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Integration: The Primary Element to Successful Planning

David L. Groves
Bowling Green State University, dgroves@bgsu.edu

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INTEGRATION:
THE PRIMARY ELEMENT TO SUCCESSFUL PLANNING

BY

DR. DAVID L. GROVES, PROFESSOR

DIVISION OF SPORT MANAGEMENT, RECREATION AND TOURISM
SCHOOL OF HUMAN MOVEMENT, SPORT AND LEISURE STUDIES
210 EPPLER NORTH
BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY
BOWLING GREEN, OHIO 43403

INTRODUCTION

Tourism planning as a science has had major impact on the economic development of some communities (15, 20). In other communities, tourism has been poorly planned and has had long-term negative impacts. The primary question being raised in this article is what is the difference between these two planning situations, one allowing success and the other resulting in failure?

Is less effective planning the result of incompetence? Are there external factors that significantly influence tourism planning that have not been incorporated into the planning process by some individuals? The difference may be in the perceptual process and the interpretation of data (13, 17, 22). The same planning process or protocol was used in both cases, but the difference may be in how the information is perceived and is interpreted and how that interpretation impacts the planning process in the community.

Perceptions of data interpretation must be viewed, based upon a uni-dimensional or a multi-dimensional approach (14, 23). The uni-dimensional approach perceives results from data collection from one dimension only. The multi-dimensional approach looks at a combination or a number of factors or planes and views them from a larger perspective. The uni-dimensional approach is much narrower while the multi-dimensional approach has a much wider perspective. The uni-dimensional approach is based upon very simple relationships that have been established. The multi-dimensional approach is based upon very complex relationships that form a network or a web. The relationships revealed from a multi-dimensional approach are much more difficult to understand, especially in how they operate in the field.

Another aspect of this perceptual difference may be a fixed versus a dynamic approach of interpretation (4, 18). In the fixed approach to planning, all perceptions are based on a nonchanging process. In a dynamic approach to planning, the elements are always changing and the primary focus is not on the variables but upon how the variables change in relation to one another and how one variable influences another to bring about change. A fixed approach is more focused on variables and variable types and classifying and grouping data (20, 25). A dynamic approach is more focused on specifying relationships, describing and understanding these relationships, and the impact

of one relationship on another (3, 27). A fixed aesthetic approach deals with one point or a series of points in time, and the factors that influence these points. A dynamic process views time as fluid. It is important to examine the ebb and flow of time and isolate the patterns of the ebb and flow in regard to the relationships that are formed.

Each of the perceptual interpretation positions identified has advantages and disadvantages. There is not one that is a better approach to the solving of interpretation problems (1, 5, 7, 11, 16). A fixed/uni-dimensional approach is focused upon specific time periods and understanding the variables that influence those time periods. There is little association in examining the relationships among variable types, especially as they are influenced by the external environment. The fixed/multi-dimensional approach also takes a look at specific time periods, identifying variables that are important in these time periods. The primary difference between the uni-dimensional and multi-dimensional approaches is that they are looking for relationships to expand their focus to external factors. They try to network the variables and understand how one layer of variables influences the other. In the dynamic uni-dimensional approach, time is a continuum as an element that flows; it is important to understand the variables that are important in this cycle or flow of time. The primary focus of this approach is upon the flow of time, understanding the various positions of time, and the important variables that are in each of the cycles or flow of time. The dynamic multi-dimensional approach also sees time as a continuum and as an element that flows. The basic difference is in the variables that are studied. It is important not to define the variables that are in each of the cycles of time, but the factors or influences that cause the shifts in flow dur-

ing the various time cycles. The primary dimension in this multi-dimensional approach is the building of relationships, the understanding of variables, and how they influence the shifts in time flow.

