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Tourist Spending Patterns in Utah

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PERRY J. BROWN

Since 1965 Utah has been investing tax dollars to attract tourists to Utah. One of the justifications for promoting Utah should be that the rural areas of the state will receive significant economic benefits from increased tourism.

Until the summer of 1968 no one had really concerned themselves with trying to find out where tourists do spend their money in the state. The idea has often been expressed that

virtually all expenditures are made along the Wasatch Front. The idea that rural areas receive a significant dollar influx from tourists is seldom expressed.

Just where do tourists spend their money in Utah? Research conducted by Utah State University for the Utah Travel Council has provided an answer to this question. During the summer of 1968, staff and graduate students of the USU Depart-

ment of Forest Science conducted a study of motor vehicle tourist expenditures and length-of-stay. Location, amount, and types of expenditures were examined during this season.

RURAL RECEIVES MAJORITY

Results of the study indicate that the majority of summer tourist expenditures are made in Utah's 25 rural counties (all counties except Davis, Salt Lake, Utah, and Weber). Over 57 percent of the spending is in these counties which possess only 22.5 percent of the State's population. The total 1968 Utah summer motor vehicle tourist spending was \$37,852,000. The research thus indicates that tourism is an important economic asset to rural areas.¹

However, these expenditures are not uniformly distributed throughout the state. The five southwestern Utah Counties (Beaver, Garfield, Iron, Kane, and Washington) receive 27.5 percent of the tourist expenditures. Since these counties contain a disproportionate number of the state's well-known tourist attractions, it should be expected that they would receive more tourists and more tourist dollars.

EXPENDITURE-NODES

In a study of tourists visiting the Bear Lake area of Utah and Idaho, Hunt interviewed tourists and found that tourists in the western states single out certain national attractions as destinations. He noted that areas such as Salt Lake City and Yellowstone National Park are tourist destinations. After noting these destinations he tabulated the location of overnight stops of the same interviewed tourists. Locations of overnight stops were found to be closely

¹ Hunt, John D. and Perry J. Brown. 1969. *Expenditures of the 1968 Utah Summer Motor Vehicle Tourist*. Report to Utah Travel Council. Utah State University, Logan, Utah. 49 pp.

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associated with destinations. Hunt used the word *node* to describe these tourist concentration areas and the term *internode* to describe the void between nodes.²

Since tourists concentrate in particular areas we might expect the majority of their purchases to be made in these areas. The 1968 research indicates that if a full spectrum of tourist services is found in the nodal location, tourists do concentrate expenditures there.

SPENDING PATTERNS

Among Utah's counties three tourist spending patterns are identifiable (counties are used in the analysis because they are readily identifiable taxing and political units). First, there are those counties which contain a tourist node. These counties are characterized by having a *balanced* tourist expenditure pattern. Generally, approximately 80 percent of the spending in these counties is about equally divided between food, lodging, and transportation purchases.

Based on this spending pattern we might re-define Hunt's *node* concept in terms of *expenditure-nodes*. An expenditure-node would then be an area with the tourist expenditure pattern balanced between food, lodging, and transportation purchases. The total amount spent by tourists would depend upon an area's relationship to tourist attractions. Therefore, expenditure-nodes close to or containing heavily visited attractions would receive more total revenue than expenditure-nodes close to or containing less visited or less known attractions. However, all expenditure-nodes must exhibit a balanced expenditure pattern, regardless of amount of revenue.

A second spending pattern occurs in some other counties. These counties have a *way-station* expenditure pattern. The way-station expenditure concept denotes an intermediate

stop spending pattern. One type of purchase, usually transportation, dominates spending in these counties. But, occasionally spending in way-station counties is about equally divided between two types of purchase. The way-station pattern is never balanced as in the expenditure-node pattern.

The third spending pattern is found among *pass-through* counties. Actually, it might be better to describe this as a non-spending pattern because these counties are characterized by virtually no tourist spending. Although every one of these counties contains a section of a major tourist highway, each receives less than 1 percent of the Utah tourist expenditures. The minor tourist expenditures in these counties are usually confined to the food and transportation sectors. The counties exhibiting each expenditure pattern are listed in table 1.

