

Landscape Assessment for Tourism¹

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Abstract: Increased development of landscapes for tourism now creates problems of integrating the many parts. Accomplishments at the site scale have not been matched with equal progress at the regional scale. This concept, and its example of application, shows promise of assisting regions in assessing their potential of landscapes before development. With such a concept, not only do regions have better guidelines for developing or protecting resources, but also the many developers can make more effective decisions at the site scale.

INTRODUCTION

The intent of this paper is to describe a new concept for assessing the national landscape for tourism development and to illustrate its application. At no time in history have as many lands been put to tourism use and yet the traditional approaches of haphazard exploitation of landscapes continue.

For purposes here the landscape of tourism is defined as the total physical and visual environment utilized by all tourism activity. It includes the whole of tourism development, such as transportation, services, information, direction and all the developments that attract people and give the incentive as well as the satisfaction to travel.

TILE CONCEPT

This concept is based upon the following sequence of assumptions or premises:

1. Tourism development is most frequently promoted because of its economic impact, derived through service businesses and facilities.

2. These service businesses depend upon flows of tourists who seek things to see and do--attractions, such as parks, recreation areas, commercial attractions and events.
3. Attractions are primarily physical landscape developments that have been selected, designed and managed by a variety of specialists, owners and managers.
4. Attractions and many other important tourism developments depend, in varying degrees, upon both physical and program factors.
5. When these factors are identified, described and mapped, better assessment of future policy decisions can be made at both the regional and the site scale.

In other words, this concept goes beyond the popular belief that all land has equal potential for tourism development if promoted heavily enough. While promotion is an essential and well-exercised factor of contemporary tourism, other elements, such as the foundations of things to be developed and promoted, accessibility and location of prime service centers, are equally important. Land is not homogeneous. Certain lands have much greater strength of factors in the support of potential tourism than others.

Certain physical factors (Table 1) were derived from examining the range of tourist activities generally and the extent to which their development depends upon physical conditions. While tourist activities vary, for a culture and for a given time period, they can be typified and generalized.

^{1/}Presented at the National Conference on Applied Techniques for Analysis and Management of the Visual Resource, Incline Village, Nevada, April 23-25, 1979.

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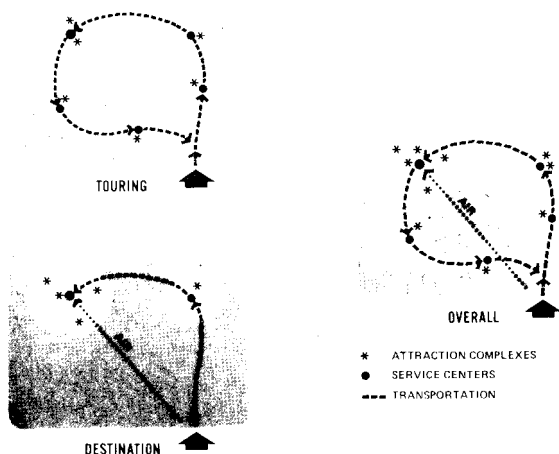


Figure 1--TOURING AND DESTINATION TOURISM
Diagram showing touring and destination type zones for tourism development and their combination for overall potential.

To these must be added program factors, such as the following: (1) markets, promotion; (2) information, direction; (3) socio-environmental; (4) implementing agents.

Another element of this concept is recognition of the difference between touring and destination tourism. Touring tourism development does not need to withstand repetitive use by the same users. Visiting historic sites, natural resource attractions and enjoying roadside scenery are examples of touring tourism. For destination tourism, however, development requires a set of activities at attractions that are repetitive and more limited to a localized vicinity. For example, conventioning, resorting, vacation home use and organization camping require slightly different attraction development and foundation factors. Figure 1

Table 1--INDEXES FOR TOURING TOURISM

Factor	Index
1. Water, waterlife	8
2. Topography, soils, geology	10
5. Vegetative cover, wildlife, pests	7
4. Climate, atmosphere	3
5. Esthetics	13
6. Existing attractions, industries, institutions	10
7. History, ethnicity, archeology, legend, lore	9
8. Service centers	15
9. Transportation, access	<u>25</u>
	100

