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Center for Economic Development

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**Marketing Western Massachusetts
as a Tourism Destination
for International Travelers**

Spring 1993

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The Center for Economic Development
wishes to thank the Research Team

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MARKETING WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS AS A TOURISM DESTINATION TO INTERNATIONAL TRAVELLERS

Introduction

In the Spring of 1991, a three phase project was begun at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst in which the overall goal of the project was to design and implement an economic development program which would assist the information dominated service industries located in Western Massachusetts. The research for the first phase of the project was undertaken by Regional Planning M.A. candidate Maureen Moriarty under the guidance of adjunct Professor Robert Hopley, School of Business Administration, and Professor Meir Gross, Department of Regional Planning. This initial step in the research "entailed the creation of a pilot program in which Western Massachusetts service firms will target British firms wishing to enter the American market, including the attraction of tourism for the U.K. as well."¹ In her master's thesis, "**Massachusetts Enters the Global Age: A Service Export Initiative**," Ms. Moriarty has provided the frame work from which the rest of phase one, specifically the research on tourism, has been based. The objective of this study, which specifically focused on tourism as a means for economic development in Western Massachusetts, was to look specifically at Western Massachusetts tourism packages that have potential for sale in the U.K..

Background Information

There exist two main factors which have led to the choice of tourism as a means of viable economic development for Western Massachusetts. The first factor is the recognition that with the continued advancements in technology we now live and operate in a global economy. Within this global context, a tremendous shift in the nature of the market has taken place. We have moved from a global market once dominated by manufacturing to one which is now based on the service sector. Approximately 60% of the work force in the United States and in the newly formed European Community is employed in the service sector.²

The following table illustrates this phenomenon, re-enforcing the tremendous potential that service industries in the Pioneer Valley possess for economic growth.

Table 1
Changes in Manufacturing & Service Employment in the Pioneer Valley

	1980-1985	1985-1989
Manufacturing	- 9,318 (-12.6%)	-2,568 (-4%)
Services	+ 13,720 (8.7%)	+ 23,089 (13.4%)

Source: Regional Data Center, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, 1991.

The second very important factor which helped to shape the direction of this project was the recognition of tourism as being one of the world's leading industries. In particular, tourism to the United States by foreign travellers has been on the upswing throughout the 1980's and into the 1990's. Between the years of 1985-1990, the number of foreign visitors to the United States increased by 55%.³ This dramatic increase was due partially to the weak position of the dollar on the world market.⁴ The actual number of international arrivals into the U.S. increased tremendously in those years from 25.7 million in 1985 to an estimated 42.4 million visitors in 1991. This translates into an increase in tourism based revenues from \$21.8 billion to an impressive \$59.0 billion in 1991.⁵

Table 2 illustrates this phenomenon and depicts the absolute change in the number of visitors and the amount of revenue generated by international travel to the United States between the years of 1985-1991.

Table 2
Foreign Arrivals & Receipts in the USA, 1985-1990

	Foreign Arrivals (millions)	Foreign Visitor Receipts (\$billions)
1985	25.7	\$21.8
1986	26.3	\$25.4
1987	29.7	\$29.6
1988	34.2	\$37.1
1989	36.6	\$44.5
1990*	39.8	\$52.8
1991**	42.4	\$59.0

*Estimates. **Projections.

Source: United States Travel and Tourism Administration (USTTA).

In 1990, 39.8 million foreign visitors arrived into the United States. Canadians and Mexicans proved to be the two international visitors that travel to the United States the most frequently. Canada provided over 17 million of these visitors, whereas Mexico, supplied the U.S. with nearly 8 million travellers.⁶ However, it was the Europeans, and in particular visitors from the United Kingdom, in which the focus of this project was intended. The numbers that follow reveal equally as exciting statistics concerning the increase in travel from the European community.

Table 3
Foreign Visitors Arrivals From Selected European Markets, 1990*

Origin	1990 ('000)	% Change 1990/1985	Receipts (\$million)
UK	3,201	159	3,471
Germany	1,138	124	2,061
France	714	113	1,183

*Estimates.

Source: United States Tourism and Travel Administration

Creating the Tourism Package

With the knowledge of tourism as a growing economic force, attention was focused on creating a two week package featuring Western Massachusetts within the context of a larger New England theme. This would then be marketed in the United Kingdom. The first task undertaken was to identify a local tourism vendor interested in establishing a partnership with the university's research group and who would be willing to oversee the implementation and continuation of the program once it was underway. Letters were sent out to several travel agencies and to individuals involved in tourism in Amherst, explaining the goal of the project and the desire to foster a working relationship which would eventually enable the local vendor to oversee all aspects of the tourism package. A flexible approach in creating the type of package as well as the number of participants involved was stressed.