The other important dimension to interpretation is the position or level that the individual has directed life experiences (6, 11, 13, 21, 25, 26). It is very important to understand whether the position of the individual doing the interpretation is at the lower strata or upper strata, in terms of their organizational affiliation. There is a definite difference in perceptual base from the top of the organization, as well as from the bottom of the organization. It is important to understand each of these strata and how each is influenced by the differences in perception. These perceptual differences not only relate to positions within an organization, or layers or strata within an organization, it also relates to different perspectives in regard to a problem. Within one level, there can be perceptual differences based upon life's experience and how one interprets the experiences and, therefore, formulates their perceptual positions. There is both a vertical and a horizontal difference in regard to perceptions, and it is important to understand each position, both vertically as well as horizontally, especially in terms of the life experiences of these perceptions, how they were formulated and how they can be integrated to develop a possible solution to planning problems.

The basic commonality or common thread through each of the different interpretations is an ability to integrate information to gain some type of understanding of the perspective of the individuals in the planning process. It is the structuring and layering of these various perceptual positions that gives an understanding of why certain projects fail (15, 23). It is obviously the lack of under-

standing perceptual positions and how to resolve these differences. The other aspect of these perceptual differences is understanding the diversities in terms of the integration process of how these differences in perception can be integrated and how they are different, based upon the life experience and position of the individual (6, 11, 25). In this context, the basic premise is that it is the integration of perceptual positions that help in resolving planning problems because each of these positions is understood in terms of commonalities, as well as differences on critical positions. The focus here is understanding the layers of perception and how these layers were formed. When this is done, then there is some kind of foundation on which to develop a planning process that is based upon an integration approach. These layers are critical to understanding why planning efforts failed in the past.

The purpose of this article is to understand, from a methodological reference, the overlaying of perceptual differences and how these can be related to the integration process of providing an understanding of perceptual differences and commonalities to planners.

METHODOLOGY

Perceptual mapping, that is, the understanding of various positions in relation to one another, is not a new phenomenon. This methodology is similar to cognitive mapping (2, 19). This type of approach allows the viewing of perceptions, not in terms of linear positions, but in terms of dynamic positions that are layered. The other important aspect is the understanding of how these perceptions are formulated on the map. This gives some indication about the necessary conflict resolution technique to help resolve the intensity problems. This also allows in-

dividuals to understand common grounds and to negotiate new positions in the planning process.

The methodology used for this study was done in three phases (1, 4, 8, 9, 18, 19, 24, 21, 27). Phase I was a content analysis of the current literature, both present and historical, to provide some type of background on the various perspectives being analyzed. Phase II was composed of interviews with opinion leaders to obtain their perceptual positions on tourism development and the types of development that should occur in their area. Phase III was comprised of a cognitive mapping methodology to chart and map the perceptual positions based upon a dynamic mapping system that layers the perceptions of the opinion leaders. As a part of this Phase III, once the positions were mapped, the opinion leaders were asked to review the perceptual map as to where there are common dimensions and different dimensions, and where there might be common ground for development to set up a negotiation process for the conflict resolution. This provided an effective database for resolving conflicts and interactions that will bring commonality and cooperation on developmental projects for the designers of conflict resolution.

Phase I, a thematic content analysis, was used to identify positions and groups, as well as identify the historical perspective of how these positions have been formed. The Thurstonian system of judgment was used where three individuals read the materials and common judging from two out of the three experts is used to develop consensus on the positions.

In Phase II, opinion leaders were surveyed using an instrument as being the basis of community planning exercises. These interviews were from general to specific in ob-

