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ANALYZING THE CITY OR TOWN AS A TOURISM PRODUCT

Learning objectives

- Why should those responsible for marketing use a process for analyzing the city as a tourism product?
- What methods could be used to determine visitor reactions to the city and enhance available products and services if necessary?
- How should the core product be analyzed to determine what attractions and benefits are available to visitors?
- How should the supporting tourism services and augmented product be analyzed so that they can be appropriately packaged with the core product?

Chapter summary

- It is now time to analyze the city to determine which creative, cultural, and tourist attractions will be promoted as providing a unique and authentic experience. The analysis will include both physical features of the city and also intangible aspects. This would include the culture of the community which is of interest to visitors seeking authentic experiences. An analysis of the core features and benefits can uncover enough potential to meet the needs of more than one segment of visitors.
- While for-profit companies can create a product that provides the benefits desired by consumers, the city as a product already exists. In addition to the core product, the city needs to provide supporting tourism services for visitors. These must be analyzed as to type of benefits offered. The services that most meet the needs of a segment of visitors will then be

> packaged with the core product. These will then be surrounded by the augmented product, which is the image of the city.
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> - The core product analysis is best done by members of the community. They should take a physical inventory of what the city has to offer. This would include any existing major attractions and also the local culture of the community. The product analysis can be used to adapt the product by determining what additional features the city is missing that are desired by a larger segment of potential tourists.
> - This next step in the product analysis process will be to analyze the city's supporting products. Some of the supporting products that are analyzed will be needed by those visiting a specific core product while all visitors need other supporting products. The final step will be to analyze the augmented product, which is the image the city projects to visitors.

Analyzing the city for tourism potential

Before developing a strategy to attract potential visitors it is necessary to analyze the city to determine what benefits it can provide. Tourism can be defined as spending time away from home to pursue pleasurable or educational activities while making use of local products and services. The definition is so broad that it is up to the city to define what activities, products, and services will be promoted. Potential tourists put considerable effort into the decision as to where to travel as the activities, products, and services reinforce a current identity or create a new identity for the traveler. The suppliers of tourism products have always known this and have used marketing to encourage travel as a way to either get away to exclusive destinations or, for the mass market, join the fun at the destination to which everyone else was traveling (Popp 2012). Now a newer trend for all travellers is to use travel to interact with local culture.

Marketing theory defines a product as a tangible physical good, an intangible service, or an experience. Marketing a city is unique because it is a product composed of all three. The physical aspects of the city along with tourism services create the visiting experience. A city contains physical elements such as the architecture of the buildings, the parks, streets, and monuments. In addition, they include the services offered by the cultural institutions, food and lodging businesses and entertainment venues. These physical features and services will be an important component in developing the city's image whether as an historical, quaint, or exciting city.

It is not just the well-known tourism attractions that might be of interest to tourists. Sites that are related to the history of specific religious or ethnic groups may be of interest to a segment of tourists. Fans will want to see the places where sports teams play or media figures live. Even films and literature can produce sights and locations that fans want to see. This is not a new phenomenon as readers of Sherlock Holmes have always wanted to visit the fictional 221B Baker Street. Just because a story is fiction, does not mean that the site has no meaning (Reijnders 2011). After all the meaning was first constructed by an artist or author who was inspired by a real place. The fictional space then becomes real to the viewer or reader. For fans of
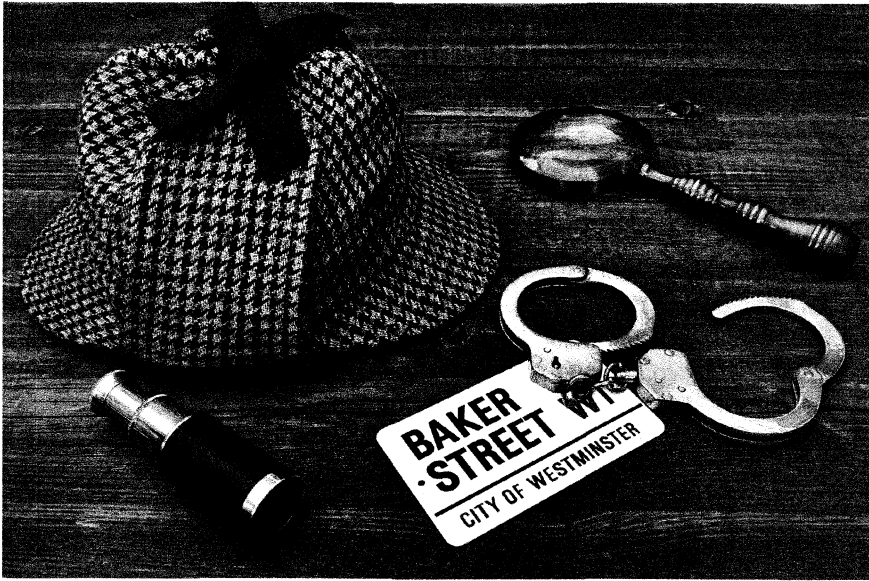
FIGURE 3.1 Sherlock Holmes and Baker Street

