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International success stories of cross-border tourism development

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Introduction

- Tourism is a generator of jobs;
- Tourism is labour intensive;
- Tourism creates entrepreneurial opportunities;
- Tourism brings development to rural areas (White Paper on Tourism. DEAT, 1996).
- Borders are icons in their own right



Borders as tourist attractions

- International Peace Garden between Manitoba, Canada and North Dakota, USA
- Meeting place of Finland, Norway and Sweden
- Niagara Falls
- Victoria Falls
- Berlin Wall
- Hadrian's Wall
- Great Wall of China
- Lanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllantysiliogogogoch - Wales



- The EU is a good example of cross-border cooperation regarding tourism.
- Nilsson, Eskilsson and Ek (2010: 156-157) and Prokkola (2008:34-35) provides further information on the European Union's Interreg III (2000-2006) cross border developments on local and regional level.
- It focusses on reducing barriers that have a harmful impact on cross border collaboration, improving transport networks and on cross border integration. The study focusses on cross border regions in the Baltic Sea Area and specifically Nordkalotten, Pomerania and Skargarden.

- Specific cross border tourism programs were recognized i.e.:
- Developing vehicular routes (Arctic Trail, Barents Road, Nordic light trail) through the different regions. However, one negative fact to be taken into account making cooperation here difficult was the large distances.
- Another example of cross border cooperation was the Haparanda-Tornia towns at the Torne River. Situated on both sides of the river they share a common history. Using their unique product (a city on both sides of the river), they created a tourism attraction out of it. Brandishing the slogan “hit the World’s longest drive” on their cross border golf course, it is possible to hit a ball on the Sweden part of the course and it lands “an hour later” (due to the time difference) in Finland.

- Lesson learnt from this case study is that tourism “has become an integrated element in regional development studies.”
- Two major observations were made from this case study on cross border cooperation and that is:
- It is important to create an inner unity within a border region.
- It was important for the regions to be seen as part of the greater European Union (Nilsson, Eskilsson and Ek 2010: 168-169).



- A study focusing on cross border cooperation at the Finnish-Swedish border, remarks that the frequent interregional cooperation found in the EU, leads to the building of cross border tourism destinations and that development strategies are more and more focused on cross border tourism. The study indicates the importance of the EU programs and that “the sustainability of the tourism industry is inextricably bound to territorial cohesion, cross border cooperation and networking”. The study further states that “cross border cooperation in tourism is understood as a means of increasing regional competitiveness and sustainability, of strengthening regional identity and promoting emergence of functional and imaginary region” Prokola (2008:32).

- The Northeastern United States, where the New England states (i.e. Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut) introduced a cooperative system of marketing them collectively as a tourism destination, is an example of successful cross-border tourism.
- Timothy (1998:53) is of the opinion and thus supports Prokkola that if “integrative tourism development is to occur; cooperation between various planning sectors must exist.” He further emphasizes that cooperation should exist between government agencies, different levels of government, administration levels and private and public sector. It is thus clear that intergovernmental cooperation is necessary for successful cross-border tourism to take place.
- It must be noted that Sofield emphasized that “where governments embrace cooperation along their borders, tourism flows can be facilitated” (Sofield, 2006:115-117).

- Suffield (2006:115) discuss borders and cross border tourism in Asia and specifically mentions six countries bordering the Mekong River i.e. Cambodia, People's Republic of China (Yunnan Province), Lao Peoples Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam.
- They formed the Greater Mekong Sub region (GMS) to strengthen regional cooperation. In 2001 they agreed to cooperate to put forward a strategy to enhance regional cooperation in the area that would facilitate cross border tourism amongst others.
- It is important to note that Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam signed a cross border agreement in which they stated that the flow of people and goods were prioritized and legislation put in place to simplify and harmonize the flow of also tourists.

- For tourism development to be successful it will need the coordinated efforts between two or more levels of government when the different levels of government are national, provincial, district and municipal levels
- Hall also realized the importance of cooperation and stated “coordination is necessary both within and between the different levels of government in order to avoid duplication of resources in the various government tourism bodies and the private sector and to develop effective tourism strategies”
- Dallen also pointed out the importance of “cooperation between government agencies, different levels of government, between equally autonomous polities (sic) at various administrative levels and between private and public sector” (Dallen, 2010: 53).

- Synergy between local administrations “foster cross-border co-operation” (Studzieniecki T and Mazurek T, 2007:37).
- In a similar vein, Tosun, Timothy, Parpairis and MacDonald (2005:6) state that “cooperation and collaboration between countries are essential in achieving sustainable development including sustainable development in tourism
- Due to the competing character of tourism amongst host destinations, cooperation between them were not high on their agenda.
- Timothy (1998) pointed out that a lack of cross-border cooperation “can result in environmental degradation on both sides of a border and can create a rift between neighbours.”



- Prokkola reaches the following conclusions.
- Municipalities have established cross border organizations motivated by the possibility of procuring funding from the Interreg programme.
- In order to support tourism development, cross border projects has been carried out in the areas covered by the different municipalities.
- Tourism development has implicated the commercialization and marketing of the area affected as a single destination.
- Cross border tourism can be established so that one municipality can belong to several tourism destinations.
- Cooperation has been politically supported.
- Financial support was always available. (Prokkola 2008:43).

- Where governments embrace cooperation along their borders, tourism flows can be facilitated
- Smallbone (2007) provided a number of measures to be implemented to promote cross-border collaboration
- Introducing measures to raise awareness of the opportunities presented by cross-border partnerships among enterprises e.g. by organizing study tours.
- Establishing cross-border partnership search facilities, to identify suitable partners for firms.
- Fostering business-to-business contacts through joint events and distributing information.



- Increasing the international networking capacity of business association.
- Establishing cross-border partnership support programmes.
- Promoting business support network in border regions, to provide information. Advice and training to small companies.
- Planning joint infrastructure.
- Promoting regional branding



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Thank you

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