Many of the agencies consulted had as their focus sending American travellers to foreign destinations and not vice-versa. However, tremendous insight was gained from these agencies

which further helped to focus the type of package that had the greatest potential for sale. Several agencies re-enforced the notion that one of the area's greatest resources are the universities. A tourism package should utilize this educational potential, both its language capabilities in providing translators and also the various professors who, as experts in the fields of American history, politics, or literature could provide in-depth lectures.

Attempts at marketing cultural theme tours of Western Massachusetts to British and German travellers had been undertaken in 1986-1987 by Mary Beth Bradigan, an Amherst based travel organizer who specializes in educationally oriented trips for adults. The target groups were British and German adult travellers who were interested in adult educational based travel. A client list was generated by adult education centers based in the U.K. and in Germany. Information promoting a cultural trip to New England was included along with other mailings to this client group. The package was designed as a two week trip which would consist of time evenly spent visiting the Amherst/Western Massachusetts area, Philadelphia, and Washington D.C.. However, the response was minimal and only two individuals signed up. With this knowledge available, the goal of the project remained the same though the focus was modified.

Current Status of Project

Contact was made with Jacqueline Waldman, a Swiss-born Amherst resident employed in the travel industry by Scandanavian Seminars, a local organization specializing in sending American elders to foreign destinations via the elder hostel program. Ms. Waldman is collaborating with Michelle Melechionda, a French-born travel agent with extensive experience in both the United States and Europe. They are both knowledgeable and experienced in educational travel, and are also familiar with the European market and the European mind set.

At this point, all elements of the project have been taken over by Jacqueline Waldman and Michelle Melechionda. Sample data was collected in the Spring of 1993 concerning the costs of specific elements in a two-week all inclusive tour. Attention was focused on obtaining data for the Western Massachusetts region, though the trip is anticipated to include Boston and New York, with an optional one week Florida add-on. The exact itinerary and costs are currently being formulated. When the information is compiled it will be forwarded to France where it will be marketed as a New England cultural tour and will utilize the resources of the local

universities. Contact has been made in France with Francis Ho Than Kouie of Chateau de Meridan who is responsible for marketing the program. It is hoped that this attempt will prove that tourism is an avenue for renewed economic opportunities for Western Massachusetts.

Conclusion

Western Massachusetts is not unique in our rapidly changing world. Once a region strongly dominated by industry and manufacturing, it has seen a steady change in the nature of the market to one now dominated by service oriented jobs. There exist underutilized resources in Western Massachusetts which could prove to add to the economic base of the region and also help to ease the transition to an economy which is based on the service industry. Western Massachusetts is home to some of the finest universities and colleges from which unlimited resources are available. It is an area dominated by the natural and cultural heritage typical of New England, of its gently sloping mountaings, its working farms, and quaint villages. These resources can be capitalized upon, not exploited, to provide for economic development for this region.

Tourism is also proving to be a rapidly increasing trend world-wide. The facts and figures highlighting this growth have been discussed in this report and others. Indisputable is the fact that tourism is viewed as one of the leading industries in the United States and in the global market as a whole. It is one arena in which Western Massachusetts can begin immediately to focus its attention.

This project is viewed as a stepping stone from which other ventures in promoting tourism to and from the region can be launched. The possibilities are virtually limitless. An interest in providing tours has been expressed by private travel organizations that have sprung up in the newly formed Russian Republic. For example, hunting trips to the forested area of Areal, 50 km north of the of the ancient Russian town of Pskov, are now available. It is a new project currently being reviewed by several travel businesses in the Amherst area. Though it does not bring foreign dollars into the region, it does utilize the resources of local travel agencies while at the same time provide for the exchange of goods and services on a global level.

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FOOTNOTES

¹ Maureen Moriarty, Massachusetts Enter the Global Age: A Service Export Initiative, (Amherst, MA: The Center for Economic Development, 1991), p.9.

² Ibid., .2.

³ EIU International Tourism Reports, "United States of America," No 2 1991, 27.

⁴ Zafar U. Ahmed & Franklin B. Krohn, "Reversing the United States' Declining Competitiveness in the Marketing of International Tourism: A Perspective on Future Policy," Journal of Travel Research, Volume XXIX, #2 1990, 23.

⁵ EIU International Tourism Reports, "United States of America," No 2 1991, 27.

⁶ Ibid., 31.