Garfield County. Each of the three spending patterns described above can be illustrated with particular case counties. Garfield county in south central Utah exhibits an expenditure-node pattern.

Seven percent of the State's summer tourist expenditures are spent in this county in which Bryce Canyon National Park and a segment of U.S. Highway 89 are located. The county's primary tourist concentration community is Panguitch which is located about 26 miles from the Park.

Panguitch offers a full spectrum of tourist services with 13 motels or hotels, six restaurants and cafes, seven service stations, and several retail outlets. This community is geographically located where it makes a convenient place for tourist overnight stops.

Garfield County's economy is bolstered by tourist spending in several of its goods and services sectors. In this county, tourists spend 28 cents of each dollar for food, 23.5 cents for lodging, 27 cents for transportation, 16.5 cents for other retail purchases, 4 cents for entertainment, and 1 cent for services. These proportions can be compared with the state-wide pattern found in table 2. In terms of total state expenditures, Garfield County receives 6.5 percent of the food expenditures, 7

Table 1. Proportion of tourist expenditures in each Utah county with counties grouped by spending pattern

County	Percent	County	Percent
Expenditure-Node Counties			
Daggett	1.0	Iron	5.0
Emery	2.0	Salt Lake	33.0
Garfield	7.0	Uintah	3.5
Grand	2.5	Utah	5.5
Way-Station Counties			
Beaver	1.5	San Juan	1.5
Box Elder	2.5	Sevier	2.0
Cache	2.0	Tooele	2.0
Carbon	2.0	Wasatch	1.5
Duchesne	1.0	Washington	9.0
Juab	1.0	Wayne	1.0
Kane	5.0	Weber	3.5
Millard	2.0		
Pass-Through Counties			
Davis	0.5	Rich	0.5
Morgan	a	Sanpete	0.5
Piute	a	Summit	0.5

a Less than 0.5 percent

² Hunt, John D. 1968. *Tourist Vacations — Planning and Patterns*. Utah Agr. Exp. Sta. Bulletin 474. 40 pp.

percent of those for lodging, 6 percent of those for transportation, 8.5 percent of those for other retail items, 11 percent of those for entertainment, and 11.5 percent of those for services. It appears that a full gamut of tourist services may help in gaining tourist revenue.

Duchesne County. A typical example of the way-station pattern is found in Duchesne County in northeastern Utah. One percent of the Utah tourist dollar is spent in this county.

Duchesne County possesses no particularly well-known tourist attractions. It is bisected by U.S. Highway 40, a primary link between Denver and Salt Lake City. Its neighboring county to the east, Uintah, has an expenditure-node spending pattern.

Duchesne County possesses two communities, Roosevelt and Duchesne, which serve as tourist service centers. They are both located along U.S. 40. Together, these communities possess 11 motels or hotels,

15 restaurants or cafes, 18 service stations, and several other retail outlets. Roosevelt, the larger of the two communities, is 2 hours and 30 minutes by automobile from Salt Lake City and 30 minutes from Vernal, Utah. These latter communities are important tourist concentration centers.

Transportation needs comprise 45½ percent of the tourist expenditures in Duchesne County. Purchases of food accounts for 27 percent, lodging 11 percent, other retail purchases 15.5 percent, entertainment 1.0 percent and services less than 0.5 percent of the tourist spending in the county. Duchesne County receives the following proportions of total state spending: food, 1 percent; lodging, less than 0.5 percent; transportation, 1.5 percent; other retail purchases, 1 percent; entertainment 0.5 percent; and services 0.5 percent. It is evident that a county with this spending pattern generally receives its major expenditure impact from the transportation segment of tourism. It re-

ceives proportionately fewer benefits from overnight visitors.

