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TOURISM RESEARCH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO

BY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to describe the tourism and recreation research work that has been conducted at the Business Research Division, University of Colorado at Boulder. The article discusses the historical development, the Journal of Travel Research, the Travel Reference Center, bibliographies, winter recreation research, the Colorado Tourism Board, other studies, the Center for Recreation and Tourism Development, and funding sources.

TOURISM RESEARCH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO

The Business Research Division (BRD) of the University of Colorado at Boulder is a well-known travel/tourism research center in the United States. The BRD has a long history in the tourism area. Activities in the tourism and recreation area started when the division was established in 1915 because one of the objectives was to track all activity in the Colorado economy. Since tourism has been an important factor in the state's economy it has also been an important activity of the BRD since its inception.

Tourism research became an even more important area following World War II when L. J. Crampon served in the research division and had tourism as a special interest. In 1947 he published Colorado Tourist Business and Colorado Tourist Accommodation Study. He continued this work until he left the University in the middle of the 1960s. During that time he gained a noteworthy reputation for both his work and the research division with his publication on the law of tourism gravitation, tourism pilot studies, winter tourism research, and the first bibliography of tourism research studies. He reported on tourism research at universities in the Journal of Marketing during this period.

The typical University of Colorado tourist survey at this time covered such subjects as the place of origin or residence of the visitor, the size of the traveling party, the types of accommodations desired, the average expenditures of the parties in the area, the activities in which the tourist desired to participate, and their opinions concerning the

areas visited. Also covered was the means of transportation employed in reaching the vacation or resort area.

The author joined the Business Research Division in January 1967 and continued much of the work that was started by L. J. Crampon and expanded involvement in tourism work considerably. For the last 20 years we have worked closely with the Travel and Tourism Research Association (TTRA or its predecessor organizations) in addition to carrying on our own tourism research activities. Because of these activities we are a major source of travel research data. A brief description of some of the travel research activities of the Business Research Division follow.

JOURNAL OF TRAVEL RESEARCH. The objective of the Journal of Travel Research (JTR) is to publish articles in the field of travel research, defining this field in the broadest sense. Its purpose is to serve as a medium through which those with research interests can exchange ideas and keep abreast of the latest developments pertaining to travel research.

The JTR strives to advance the level and standards used in travel research by providing readers with new and helpful information about travel research, new techniques, creative views, generalizations about travel research thought and practice, and syntheses of travel research material.

The journal is published quarterly in cooperation with TTRA. In addition to scholarly articles of travel research methodology and results, a feature of the publication is the "Travel Research Bookshelf" which annotates travel research studies and articles and is an excellent guide to travel data. It has been one of the most popular features of the journal. Because we have been conducting travel research and publishing the journal for a number of years, many researchers routinely send us travel publications for possible inclusion. We also discover publications by reviewing the National Technical Information Service Transportation and Economics bulletins, trade publications, journals, and other reference documents.

TRAVEL REFERENCE CENTER. The reference center was established in 1969 to assist the travel industry in finding information sources and provide a facility to house a comprehensive collection of travel studies. The center was established with the cooperation of the Travel and Tourism Research Association (TTRA) and is now operated by the Business Research Division. Services of the center are available to the travel industry for a charge. The center now comprises the largest collection of travel, tourism, and recreation research studies available at any one place in the United States. The present collection numbers over 8,000 documents and is growing daily. The collection was computerized in 1985 and the Center can do literature searches using 973 descriptors. Literature searches are \$50 per search by descriptor and research assistance is \$75 an hour.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHIES

In addition to being a frequent contributor to the tourism

literature the Business Research Division has also been a major publisher of tourism research bibliographies. Prior to 1960, there were no bibliographies published on tourism research. In 1967 the BRD published a small volume which updated the 1960 work and was called Bibliography of Tourism and Travel Research Studies, Reports and Articles. It was not annotated and contained 70 pages. After only four years the work needed to be updated and re-published; this time the publication was annotated and published in three volumes, and it totaled 371 pages. In 1976 the BRD published Travel Research Bibliography which was a bibliography of the holdings of the Travel Reference Center as of June 30, 1975. The next edition of Bibliography of Tourism and Travel Research Studies, Reports and Articles came out in 1980, was published in nine volumes, and totaled 762 pages. The BRD is currently working on an update which will probably have 12 volumes and total over 1,000 pages.

This experience is an indication of the rapid growth in tourism research, and demonstrates the vitality and dynamic nature of the discipline. The BRD has collected five bookshelves of tourism bibliographies and have published Bibliographies on Tourism and Related Subjects: An Annotated Sourcebook by Jafar Jafari and others, University of Wisconsin - Stout, which numbers 81 pages.

#### WINTER RECREATION RESEARCH

A great deal of research has been focused on the ski industry. In fact, the BRD has published more ski research studies than any other single entity. This important sector is evaluated periodically through the BRD's Colorado Ski and Winter Recreation Statistics. Studies have also been conducted at most of the large resort areas in Colorado including Aspen, Vail, Winter Park, Steamboat, Copper Mountain, and Breckenridge. Other studies include the skier using commercial air, skier demographics, cost of recreation and leisure activities, bibliography of skiing studies, ski rental shop survey, ski area marketing, and ski school survey.