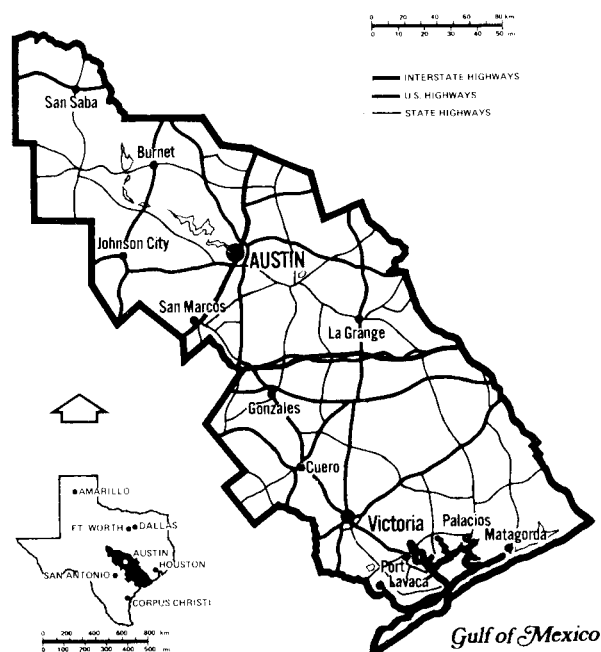


Figure 2--THE STUDY REGION. The 20 county region of Texas used in this application of a concept for assessment of tourism development potential.

illustrates the concept of identifying zones suited to touring and destination tourism development and combining them for overall potential.

APPLICATION

A region of 20 counties in south-central Texas (Figure 2) was arbitrarily selected for application of this concept.

The first step consisted of researching the region's physical factors. By means of

Table 2--INDEXES FOR DESTINATION TOURISM

Factor	Index
1. Water, waterlife	24
2. Topography, soils, geology	10
3. Vegetative cover, wildlife pests	8
4. Climate, atmosphere	13
5. Esthetics	7
6. Existing attractions, industries, institutions	5
7. History, ethnicity, archeology, legend, lore	3
8. Service centers	10
9. Transportation, access	<u>20</u>
	100

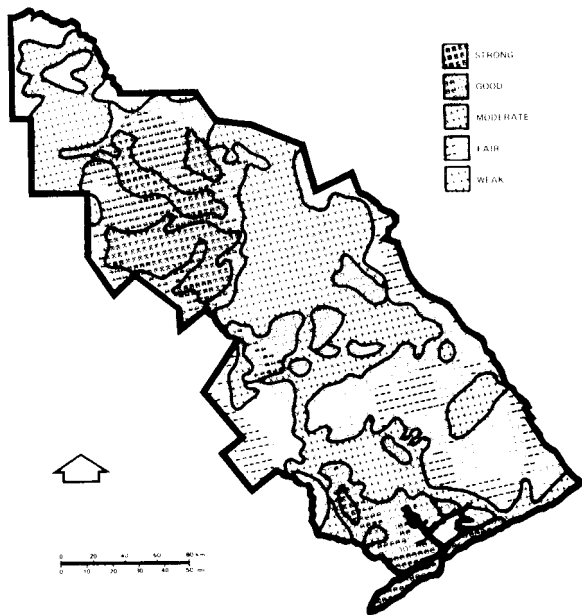


Figure 3--"TOURING" TOURISM--PHYSICAL FACTORS. Computer printout showing areas with strongest to weakest resource strength in support of tourism development.

