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Strengthening South Dakota Tourism

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Recommended Citation

Bateman, Arnold J., "Strengthening South Dakota Tourism" (1977). *SDSU Extension Circulars*. 875.
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Strengthening South Dakota Tourism

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He's the most important person in your business

Tourists' money is as welcome as the money of anyone else. Help those travelers to spend their money at your business or in your community.

If you run a campground, a motel, or a food service or a gas station, you and your employees are the first people a tourist will see and the first ones he will ask for help. You are the first people who have the opportunity to create favorable impressions. You are the key people to influence tourists to stay longer in the community.

A pleasant, courteous encounter with you may be enough to encourage the tourist to lengthen his stay, return, or refer your business and community to his friends. However, the lack of attention and courtesy by employees might be the number one reason why tourists go on to the next town, or the next state.

If your wage, salary, or business income is dependent on the amount of dollars spent by the traveling public, then the customer should be the most important person in your business. It is up to you to make him feel that way.

Strengthening South Dakota Tourism

Arnold J. Bateman
area Extension rural development specialist

Tourists are just people away from home. They spend money for the same services as everyone else, with one addition -- temporary housing. They require grocery stores, restaurants, service stations, garages, clothing stores, drug stores, laundries, doctors, and dentists.

In addition, they buy souvenirs, postage stamps, articles they don't need and replacements for what they forgot to bring along. They are also purchasers of entertainment, sight seeing, amusements and recreation activities.

In 1973, South Dakota ranked nineteenth among the 50 states in impact of tourism on the state's economy. The Institute for Study of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism, Utah State University, estimated that 6.41% of South Dakota's gross state product came from traveler expenditures in that year.



In 1976, according to a University of South Dakota Business Research Bureau report, an estimated 1,802,705 travel parties visited South Dakota. An average 3.0 people made up each travel party for a total of 5,408,115 people.¹

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Hospitality, the art of serving people, pays off

Total expenditures by out-of-state tourists in the summer of 1975 were estimated at \$142,820,750 and in 1976 at \$152,000,000.¹ A breakdown of the 1976 expenditures is shown in Figure 1.

Tourists also contribute four cents on the dollar to the state as tax on retail purchases and eight cents per gallon on motor fuel. City sales tax may be an additional local economic benefit.

Estimated state sales tax receipts from out-of-state travelers in 1976 totaled \$4.8 million. Gasoline tax receipts totaled \$4.2 million.

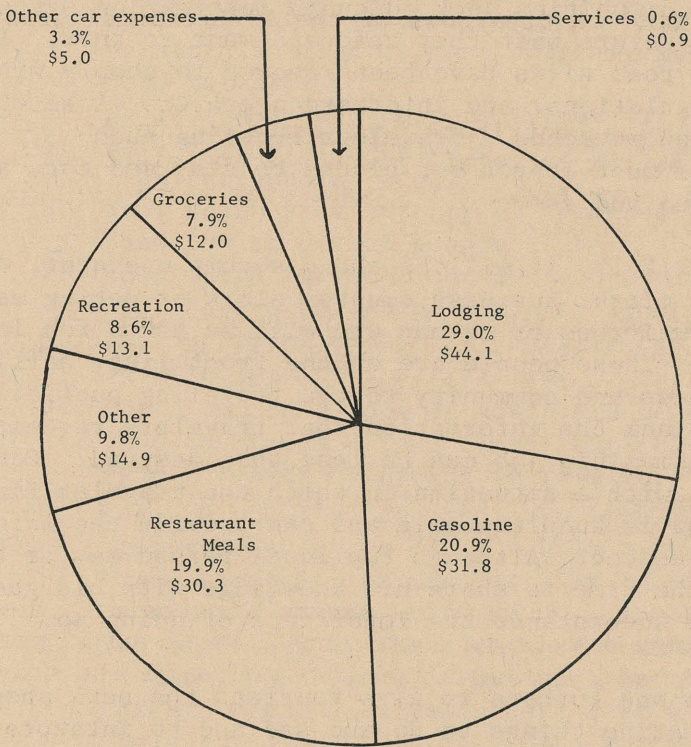
Each traveling party that visited South Dakota during the summer of 1976 provided the state with an estimated \$4.99 in tax revenue.

South Dakota's economy has become increasingly dependent on tourism dollars during the last 10 to 15 years. Business employers and employees who deal with the trav-

¹Out-of-state travelers in South Dakota, June, July, August, 1976, Business Research Bureau, School of Business, University of South Dakota, pp. 3 & 10.

eling public must recognize the economic value of tourism. They need also to understand that their attitude and ability to serve the traveling public can have a direct influence on length of stay or frequency of visits. This in turn affects the total dollars spent at places of business and sales and gasoline taxes collected by the state.