Sanpete County. Pass-through counties are typified by Sanpete County in central Utah. The county is composed of numerous small towns. There is no community which serves as a tourist concentration center. U.S. Highway 89 passes through Sanpete County and then brings tourists into the area. Uintah County to the north of Sanpete, exhibits an expenditure-node spending pattern while Sevier County, south along U.S. 89, exhibits a way-station spending pattern.

We would not expect any sizeable concentration of tourist services in a rural county which does not possess any dominating communities. We might expect, however, that numerous small communities would serve as a tourist dispersing factor. In the entire county there are 12 motels or hotels, 22 restaurants, 35 service stations, and a few retail outlets. Many of these services, especially cafes and service stations, are not located along the

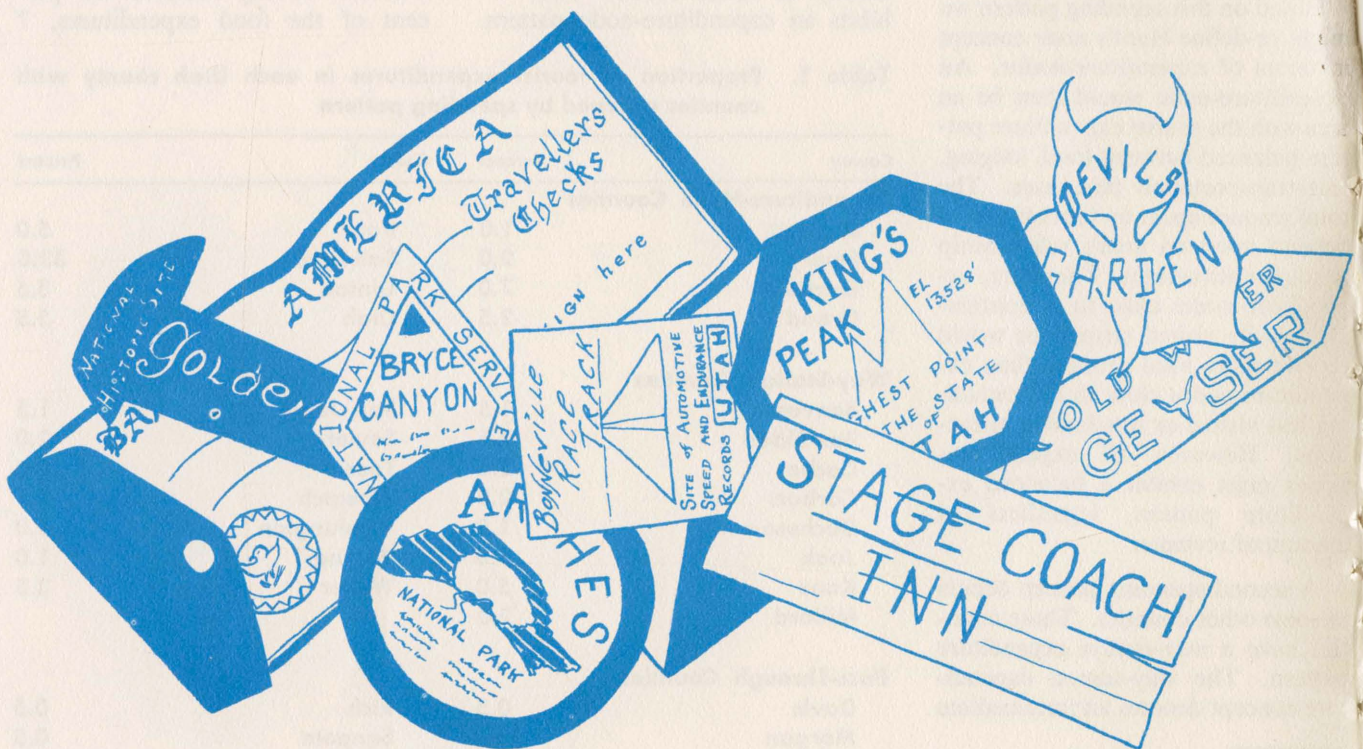


Figure 1. Results of the USU tourist study indicate that the majority of summer tourist expenditures are made in Utah's 25 rural counties.

county's primary tourist route, U.S. 89. Sanpete County also has no well-known tourist attractions.