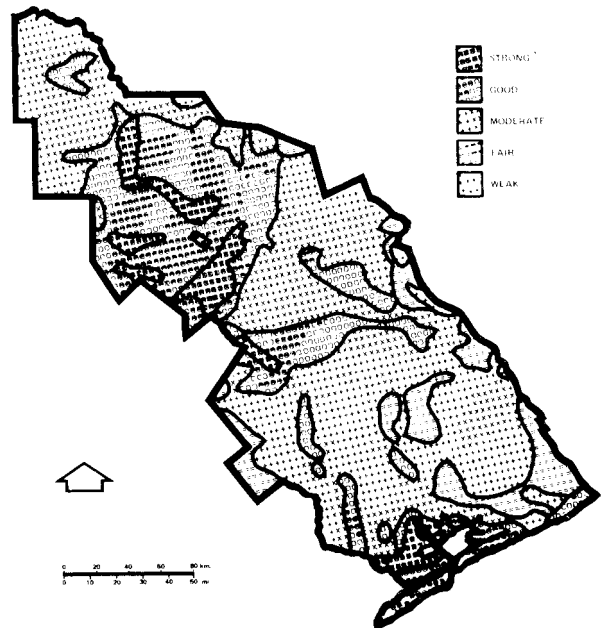


Figure 4--"DESTINATION" TOURISM--PHYSICAL FACTORS. Computer printout showing areas of strong to weak support of destination tourism development.

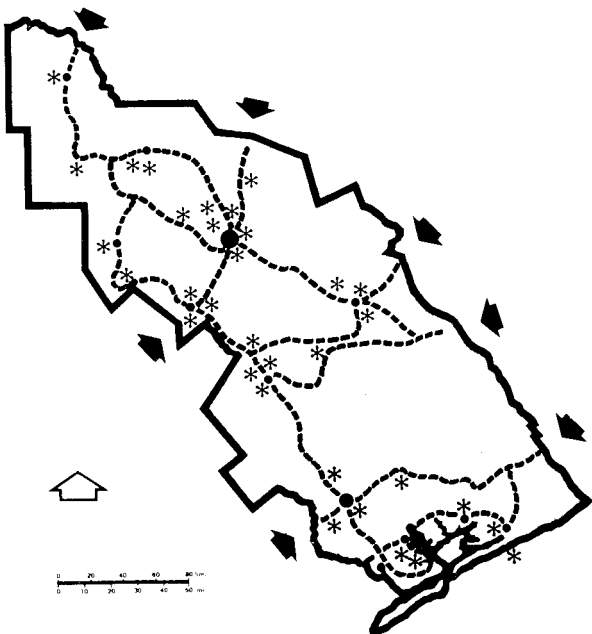


Figure 5- "TOURING" TOURISM--CONCEPTS. Potential zones for development, containing locations of possible attraction complexes, service centers and proposed touring routes. Arrows indicate prime entrance points

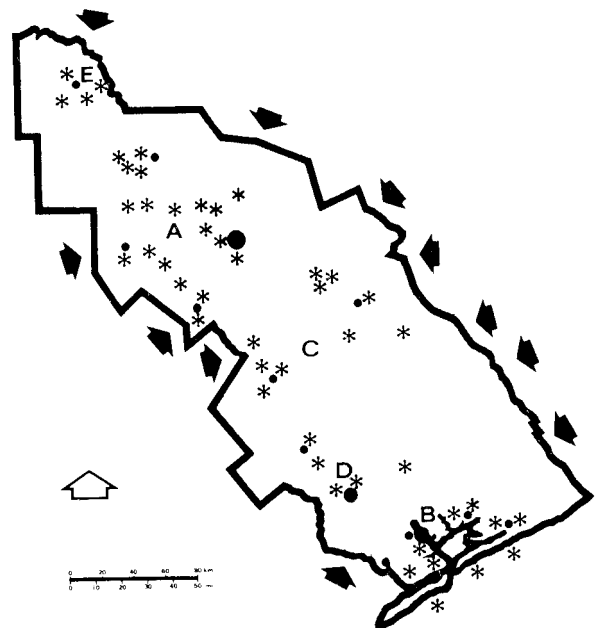


Figure 6--"TOURING" TOURISM--CONCEPTS. Potential zones for development, containing locations of possible attraction complexes, and service centers. Arrows indicate prime linkage with market areas.

study of documents, reconnaissance of the region and interviews with experts, both narrative statements and maps were produced. Special mapping procedures were used to lay the foundations for the zones with greatest potential.

Tables 1 and 2 indicate a separate weight, or "index given to each physical factor, based on the assumption that these factors are not of equal weight in support of either touring or destination tourism development. These weights were developed by a panel of experts. Obviously, this is a subjective evaluation but based not upon whim or local pride but upon documentation of facts about each factor. For mapping purposes, each index was divided into five levels of potential support, from "strong" to "weak." The resulting number values could then be used in preparation of a hand-drawn map for each factor.