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taining the individual's perspective on commercial and industrial developments and the relationship with tourism and future development ideas, based upon a tourism model. The Convention and Visitors Bureau director were the primary interviews and opinion leaders were selected from a list identified by the Convention and Visitors Bureau directors. Additional individuals were identified, based upon the leaders that have been interviewed. Opinions sought reflected economic, social, cultural, and environmental issues. The Thurstonian system of judgment was used to classify the responses and a 2-out-of-3 criteria system was used to develop the consistent position from the expert leaders. The third phase, the Thurstonian system of judgment involving three content experts, was used to place the data collected from Phase I and Phase II in a perceptual map. This perceptual map was structured like a cognitive map and layered from one position to another and included a time element that involved the evolution of this position from a historical perspective. If additional information was needed from the participants during this particular phase, they were asked if they could be contacted so that their position could be clarified. A 2-out-of-3 criteria system was used, between the judges, to place the perceptions in the map space. Once this perceptual map was formulated, feedback was sought from the participants on the structure and nature of the map, especially in regard to the common elements where ground can be formulated to develop a long- and short-term plan for tourism development for their community. Where there was conflict, the information was also sought on how to mediate or negotiate this position, especially in regard to those areas where there is common ground. A position statement was developed, based upon tourism information that reflects these perceptual map situations.

STUDY AREA

The study area was the Great Black Swamp in Northwest Ohio, that extends from the Great Lakes on the northwest edge to Fort Wayne, Indiana. Historically, this area was a swamp, with much history in terms of Native Americans and the evolutionary history of the United States from colonial times to present. Also, part of this area is the Maumee River basin, as well as the Great Lakes area, and the historical elements involved in opening up the Northwest Territory of the United States. The purpose of this project was to develop a perceptual map of the Great Black Swamp area and to focus, in particular, on a case study of two areas: Grand Rapids, Ohio and Toledo, Ohio, to determine the feasibility of development of an industrial tourism approach to these Northwest Ohio resources. Various states' Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) directors were selected, using a convenience sample related to industrial tourism in their communities, to ascertain the status of industrial tourism. A regional sample of CVB's and important leaders were interviewed to determine the nature of the region. Individuals in Grand Rapids and Toledo, Ohio were intensely interviewed and perceptual maps were developed from statewide, regional, and local areas to illustrate the use of a perceptual mapping methodology for effective industrial tourism planning.

As mentioned earlier, the individuals who were sampled were CVB directors. The CVB directors, especially on the regional and local levels, identified additional important opinion leaders in the community who had industrial, social, cultural, and environmental influence. Individuals were then interviewed, and at the regional level, only the opinion leaders were sampled. However, at the local level in Grand Rapids and Toledo, the various layers representing primary, sec-

ondary, and tertiary individuals were interviewed to develop a more consistent perceptual map of the area.

CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Tourism in Northwest Ohio seems to be highly segmented and is quite different from other parts of the state. The Black Swamp area, the area from Toledo to Cleveland that runs northwest of the Indiana line, is a very unique area ecologically. This has provided quite an exceptional culture and has the potential to be a unifying factor in tourism in Northwest Ohio. Because of the commonality of ecological factors, it would seem that this area of Northwest Ohio could be developed into a regional market that would have a very sustainable impact on tourism in the state. The focus here would be on a regional approach that would serve as a unifying force to market and to develop image and attractions. It would be an agency, of some kind, on a regional level that would develop a unique perspective on the area and serve as a developmental, as well as a promotional factor, to build the economy of this region for greater tourism development.

For this type of vision to occur, much work needs to be done in Northwest Ohio. There seems to be two primary foci. One is Lake Erie, and those counties that center on the lake, where tourism already is an important aspect. These counties see the lake and view tourism from a narrow perspective of fishing, boating, etc. Many do not see the wider perspective of the cultural relationship to the Black Swamp and the impact of historical events that have occurred. This could work into a regional base for the tourism development of the area. The other aspect is the segment from the Indiana line eastward to Interstate 75 and beyond by one or two counties. This area is seen as an agricultural

or highly industrial area. Much of the automotive industry has relocated here. Even though they have the same basic relationship, tourism has been low on their priority list, in terms of economic development for their region. They haven't seen a need, to this point in time, in diversifying their economy into other economic fields. There are isolated pockets of tourism development in locations such as Grand Rapids, Toledo, etc., but there does not seem to be any regional perspective for the development of a common theme through the area. Each interest or county seems to be developing their own perspective about tourism and none of them really has the resources to develop a national attractive approach. Many see the canal, lake, and the Maumee River basin as a resource, but they do not see it as a tourism resource. In addition, they do not see the historical contributions that Northwest Ohio could make to tourism development.

