Aboriginal tourism product preference by visitors to northern British Columbia

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Overview

- Introduction
- Aboriginal tourism in the north
- Objectives and methods
- Four potential products in comparison
- Preferred product features
- Potential target markets
- Conclusion
Introduction: A research partnership

- Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)

- Despite research partnership with Tl’azt’en, results may assist other First Nation and Indigenous communities in northern B.C.
Why focus on northern B.C.?

- Advancement of Aboriginal tourism in British Columbia
- Potential economic development benefits for Canada’s First Nations
- Unique challenges
- Research gap
  - Lack of understanding of traveler interest in and preferences for Aboriginal tourism products
Objectives

- To identify tourists’ preferred Aboriginal tourism products and product features
- To identify potential target markets
Methods

• Self-administered questionnaire contained:
  ✓ 4 potential products
  ✓ 3 lists (activities, topics, experiences) of 31 visitor preferred features of Aboriginal tourism
  ✓ 1 list of 8 features about the nature of an Aboriginal experience
  ✓ Socio-demographic & travel behaviour questions

• Survey location: Prince George Visitor Information Centre

• 337 questionnaires suitable for analysis
• 60% response rate
### Four potential products in comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Central features</th>
<th>Time frame</th>
<th>Physical Activity level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tl’azt’en Traditional Feast (Feast)</strong></td>
<td>Celebration, traditional food, arts and crafts, scenery, drumming &amp; singing Performance</td>
<td>3 hrs</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Cultural Camp (Camp)</strong></td>
<td>Experiencing Carrier culture, traditional activity workshops, rebuild pit houses</td>
<td>1 ½ days</td>
<td>Moderate to low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td><strong>Central features</strong></td>
<td><strong>Time frame</strong></td>
<td><strong>Physical Activity level</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrier Rock Paintings (Rock Art)</td>
<td>Carrier rock paintings, Carrier culture, boat tour, wildlife viewing</td>
<td>3 hrs</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tl’azt’en Territory Nature Hike (Hike)</td>
<td>Hiking, nature, scenery, learning about local flora and fauna, wildlife viewing, Carrier culture</td>
<td>2.5 hrs</td>
<td>Moderate to high</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Carrier rock paintings, Carrier culture, boat tour, wildlife viewing*

*Hiking, nature, scenery, learning about local flora and fauna, wildlife viewing, Carrier culture*
Study Findings: Respondent Profile

- Sample skewed towards older respondents (64% were 45 years or older)
- 54% have higher education
- Origin: Canada 36%; USA 20%; Europe 33%
- Adult couples dominant travel party
Of the 4 products, most interest was expressed in…

Product purchase likelihood

Tl'azt'en Traditional Feast  Family Cultural Camp  Carrier Rock Paintings  Tl'azt'en Territory Nature Hike

Not likely to purchase  Neutral  Likely to purchase
Significant relationships were found between...

- Tl’azt’en Territory Nature Hike
  + Education and prior information search
- Tl’azt’en Traditional Feast
  + Prior information search and prior experience
  - Age
- Family Cultural Camp
  + Prior experience and gender (higher interest by women)
  - Age
- Carrier Rock Paintings
  + Prior information search
# Preferred product features

## Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Mean²</th>
<th>Std. deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woodcarving</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>0.993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collecting edible plants</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>0.990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor survival</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>0.973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storytelling</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>0.877</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Mean²</th>
<th>Std. deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Animal &amp; plant life of the region</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>0.834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stories and legends of Aboriginal culture</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>0.893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal history post-European contact</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>0.891</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Mean²</th>
<th>Std. deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taking photos of scenic landscapes or wildlife</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>0.904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrations by artisans of artefacts</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>0.876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal drumming and dance performances</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>1.145</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

²Each feature was measured on a five-point scale where 1 = not at all interested and 5 = very interested.
Experience creates greater interest

- Respondents with Aboriginal tourism experience were significantly more likely to be interested in the Tl’atz’en Traditional Feast and Family Cultural Camp products.

- Participants were more likely to be interested in these products if they had:
  - purchased Aboriginal arts or crafts
  - attended an Aboriginal tourism performance
  - or similar experiences.
Nature of the Aboriginal tourism experience

- Exploring visitors’ enthusiasm for:
  - actively participating in Aboriginal cultural activities
  - their preferred level of contact with Aboriginal hosts
  - their preferred activity level and focus of the experience

*Tl'azt'en Elders presenting bone tools
*Tl'azt'en members and tourists playing traditional game
Nature of the experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-interactive</th>
<th>Interactive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relaxed &amp; observational (15%)</td>
<td>Active &amp; involved (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-guided experience (18%)</td>
<td>Guided tour (34%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casually speak with Aboriginal hosts (19%)</td>
<td>Opportunity to have one-on-one conversations with Aboriginal hosts (41%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See how arts and crafts are made (40%)</td>
<td>Make arts &amp; crafts yourself (27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See drumming &amp; dancing (50%)</td>
<td>Participate in drumming &amp; dancing (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore cultural exhibits (32%)</td>
<td>Participate in daily activities of traditional Aboriginal life (30%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Potential market segments

1. The Culture Seekers
2. The Nature-Culture Observers
3. The Sightseers
### Sociodemographic information of clusters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Culture Seekers (n = 88)</th>
<th>Nature-Culture Observers (n = 144)</th>
<th>Sightseers (n = 32)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Origin</strong>&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority Canadian</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong>&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oldest (55+)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>Chi-square indicated significant differences, p<0.05
Culture Seekers

• Scored highest on all features such as:
  – Aboriginal ways of living off the land, Aboriginal stories/legends, traditional food, outdoor survival, overnight stays in traditional Aboriginal housing & cultural camps

• Similar to other high-interest segments

• High percentage of Canadian travelers

• Results suggest market for culture focused products

• Nature still plays role in product appeal
Nature-Culture Observers

• Interest in a variety of Aboriginal topics:
  – traditional food, edible plants, flora and fauna, etc.
  – greater interest in features related to nature
• Not interested in multi-day camps and hands-on experiences
• Appear to match the ‘dual-track’ market
• May best be targeted with a mixed nature-culture product
Sightseers

- Interested in taking pictures of scenic landscapes
- Not interested in overnight stays, multi-day cultural camps or hands-on activities
- Neutral response on remaining features
- May need introduction to Aboriginal tourism
- High number of adults with children
- Great amount of leisure travelers
Market segment feasibility

• Most promising marketing opportunities appear to lie with the Culture Seekers and Nature-Culture Observers

• Culture Seekers – focus on Aboriginal cultural content products

• Nature-Culture Observers – focus on mixed nature/culture products or nature products with culture as an added-value

• Sightseers – potentially require intensive marketing & an introduction to Aboriginal tourism
Conclusion

• Aboriginal tourism is of interest to a portion of travelers to northern B.C.
• Generally speaking, products and product features centred on nature experiences were preferred
• There appears to be a smaller market for Aboriginal cultural tourism
• Work with Tl’azt’en on tourism development continues
Acknowledgement

- Dr. Pam Wright (UNBC)
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- Dr. Gail Fondahl (UNBC)
- Dr. Simon Hudson (UofC)
- Dr. Peter Williams (SFU)
References


• BearingPoint LP, Goss Gilroy Inc. and Associates (2003) Aboriginal Tourism in Canada; Part II: Trends, Issues, Constraints and Opportunities. Canada: Aboriginal Tourism Team Canada.