The several hand-drawn maps were then translated into computer maps so that they could be aggregated. Aggregated maps for touring tourism potential and destination tourism potential are shown in Figures 3 and 4, respectively. Wherever the totals were the largest, the strength of support of tourism development would be strongest. By using a computer map grid for the SYMAP (Dudnik: 1971) program, each cell for the scale of map used represents 6.25 square miles.

Study of both the research information about all factors and the results of computer mapping provided locational conclusions about what kinds of development had potential and where such development most logically could take place. This final assessment is illustrated in Figures 5 and 6. Graphically, four main elements are illustrated: zones with highest potential (white areas); locations with high potential for future attraction complexes (stars); key community service centers (dots) and transportation and access (arrows and dash lines).

Touring Tourism

It was found that several zones (Figure 5) contained many assets for potential touring tourism development. In most instances, no development had yet been made at historic points of interest with the potential of large and very meaningful complexes. Developing museums, restoring buildings, adding pageantry nearby, and identifying historic sites and buildings could offer opportunities for loop walking or drive trails and holding special events in squares, malls or parks. Interesting land

features, such as reservoirs, rivers, isolated forests, beaches and coastal resources provide many opportunities for touring tourism activity development.

Wherever there appeared to be a grouping of these attraction complex potentials around a service center and near a circulation corridor, a zone was identified. This is merely a generalized area in which a number of complexes could be developed and served by the same service center and access.

Because of the importance of the travel ways of touring, all transportation corridors, when finally selected, would need to be studied and possibly redesigned to fulfill tourism functions. This might require very little redevelopment--perhaps only some signage and improved information-direction material. On the other hand, major cleanup, scenic easements, new highway design, expanded service center functions (toilet facilities at rest stops), new landscape plantings and the installation of certain constraints against public trespass along the way may need to be initiated. For air travelers, new linkages with ground tour corridors may need to be created.

Service centers were chosen on the basis of their own existing service capability, their potential for expanded service, their proximity to potential attraction complexes and their accessibility.

Destination Tourism

For destination tourism, shown in Figure 6, this region has good highway access and some air access to existing and potential markets. The following five destination zones contain cohesive resource foundations lending themselves to considerable future tourism development.

Zone A contains potential for vacation home complexes, resorts, dude ranches, organization camps, water sports areas, conference centers and major sports arenas. The hills, lakes, topography, history and state capitol combine to provide strong foundations.

Zone B, a coastal area, has great potential because the resource assets have not yet been developed to a very large extent. Increased development to utilize the birdlife, waterlife, waterfront forces, biological production in the estuaries and geological formation of barrier islands has many possibilities. Large nature interpretive complexes could provide an important tourist function, leaving extensive areas in protected zones for preservation of

natural ecosystems. Other potential lies in the festivals, pageants, historic restoration and interpretation of the coast.

Zone C is well suited to inland Texas tourism development, such as dude ranches, resorts and special development around the German and Czech themes. Market sources are generally available, accessible over good highways and the service centers are beginning to orient themselves toward tourist development.

Zone D is a coastal plains destination area with the city of Victoria and the Guadalupe and Lavaca Rivers as prime assets. Opportunities for camping, vacation home, water recreation and conference activities can be found here. The countryside is picturesque and the outside markets would find it a zone much more interesting and appealing than the typical Texas image.

Zone E, although relatively small, does have potential centered on the natural resource assets of river valleys. Camping and vacation home complexes could offer interesting vacations for many and are readily accessible from markets.

Program Concepts

Although not lending themselves as well to mapping, researching program factors led to conclusions important to development potential.

One conclusion centered on the need for greater education on several facts of tourism development. Some of the prime businesses oriented to tourism were aware of its impact but tourism does not now enjoy a high level of understanding within the region. For example, it is not well known that in these counties there is now an economic impact annually of \$307,692,700, employment of 2,000 people and returns to local taxes of \$3,116,800. (The Impact 1978).