Within the industrial counties west of the lake, the primary emphasis seems to be on the highway system, that is, the completing of Route 24 to open up economic development; tourism would be considered an important part of this. It seems to be the flash point that may be able to help organize these counties into considering a regional approach to tourism economic development. The counties in those areas adjacent to Interstate 75 are also considering the importance of highways and their contribution to the development of tourism as a possible economic boost, but they are less enthusiastic than the counties west of I-75 toward the Indiana line. Interstate 75 has already brought them some prosperity and this prosperity has tempered their attitudes toward other types of economic development. A big problem is with those counties in and around the lake. Many of them want to maintain status quo because they feel that their "bread and butter" is in the current

tourism status. These individuals may be the most difficult to convince that a regional tourism approach to Northwest Ohio may influence them significantly.

There is a definite difference of opinion among the various counties and cities within the Black Swamp region of Northwest Ohio about tourism development. It is apparent that it is important to understand the differences between the counties, as well as the differences between individuals who have regional and state responsibility for tourism development in Ohio. For a regional approach to tourism in the Great Black Swamp area to be successful, there must be consistence or congruence among various perceptions. This will lay a foundation for the growth of tourism. The uniqueness of Northwest Ohio should be isolated and new attractions developed that have a focused theme. Communities with these focused themes have the best opportunity for being successful on a sustainable basis for tourism.

RESULTS

The results of perceptual mapping show a distinct difference of opinion about the position of Toledo in regard to a number of key issues. Toledo seems to have a very arrogant attitude, especially in regard to the other five counties along the Maumee basin and canal area. In fact, they do not even see the importance of these counties in this topic as a tourist issue. Their perception seems to be that Toledo has all the resources that it needs and the other counties should look to each other in sharing their resources in order to develop as a tourism regional base. The flashpoint seems to be Route 24, which would open the other five counties in terms of their accessibility from Ft. Wayne. Toledo seems to be dragging its feet in putting political barriers in the way to comple-

tion of this project. Toledo does not necessarily see it as a high enough priority to allocate the resources for its development.

On one end of the tourism leadership continuum is Defiance County. It has moved forward, very aggressively, in developing the concept of becoming a regional shopping and industry center. It has implemented a bed tax and sees itself as being a regional leader halfway between Ft. Wayne and Toledo. Because of its geographic midpoint, it is indeed becoming a regional center generating incredible tax dollars. Economic attitudes are quite positive and very refreshing. Defiance County has a primary position and a "can do" mentality.

Wood County is at the other end of the continuum in that it has indifference toward tourism and does not see itself as part of the economic development. It also does not see itself as part of this basin region, even though one of the most prolific developments has occurred in Grand Rapids, which is part of Wood County. It seems to be a very isolated pocket and very fragmented in its economic point of view. It is a very diverse county, from agriculture to industry, with a wide spectrum of income levels. It has had economic success, but there is no consistent direction, and it maintains a very conservative approach to any type of economic development. Paulding County seems to be a very laid back and a very traditional agricultural community. It is probably more oriented toward Ft. Wayne than Toledo. It seeks its services from Indiana as much as it does Ohio. Its position is that there is not much in Paulding County, but what is there is primarily for the community and not for external consumption by tourists. In Paulding County, there is lack of direction and, to some extent, lack of leadership, but it is very positive in its approach to development. It wants to develop and it

wants to relate to other counties, but it possesses an attitude of inferiority.

