's and don'ts. More extensive preparation is necessary to achieve successful tourist-resident interaction and eliminate negative stereotypes. But cross-cultural preparation is also essential for those who are involved in tourism planning as well as the workforce involved closely with tourists. Nettekoven (26) identified this workforce of airline and hotel personnel, tour operators, travel agents and tour guides as the professional cultural intermediaries of the tourism industry. He saw their role as one of motivating tourists, "if tourism serves or is supposed to serve as a medium for objective cultural exchange." To perform this role successfully, cross-cultural awareness preparation would appear to be a necessary factor in their training.

CROSS-CULTURAL PREPARATION METHODOLOGY

In a definitive paper Kohls (19) draws a sharp distinction between the four traditional approaches to cross-cultural preparation. The terms used to describe these approaches, education, training, orientation and briefing, are frequently used imprecisely or interchangeably, leading to some confusion. As described by Kohls, the four different and valid approaches could best be used in combination to be most

effective in real life learning situations.

For use within the tourism industry, specifically for the workforce and tourists, the two approaches, training and orientation, frequently identified in the cross-cultural literature as culture general (the training approach) and culture specific (the orientation approach) would appear to be the most effective. These utilize experiential and participant-centered exercises, emphasize "hands on" experiences and encompass a flexible time frame ranging from one to five days depending upon participant needs.

Training identifies the reasons for cultural differences and provides the methods for coping with them. It focuses on cultural awareness, sensitivity and understanding. In contrast, the orientation approach introduces only the culture to be encountered and focuses on providing practical information for daily living and communication. According to Harris & Harris (14), there is more value to culture general training than there is for culture specific preparation oriented toward a specific culture. They note that the universal approach of culture general training gives individuals the tools to deal with peoples from a variety of cultures, and enables them to develop those conceptual insights which aid in the acquisition of culture specific information.

The seven skills which the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) concentrates on for their overseas volunteers illustrate the objectives of cross-cultural training:

1. the capacity to communicate respect
2. the capacity to be non-judgemental
3. the capacity to personalize knowledge and perceptions
4. the capacity to display empathy

5. the capacity for role flexibility
6. the capacity to demonstrate reciprocal concern
7. the capacity to tolerate ambiguity

It follows that a combination of the two approaches, the practical with the universal, would be of greater value. Brislin (6) notes that after training "changes in people's thinking include the willingness to entertain more complex points of view, the rejection of stereotypes and the ability to understand problematic encounters in a manner similar to individuals in other cultures."

> I Hear and I Know, I See and I
> Believe, I Do and I Understand
> (Confucius)

Important tools in training are structured experiences which enable the participant to learn by doing. In the hands of skilled facilitators, they provide an insight into the problems which may occur in cross-cultural encounters and set the stage for further learning (43). According to the International Society for Intercultural Education Training and Research (37), of all the cross-cultural training techniques, the one with the most research evidence on effectiveness is known as the culture assimilator or intercultural sensitizer, a structured experience which brings together individuals from diverse cultures in various settings. Listed in Batchelder (4), Hoopes (16), Weeks (43) and Fowler (10) are a wide range of exercises suitable for all situations.

One example of a structured experience widely used is the simulation exercise, BaFa BaFa, developed by a team of psychologists for use in a U. S. Navy cross-cultural training program (36). An advantage of this type of exercise is the instant immersion of participants in a cross-cultural situation. Foust (11) describes the value of BaFa

BaFa, "It stimulates awareness of language norms and feelings which arise within and between groups ... helps develop awareness of self and others as culturally conditioned beings."

The exercise is used to identify problems that arise within cross-cultural situations. Participants in the exercise are divided into two groups or "cultures" and introduced to the values, lifestyles and customs of their new culture. In the interaction which takes place between the differing cultures, each group attempts to understand the other. The discussion session which follows the exercise provides an opportunity for the group members to analyze their experiences and to explore strategies to increase positive interaction.

Simulation exercises used as a tool in the education approach to cross-cultural preparation are found in courses taught to tourism and hospitality students by Robert Woods at Michigan State University, James Poynter at Metropolitan State College, Denver, and the author at George Washington University, Washington, D. C. Woods (45) in the Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Quarterly, describes the value of BaFa BaFa for hotel and restaurant management staffs as well as for training students in the hospitality field as an invaluable tool which "introduces students to the values, expectations, and customs of a foreign culture ... and is also useful in illustrating how one might feel when encountering or entering another culture." George Washington University Travel & Tourism Program students evaluation comments on the course, Tourism and Cross-Cultural Behavior, included:

"Stimulates thinking"

"More class activities like BaFa BaFa should be included"

"Important in understanding cross-cultural behavior"

"Course has made me realize the "proper" way to deal with people from different cultures"

"Helpful for my travels and very applicable to real world situations"

"Helped me to become aware of other cultures and how to interact with them"

"Incredibly interesting. I think that it should be incorporated in the normal program requirements"

"Helpful for dealing with and understanding other cultures in everyday life. Makes one more aware."

"It is an interesting and worthwhile course. Cross-cultural understanding is a topic of increasing importance for almost everyone as the world gets smaller and global interdependence increases."

More recently, Poynter (1993-present) designed and is currently teaching a required course, Multicultural-Multinational Cultural Adjustment/Readjustment, in which he incorporates simulation exercises. This course has proven to be extremely successful and has attracted non tourism majors as well.

CONCLUSION

"Many people have to communicate and work with members of other cultures. Of these, tourists are probably the largest category" (3). To effectively function in

and with cultures different from your own is no easy task. We carry with us wherever we go our own cultural backpack, jammed full with the customs, values and traditions of our ancestors, handed down from generation to generation. Our cultural baggage determines how we behave; it determines how we respond to new situations and it defines how we judge others. This judgemental view is the root of our difficulties in relating on equal terms with people of another culture.

Ethnocentrism, the belief that one's own culture is superior to all others, is one of the greatest barriers to cross-cultural understanding. Cross-cultural awareness and communication skills are useful in all areas of our lives and are particularly needed for successful functioning in the global village the world has now become. In 1977 Janeway noted, "Humanity is moving toward global brotherhood in a world which already recognizes and affirms the interrelatedness of all people who share the planet earth." Two decades later we are still faced with a divisiveness of cultures that threatens to engulf the world. The time is now for the tourism industry to move forward and to actively work towards realizing the goals set for tourism by the 1963 United Nations Conference and provide the means by which tourism can become an instrument of peace.

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