Both nearby and distant markets might be cultivated but only following coordinated development-promotion-information programs. This is not now available for these zones. Special market interests could be emphasized: spring and fall offer idyllic vacation settings. Detailed market studies of the special opportunities within this region could be of value.

Improved information and communication offer other opportunities. Live existing attractions and services are not well communicated to the visiting public. It is not easy for the visitor to learn about points of interest, travel ways, accommodations and specialty shops.

If the concepts of physical development are to be realized, it is clear that stronger organization to stimulate development is needed. In several instances, industrial development is promoted but no comparable programs for tourist development can be found.

Linkage needs to be established between the many forces fostering resource protection and restoration and the developers of tourism. While there is a functional spinoff from such programs as historic restoration, there is no organized linkage with the programs of inviting and providing services to visitors.

The physical development of tourism could be enhanced if greater coordination of decision-making could be accomplished between the several state agencies that impact on tourism. Without creating new and cumbersome bureaucratic procedures, there is merit in agency input to each other on tourism matters.

Another important level of communication and decision-making is that between counties. Perhaps through leadership and catalytic action of the councils of government, the several counties of each potential zone can bring the several opportunities into alignment and implementation.

Finally, linkage between public policy on park and recreation programs and decisions on commercial development of tourism is a great opportunity for improved tourism. One major new policy of all public agencies could be to stimulate innovative and environmentally sensitive development by the private sector.

DISCUSSION

This approach to the assessment of the landscape for tourism development raises issues of both methodology and implementation.

The acts of participation by tourists at attractions are extremely varied and difficult to classify. The only classification used here is that of two categories: touring and destination. Another typology might include the five categories of sightseeing, outdoor recreation, vacation homes, conventioning and attending events. Whatever typology is used at the regional scale, it should be comprehensive. In any case, the process described here will apply. It merely requires the development of more indexes for the quantitative scaling to be used on the several computer maps. It should be kept in mind that the end product involves total tourism development, not fragments. The components of transportation, services and facilities depend upon volume. Therefore, it

is necessary to look toward zones best served by these. This demands aggregation of potential derived by grouping together the many separate activity potentials.

Because overall tourism development does include many factors, an essential component of strategy is involvement. It should not be construed that the concept described here is merely a drafting room technique to be implemented by an elite of landscape architects. On the contrary, unless there is commitment by the existing tourism establishment, developers, investors, citizens who may be impacted by tourism and the many governments involved, the concept would be of little value. It should be emphasized that economic expansion, although a virtuous objective, is not the only goal of this concept of landscape assessment. In fact, the three goals must be sought at the same time: improved visitor satisfaction, better business and improved environmental use and protection.

A basic assumption requiring deeper research is that concerning the physical and program factors required for tourism. Observation and location theory formed the basis for this concept. Yet, much deeper study is needed to determine those factors needed for success for both the developers and the users. While some studies in marketing and psychographics of travelers are increasing our knowledge of tourist behavior, much more information is needed. While location theory has been developed for industry, little is known about the geography of tourism. The development of this concept exposed the real need for greater understandings of resource and development linkages, such as the relationships between parks, commercial attractions, historic sites and the several services and facilities.

Study for this concept revealed a great amount of polarization between supporters of development and conservation, with landscape assessment schemes often aligning behind conservation. While such polarization of these ideologies is understandable it tends to exacerbate rather than solve problems of resource development. Instead, there is evident need for much more cooperation and collaboration between all who design, develop and use the landscape. So-called "capacity" problems appear to result more from poor landscape design, utilization and management than from overuse.

CONCLUSIONS

It is possible and also helpful to make a generalized landscape assessment of a region

for tourism development with the aid of computerized techniques. This provides landscape planners, governments, developers and existing tourism development a perspective on land areas with greatest potential.

The process described here is highly dependent upon commitment of local and state governments and other prime factors. It is limited by the extent of research knowledge concerning the linkage between resource assets, potential use and development.

This approach leads up to and provides the basis for site design and feasibilities of individual projects for tourism. By identifying potential, local decision-makers and planners can weigh their further action toward both protection and development.

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NOTE:

The concept described here and the illustrations are from the book, TOURISM PLANNING by Clare A. Gunn, published by Crane, Russak, Inc., New York.