Henry County is progressive and has started its economic development, especially industrial development. It is slowly changing its identity and sees itself as a very prolific industrial center. It also sees itself as an excellent location in relation to various industries, especially the automotive industry. Its geographical location is indeed its strong point and it sees this as a plus and is going to continue to develop industry, based upon its uniqueness of location. It has a limited perspective in regard to other economic approaches to the generation of revenues.

In addition to the information about individual counties, a collective score or mean was obtained to gain an overall perspective about the counties' feelings on the 10 issues identified. In general, the counties felt that there is some development, but not extensive. They felt that the political barriers are not significant. There needs to be more money appropriated for the development of tourism, and the issue of Route 24 is a very strong flash point in feelings. The counties feel that they have the resources to develop tourism, but they do not have an extensive understanding of tourism and its impact. In fact, many of the counties do not even have an understanding of their unique heritage and there are very strong dissentions among some of the counties. There is a general lack of vision and not much enthusiasm for using tourism as a point of economic development.

The communities of Grand Rapids and Toledo were intensely studied because it was felt that these two communities are good examples of where tourism has been used as an economic development tool. The Grand Rapids area represents more of a small-town/village approach and Toledo represents an urban approach. In completing the Grand Rapids analysis, it was found that it feels it has a moderate amount of development and a moderate amount of political barriers. There is a feeling that it also has a moderate amount of money, but fewer than resources other counties. The issue of Route 24 is seen as an important element to the further development of its tourism. There is a general feeling that individuals understand the historical contributions Grand Rapids makes. The cooperation issue is still in the Grand Rapids area and is seen as a point of contention, especially with the larger urban area of Toledo. Individuals feel that they have a good vision of where they're going, but they do not necessarily understand tourism as an effective component of economic development.

In regards to Toledo, it feels it has a good developmental base, but its political barriers are also significant. It feels that it has a moderate amount of money, and that Route 24 is not as big an issue because it has other interstates and other transportation resources in the area. There are good resources for the development of tourism projects. Toledo has a good understanding of tourism and good economic vision, but tourism is only of a moderate interest in terms of their economic development plans.

Those who are involved in regional development feel that the counties are just beginning to understand developmental projects, and that they have very low political barriers to any type of development. The regional people feel that the money is reasonable and that it is a necessary amount of money for regional development. They also see Route 24 as a critical issue in any type of tourism development for these counties. The regional development people feel that there are few resources for this development and that the individuals in the counties do not have an understanding of tourism and even

less of an understanding of their community. They sense that the feeling of cooperation is very high and that the counties generally lack vision. They do not see that these counties have a perception of themselves as relying on tourism as a major economic development factor.

Individuals at the state level believe that the counties are just beginning to think about economic development and that their planning skills are very low. They also see the political barriers as being few. They think that these counties have monetary resources that could be diverted for the use of tourism. The state individuals feel that Route 24 is a stimulus that will help in tourism development. Individuals at the state level also feel that there are not as many resources that will allow for the development of sustainable tourism in this area. They also believe that individuals in the area do not understand tourism and have a general lack of understanding of the uniqueness of their communities. Cooperation with Toledo is only an issue that has medium strength and is not that important. State economic developers feel that the counties lack vision and do not see tourism as an important economic development tool in their future.

When the comparisons are made among the counties, the regional, and the state levels, perceptual differences and similarities are isolated. There is consistence among the counties, regional, and state levels that the amount of economic planning that has occurred is low. There are also some very low scores in regard to the political barriers to economic development. Where there is real disparity is in regard to money. The regional and state individuals see these counties as having the necessary monetary resources for development, but the counties feel that they need more money for development. The issue of Route 24 is a point of consistence in regard to perception, but the