the film or book, having visited the place becomes part of their identity. As a result, they want to visit the physical place that inspired the fictional work.

The physical elements also include the geographic setting of the city. Being located by a river, ocean, or mountains adds to the value of experiencing the city. The cultural facilities and religious buildings, theatres, and sports venues are also an important component of the physical product. All of these together will be used to develop the city's image.

In the past many communities would only focus their tourism marketing message on the benefits provided by major tourism attractions. They would promote visiting large cultural institutions or venues such as museums, historical sites, or sports arenas. It was assumed that these would be all that were of interest to tourists. This might still be the case for world-renowned historical or cultural sites. While there are few cities and fewer towns that are home to such institutions, all have examples of sites and buildings of local interest that can be used to attract tourists.

All cities trying to attract tourists also need to provide services. A larger city has an advantage in developing a tourism sector. People are already traveling to large cities because they are regional, national, or even international centers of commerce. Because this is true they will already have businesses that provide food and lodging to visitors. In addition, they will have a transportation system to get to and around the city. It is easy for these cities to simply add capacity to also handle tourists. Providing tourism services can be a challenge for small cities and towns as they may need to establish transportation, lodging, and food services for visitors as they do not already exist. Or, they may exist but not be of the quality required by visitors.

Understanding both the tangible city and its people

While the marketing department for a city could simply devise a slogan, the words it conveys would only pertain to the writer's view of the city. The city or town is a complicated product comprised of both a built and a human component that may be experienced differently depending on an individual's age, gender values, or lifestyle. It is essential that before a tourism strategy is developed, the city is understood as a whole. The built environment of a city is easiest to understand and catalog as it consists of physical sites, monuments, and buildings of which almost everyone is aware. They may be famous, such as monument to those killed in a war, or known only to those in the community, such as the site of an historic market square. Both types are used by community members as reference points when giving directions as it is assumed that everyone knows where they are located.

On a larger scale and more difficult to understand are districts or neighborhoods that share a distinction that makes them unique. Although outsiders may initially see the city as homogenous, locals know that there are distinctions based on ethnic or religious background, lifestyle, or social class. When cataloguing the city, older residents should be consulted as it can take a lifetime to truly understand the character of a city (Hospers 2009).

Recently there has been a change in preference in what people desire from the tourist experience from which smaller cities and town can benefit. While they still may want to visit well-known landmarks, they know that these sites do not reflect the daily cultural life of the community. It is this daily life that they want to experience and explore. While it can be easy to catalogue major physical sites and buildings, it is more difficult to analyze the people and local neighborhood culture. The activities engaged in by local community members may not be thought of as being of interest to others because they are simply part of the lived experience of the community. Local community members that practice skills tied to a different time period or culture will be of interest to tourists looking for authentic experiences. For example, as interest in the local food movement grows, meeting community members that tend large gardens and preserve their own food may be of interest to tourists. Visitors with an interest in fiber arts may wish to learn more about weaving from a local resident. This is also true of sharing stories of the origin of local customs. Local residents who sit in cafes talking about the old days with each other can find a new audience with visitors. These neighborhoods are now part of the tourism product and will need to be analyzed and promoted.