Fig. 1. Estimated Expenditures by Out-of-State Travelers Classified by Type of Expenditure, Summer, 1976



Top Number.....Percent

Bottom Number.....Expenditures in Millions

Hospitality: more than taking his money with a smile

Perhaps you and your community have more to offer to tourists than you think. Perhaps you can increase your tourism income. This publication offers informational material for those of you who come in contact with the traveling public.

Hospitality depends upon you. But you aren't alone. Hospitality also depends upon the entire community, its natural resources, its services and facilities, and the person on the street. Some communities do a much better job at hospitality than others.

Many communities lack adequate information systems to tell travelers what they need and want to know. In some areas road signs have been removed to comply with highway regulations, and information centers close at night and on weekends. Travelers entering such communities must search for places to stay and eat, and things to do and see.

Most likely, it will be the gas pump operator, the motel desk clerk, business counter clerk or eating establishment waitress or carhop who will be asked for information. These people are on the front line, selling your business and community to the traveling public. When they lack the information that travelers request, their salesmanship job can be less than desired. Contrast this with a situation in which the traveler finds someone who is knowledgeable and can provide the information requested. Although the local person may be busy he takes the time to share his knowledge with his guest because he understands the importance of doing so.

If no one bothers to give tourists the news about the fascinating things to do and see and to interpret or explain to them the geology, natural ecology and the human history of the people in South Dakota, they will remember South Dakota as just the highway between home and their destination.

The remainder of this publication gives some suggestions to better serve the traveling public. This material is primarily for motel and hotel, campground, restaurant, retail sales, service station, and transportation personnel.

Know the answers before the questions are asked

You will find that a stranger doesn't need to have an accent to be a tourist in your community. The visitor might be from another area of the state. Wherever your customers come from, they need to be treated as friends. The following are some things to keep in mind.

1. Help all of your guests to feel welcome.
2. Be pleasant when greeting them and take the attitude that you are happy to help them.
3. Be attentive, alert, and cordial, but don't be too forward.
4. Be courteous and cooperative at all times.
5. Have a general knowledge of your community and the surrounding area.
6. Know where your chamber of commerce is located and how to direct people there.
7. Know where services can be located and be able to provide telephone numbers, if desired.
8. Talk up local events so tourists can learn about your community's activities.
9. Use a pleasant tone of voice and be cooperative and courteous. Your first contact with the guest leaves a lasting impression.
10. Use the guest's name and make complimentary references to the guest's home town, if you know about it, particularly if he has traveled a great distance.
11. You might ask if the guest has visited your community or place of business before. If not, offer to give any assistance that will be helpful.
12. If you are unable to help the tourist at your business, tell him where he can get the information or service desired.

13. Learn the names and location of the major streets in your town so you can give directions.
14. When pointing out directions on a map, use the tourist's map because he is more familiar with his map.
15. Invite tourists to come back to your place of business and tell them you are glad for the opportunity to serve them.

What do you know about your community?

Can you answer these questions about your community and nearby area?

1. How did your town get its name?
2. What do most people in your community do for a living?
3. Where are the post office, chamber of commerce and library located?
4. What is the town or city population?
5. Where is a nice place for a picnic?
6. Where can I go fishing and how much does a fishing license cost? (Remember, there's a difference in resident and non-resident fees.)
7. We plan to stay here two days; what do you recommend we try to see?
8. How are the highways leaving here? Are there any detours or road construction?
9. Are there any parks or resort areas nearby?
10. What churches are located here?
11. Do you have any museums and where are they located?
12. Where can I get service for my automobile?
13. Where can I get emergency road service?
14. Can you recommend a good place to eat?
15. What is the average temperature here? How much rain do you get?
16. What kind of accommodations are available?
17. What are the local activities and attractions?
18. How far is it to major places of interest?

19. List other important information about your community.

Managers, assistant managers and those in executive capacities need to know their employees and train them to adequately serve the customers. It is essential for those who operate businesses and depend on the traveling public to make friends.

Your employees must enjoy their jobs before they can provide for the needs of the traveling public and leave a lasting favorable impression on the customer.

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Points to remember

Remember, tourists like friendly, hospitable places.

Guests must be happy and satisfied, or they won't return. Hospitality is the art of making people feel welcome and wanted.

Your guests are expecting a two weeks vacation they'll remember all year. Be sure it's a pleasant memory.

A customer is not an interruption to your work - he is the purpose of it. He brings you his wants and it is your responsibility to take care of them profitably, for him and for yourself.

Tourists will tell their friends about their experiences in South Dakota. Let's be sure they were pleasant ones.

Acknowledgement is made to the Mississippi Cooperative Extension Service, Pennsylvania Cooperative Extension Service and the Minnesota Cooperative Extension Service for use of some of their ideas and material in this publication.

