A Typology of Cultural Tourists and Their Trip Characteristics in Prince Edward Island

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Culture is an important part of the tourism “product” and is one of the factors that can improve the competitiveness of a tourism destination. Cultural tourism covers all aspects of travel whereby visitors can learn about another area’s history and way of life. However, it has been difficult to demonstrate how important cultural tourism and cultural tourists are for a specific destination.

Who are the tourists that visit cultural attractions or engage in cultural activities, and why? What specific travel behaviours make them distinct from other travellers? How large is the demand for cultural tourism and what elements of culture attract tourists? How can cultural tourism be successfully developed and promoted? The answers to these types of questions may be quite different among destinations due to the different elements that create the culture of each destination. This paper’s objective is to examine the meanings and significance of cultural tourism on Prince Edward Island. In doing so, the paper attempts to identify cultural tourists and profile trip characteristics of cultural tourists in an island setting.

The study used secondary data drawn from the 2004 Tourist Exit Survey conducted on Prince Edward Island (PEI), Canada’s smallest province, and a major tourist destination. A total of 3,591 surveys were completed. Of these, 3,139 were for overnight pleasure tourists and these were used for this study. These visitors were segmented into two cluster groups based on the mean scores recorded on a number of questions concerning cultural activities undertaken while on PEI. Respondents were classified as “cultural” and “non-cultural” tourists. Of the 3,139 cases visitors, 1,996 (63.6%) reported low involvement in cultural activities and were termed “non-cultural tourists,” while 1,143 (36.4%) were highly involved in cultural activities and were termed “cultural tourists.”

The survey results indicated that there are significant differences between the two clusters with respect to trip characteristics including travel information sources used, recall of communities visited, trip duration, other activities participated in, and expenditures. It was found that the cultural tourists were more likely to use travel information sources, to stay more nights at the destination, to recall communities they visited, to engage in all other travel activities (excluding camping, playing golf, and visiting friends and/or relatives), and to spend more money than the non-cultural tourists. Consequently, the results demonstrate that cultural tourists are valuable in terms of their economic contribution to the destination and cultural/social interaction with communities.

In conclusion, this study identified that cultural themes are an important factor for a significant portion of the tourists visiting a destination. Further research on tourism and culture should be undertaken, applying both qualitative and quantitative methods, to further investigate the importance of the cultural “product” in attracting tourists to Prince Edward Island. This research could also be the basis for making comparisons between destinations, particularly islands, where the cultural “product” and the underlying reasons why tourists visit may be more easily defined.