Defining the community culture

A community can be defined as the people and the built environment in a specific geographic area. A community can encompass the total area of a city or town, but more likely there will be several unique neighborhoods within it that need to be analyzed. What separates one community from the area next to it is the cultural

values and lifestyles of the people. Communities are built as people of common interests tend to want to live together. It is this variation in culture that is of interest to tourists.

Culture was once thought of as refinement, with some communities having culture, and others not. Cultured communities created art, while uncultured communities at best produced crafts. It was thought that tourists would only be interested in visiting the first type of community, but this view is no longer widely held (Borrup 2006). Instead people understand that while culture varies as to type, this does not imply a value judgement. Instead the visitor will decide what type of culture they may wish to experience and what types they do not. The decision will be based on the visitor's perception of the quality of the experience and its authenticity. Those responsible for developing tourism need to understand that what they most take for granted in their communities may be what will be of most interest to visitors from other places.

Discovering product components

Because the city as a tourism product consists of many components, the process of developing a marketing plan to attract tourists must be a thorough analysis of what features and benefits the city has to offer. Table 3.1 provides a sample of some possible product components including sites, services, events, and experiences, but there can be many more.

First, the physical features of the city must be analyzed to determine what already exists that can attract a segment of tourists. These will include well-known sites, but also those that might be of interest to specific groups. Tourist services can also include events such as theatrical productions, dance performances, concerts, festivals, parades, shopping, and even sports (Hughes 2000).

Second, to discover what services are available to visitors, a survey of the local businesses and organizations must be conducted, even if the business or organization

TABLE 3.1 Product components of the city

Sites	Services/events	Experience
Interesting architecture	Festivals	Exciting
Historical buildings	Parades	Historical
Cultural facilities	Cultural events	Charming
Churches, temples, mosques	Plays	Friendly
Unique street patterns	Sports	Beautiful
Public parks or squares	Tours	Creative
Walking paths, canals	Cinema	Ethnic
Mountains, rivers, oceans	Hotel rooms	Spiritual
Monuments	Dining	Licentious
Transportation system	Entertainment	Family fun

is currently not marketing to visitors. There are also services that the city provides that are not part of the primary motivation for visiting. These tourist services include the obviously needed lodging accommodations and dining establishments. However, even these can be improved by tying them into local culture and history through décor or menu. Some of these products and services may be ready to promote to visitors while others may need to make improvements before tourists will be interested in visiting. Some of these services can be provided in a non-traditional manner that adds to their attraction such as local residents who are willing to host visitors for a lunch of locally grown food. While it is easy to understand that local restaurants would be part of the services needed by tourists. In addition, events that are part of the local community culture, such as a local fish fry that is held each weekend, they can be promoted as part of the tourism product.

Combining the physical city and the services/events creates the experience of visiting. This experience can be characterized in many different ways, exciting, charming, or creative. The experience can also be created by the lifestyles and values of the local residents, such as an ethnic culture, the friendly attitude of the residents, or an emphasis on family fun. It is actually this entire experience that must be promoted when marketing a city as a tourist destination.

Analysis of tourism products and services

The heart of the marketing concept is the process of matching the features of the product and the benefits these features provide with the needs and desires of the consumer. This matching process is easier for a business as it can change its existing product. A business can even develop a completely new product by first researching the needs and desires of its targeted consumers. Of course the process of developing a city as a tourist destination starts differently. For tourism marketers the product already exists. The architectural style of the buildings, the parks and scenery, the city's history, and the ethnic heritage of the residents are already in place. While these features can be enhanced, they cannot be fundamentally changed. Businesses have the advantage of being able to first research consumers before developing a product. In contrast tourism marketers first analyze their city's existing features and benefits and then find the potential tourists who will be interested in what the city already has to offer.

The process of marketing cities is further complicated by the fact that different segments of potential tourists will desire different features and benefits from the visit experience. For example, the demographics of potential tourists, such as their income or family status, will affect the destination decision. For instance, for travelers on a budget, the availability of low cost lodging and inexpensive activities will be an important consideration when deciding upon a travel destination. A family's values will also help determine what activities they desire. Families who value togetherness will be looking for attractions that both parents and children can enjoy at the same time.

The demographic segment of potential visitors who are single travelers will also choose a destination based on their needs and desires. For this segment, cost will