The BRD is responsible for preparing the National Ski Areas Association's annual Economic Analysis of North American Ski Areas. In conjunction with that project the BRD also prepares an annual report for Colorado Ski Country USA entitled Colorado Ski Industry Characteristics and Financial Analysis. In addition, standards have been established by the BRD for conducting ski studies in the hope of making comparisons possible on a study by study basis.

#### OUR MOST SIGNIFICANT PROJECT

On December 9, 1981 the BRD, University of Colorado received a purchase order from the Office of Tourism, Colorado Department of Commerce and Development to conduct an assessment of state travel offices. The workplan agreed upon called for visits to six state government tourism offices: 1) the Division of Tourism, Florida Department of Commerce, Tallahassee, Florida; 2) Hawaii Visitors Bureau,

Honolulu, Hawaii; 3) Michigan Travel Bureau, Lansing, Michigan; 4) Pennsylvania Bureau of Travel Development, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; 5) Tennessee Department of Tourist Development, Nashville, Tennessee; and 6) the Utah Travel Council, Salt Lake City, Utah.

It was hoped that assessing the organization, underlying rationale, structure, operations, funding, and impacts of state government tourism programs would 1) compare the various aspects of other state programs to Colorado's, 2) identify successful program aspects which might be incorporated in Colorado tourism programs, 3) identify problems or weaknesses in tourism programs which should be avoided in Colorado programs, and 4) identify opportunities for Colorado to develop policies and programs to enhance its tourism industry.

The study team consisted of C. R. Goeldner, Director, Business Research Division; John Hunt, Professor of Tourism, George Washington University; and Karen Duea, Research Economist, Business Research Division.

Eight reports were completed and turned over to the Colorado Office of Tourism--one for each of the six states mentioned above and one for Colorado, to allow comparisons to be made with some of the better tourism programs in the nation. The Colorado report contained 44 pages; Florida, 145 pages; Hawaii, 119 pages; Michigan, 171 pages; Pennsylvania, 172 pages; Tennessee, 142 pages; and Utah, 103 pages. In addition, a large amount of tourism material utilized by other tourism offices has been turned over to the Colorado Office of Tourism. The eighth was a final report which made additional comparisons with all other tourism offices, examined the findings of the six tourism office visits, made comparisons with Colorado, looked at the results, drew conclusions, and made recommendations.

The final outcome of this work was particularly pleasing. While research centers are proud of the work they do and the knowledge and data they disseminate it is not often they are privileged to do a project which has a major significant impact on the industry and the state. One of the BRD's proudest moments was when it completed this study entitled An Assessment of State Travel Offices because it played an important role in helping establish the Colorado Tourism Board and raising state expenditures for tourism from about \$750,000 per year to over \$3 million through a one-tenth of one percent sales tax on lodging, food and drink, ski lift and admission tickets, private tourist attraction admissions, rental automobiles and tour bus and sightseeing passenger carrier tickets. The Colorado Tourism Board is functioning well and approval to increase the tax to two-tenths of one percent has given the board over \$8 million to work with in the current fiscal year.

#### OTHER STUDIES

In addition, the BRD has conducted a large number of studies on the Colorado tourism industry. Colorado Travel and Tourism Statistics is prepared annually; the summer visitor, winter visitor, and convention visitor to Aspen have been studied. Research designs have been prepared

for state tourism studies and conversion studies have been conducted. Feasibility and economic impact studies have been conducted. While the BRD predominately conducts local, state and regional level studies, the organization is also active on the national and international tourism scene through their joint efforts with the U.S. Travel Data Center and the previously mentioned TTRA. Tourism's Top Twenty and An Inventory of Federal Travel and Tourism Related Information Sources are examples of joint projects with the U.S. Travel Data Center.

#### CENTER FOR RECREATION AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

The tourism activities of the BRD received a large boost in 1986 when the Regents of the University of Colorado transferred the Commercial Recreation major to the College of Business which brought the Center for Rural Recreation to the College as well. This center was renamed and is physically housed in the BRD and we work together to produce tourism research and services. A brief description of the center provides a feel for its role.

The Center for Recreation and Tourism Development supports basic and applied research, community service, and field-based academic opportunities for faculty and students that contribute to the improvement of a community's economic condition and its quality of life.

Primary activities include 1) recreation and tourism development for rural towns and small cities in Colorado as well as technical assistance to six of the Rocky Mountain Region states, 2) hospitality training for both the public and private sectors, and 3) recreation enterprise skill development training for youth and adults. The Center also responds to requests for assistance including economic impact studies, marketing plans for recreation development, and assessments of the impact of recreation services on select clientele.

#### FUNDING

The BRD receives an annual budget from the University which covers the salary of the Director, Research Economist, Office Manager, and Receptionist; plus a small amount for operating costs. The University views this as seed money and expects the BRD to engage in activities such as contract work and for sale publications to generate revenue and employ additional staff. We have a publications list and use the revenue from tourism and other publications to help support our tourism research activities.

#### FURTHER INFORMATION

Anyone wishing a publications list, information on the Journal of Travel Research or the Travel Reference Center should write to C.R. Goeldner, Director, Business Research Division, Campus Box 420,

University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado 80309.