Tourist expenditures in Sanpete County are almost equally divided between food and transportation purchases. The distribution of purchases is: food, 44.5 percent; lodging, 23.5 percent; transportation, 31.5 percent; other retail purchases, 12.0 percent; entertainment, 3.5 percent; and services, 1.0 percent. Sanpete County receives 1 percent of the food expenditures in the state, 1 percent of the transportation expenditures, 0.5 percent of the service expenditures, and less than 0.5 percent of the expenditures in the other categories. It appears that pass-through spending pattern in counties, which each receive less than 1 percent of the tourist expenditures in the state, derive little direct economic benefit from tourists.

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

From the three illustrative cases we can draw some conclusions about the expenditure of tourist dollars. An inescapable conclusion is that highways are extremely important. They represent the mechanism which enables tourists to enter an area. But, a major highway is not sufficient to insure the capture of tourist dollars. Highways may be insignificant until they are accompanied by tourist holding phenomena.

Two key elements for increasing tourist length-of-stay and expenditures in a county are tourist attractions and a concentrated tourist service plant. In most cases, attractions are the basis of tourist nodes. To capture the tourist dollar and develop an expenditure node, however,

there must be a concentration of a spectrum of tourist facilities near the attraction. It appears that such a concentration represents an additional increment of choice which the tourist desires.

There are also other elements that seem to influence tourist expenditure behavior. Some of these are the size and diversity of communities, the incidence and radial input of highway confluences, proximity to expenditure-nodes, spatial location of communities in terms of temporal relationships to expenditure-nodes, and community involvement in tourism. All of these factors vary throughout the state and evidently influence the location of tourist purchases.

Tourism development is dependent upon more than attractions, highways, facilities, or promotion. These and other factors must be jointly employed if a community, county, or state is to capture the non-resident tourist dollar. Areas must be made destinations. But, destinations are not created solely by promotion. They arise from a combination of natural and man-made endowments which are promoted. Therefore promotion which attempts to influence the tourist while enroute should supplement tourist point of origin promotion. If tourists are brought into an area or to an unusual feature, and if they gain a favorable impression of that area, they will spend time and money there on future trips. They will also influence their friends to visit that area. The ingredients, then are more than encouraging people to visit an area. The area must have a recognizable tourism endowment. A tourism climate and atmosphere must be developed.

Table 2. Proportion of state-wide tourist expenditures in each type of purchase class

Type of purchase	Proportion of expenditures
Food	28.5
Lodging	23.5
Transportation	31.5
Other Retail Purchases	12.0
Entertainment	3.5
Services	1.0

WILDLIFE NOTES

The pronghorn, commonly referred to as an antelope, is a true native of North America. It is found nowhere else on earth.

One of nature's freaks, the antlered doe, turns up once in every 3,000 antlered bucks checked by biologists, but its antlers usually are still in velvet while those of the bucks are mature, polished racks.

Sound from supersonic transport planes, according to some ornithologists, threatens extinction of the hummingbird by breaking its delicate eggs, making reproduction impossible.

It may not feel that way, but most of the 2,500 species of mosquitoes that inhabit the world never bite humans.

Black bear cubs weigh between 8 and 18 ounces at birth and measure 9 to 12 inches in length. By fall, they weigh between 50 and 75 pounds; a year later, between 150 and 200 pounds.

Birds produce vocal sounds with the syrinx, a voice box structure in the throat.

Studies show that 25 percent of any deer herd can be harvested in the fall by hunters without decreasing the annual size of the herd.

A maple or oak tree may expose as much as four acres of leaf surface to the sun.

Bears and humans have at least one thing in common—tooth decay. A favorite bruin diet consists of honey and all types of berries, just the thing for producing cavities.

A cup of dried mustard mixed with a bucket of warm water will remove skunk odor from a car.