individuals at the regional and state levels feel that it is very critical. It is quite surprising that the Route 24 issue is not as high as the regional and state scores. There is also a perceptual disparity between resources for development and economic development of tourism. The counties feel that they have excellent resources, but the regional and state individuals do not see these resources as being the type that are necessary for development. There is also disparity in regard to whether the individuals feel that they have an understanding of tourism. The counties feel that they have an understanding of tourism, but the regional and state individuals feel that they have less of an understanding of what tourism is in terms of economic development. In regard to the understanding of their own community, the counties feel that they do have some understanding of their community and its importance, but the state and regional individuals have a much lower score. The primary issue of cooperation with Toledo in the counties is a critical issue where they feel that cooperation is very low, but the regional and state individuals feel that cooperation with the other counties, other than Lucas County, is very good. This is perhaps the greatest perceptual disparity. In regard to vision, the counties feel that they have a moderate vision of where they are going, but the regional and state levels feel that they have less of a vision of where they're going. The aspect of tourism in regard to it as an economic factor at the county, regional, and state level seems to be very low.

IMPLICATIONS

The potential for regional development in the Black Swamp area seems to be very distant. The perceptual problems seem to be that those counties along the lake already have a perception of tourism and know its

importance, while the other counties in the Black Swamp area do not seem to understand or see the importance of tourism as a sustainable economic component to their development. It seems like regional development must take place in two phases. The educational process must be for those who are along the lake to educate them to the diversity of tourism opportunities, especially in the cultural area. The second is to educate the other counties in the Black Swamp area to the nature of tourism development as a sustainable economic force within their economic development repertoire. It would seem that there is a vast disparity of difference between perceptions of regional, state, and local individuals. These differences must be reconciled before any effective plan can be put together on a regional basis. It would seem that the starting point for this type of program is with the county which identifies its potential resources, conducts an inventory, and reflects its uniqueness and effects on the developmental process. The issue that seems to weld the country, regional, and state levels together is the completion of Route 24 as a transportational dimension that will open up these counties, and as this takes place, the possibility of sustainable tourism is a real possibility. The one element that is being forgotten here is that development is not a haphazard or a random function and that planning needs to be done now so that when Route 24 is completed, there will be some process in place for the use of Route 24 as an integrating factor for regional tourism development. The counties must know themselves first, and there must be some type of incentive provided for them to integrate Route 24 into regional development, not only of tourism but also of other types of developmental factors.

Figure 1
Ratings for Issues Scale

#1.   Where are we
    1.   Not Interested
    2.   Just beginning
    3.   Some development
    4.   Half way there
    5.   Where we want to be

#2.   Political barriers
    1.   Cannot overcome
    2.   Will work/Some prodding
    3.   Encourages new development
    4.   Half way there
    5.   Excited about new development

#3.   Money
    1.   Does not understand the financial process for tourism development
    2.   Needs seed money
    3.   Needs new revenue source
    4.   Has money/bed tax
    5.   Has money/economic development

#4.   Rt. 24
    1.   None
    2.   Little help in developing tourism
    3.   Some help in developing tourism
    4.   Good help in developing tourism
    5.   Excellent help in developing tourism

#5.   Resources
    1.   None
    2.   Little
    3.   Some
    4.   Good
    5.   Excellent

#6.   Understand tourism
    1.   None
    2.   Little
    3.   Some
    4.   Good
    5.   Excellent

#7.   Understand community
    1.   None
    2.   Little
    3.   Some
    4.   Good
    5.   Excellent

#8.   Cooperation with City A
    1.   None
    2.   Little
    3.   Some
    4.   Good
    5.   Excellent

#9.   Vision
    1.   None
    2.   Little
    3.   Some
    4.   Good
    5.   Excellent

#10.   Tourism development
    1.   None
    2.   Little
    3.   Some
    4.   Good
    5.   Excellent

Table 1
Issues and County and Regional & State Response

Issue	County	Regional & State
1. Where are we	3	2
2. Political barriers	2	2
3. Money	4	2
4. Rt. 24	2	5
5. Resources	4	3
6. Understand tourism	3	2
7. Understanding community	3	3
8. Cooperation with City A	3	3
9. Vision	3	2
10. Tourism development	2	2

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