

Urban Green Tourism: *Applying ecotourism principles to the city*

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Abstract:

The need to “green” mass tourism suppliers

Where does this leave the bulk of tourism suppliers catering to a mass market largely hosted by urban centres concentrated in the developed

Organi-zation of its own Code, and a few large corpora-tions such as CP Hotels and Resorts (now Fair-mont Hotels and Resorts), Inter-Continental Hotels, British Airways and Lufthansa, to name

step in becoming more environmentally sensitive. While there is increasing evidence that addressing environmental issues can achieve significant cost reductions for corporations, the most spectacular savings are realized by large organizations. For instance, according to Ivarsson (1998), almost any hotel can achieve a 20% cost reduction without detriment to the comfort of their customers as result of focussing on reduced energy and water consumption. At the same time, he suggests that hotel waste programs typically reduce the amount of unsorted waste by 40-60% and reduce costs accordingly. However, it became quickly apparent to the Green Tourism Association's Board of Directors that buy-in to its mission and workplan by businesses would require tangible proof that visitors coming to Toronto were indeed looking for "greener" experiences and that joining the association would translate into additional revenues for companies. The majority of corporate marketing budgets are simply too small in the tourism industry to justify paying for membership, services and advertising unless there is a direct contribution to a business's bottom line in the form of increased revenues, not just cost savings. Therefore the decision was made to develop a promotional piece that would serve a very useful purpose for visitors and residents alike, by informing them about many aspects of the city that are not normally included in the main stream tourism literature. After all, Canadians spent \$11 billion on nature activities, 67% of which were spent on outdoor activities in natural areas (Canadian Tourism Commission, 2000, p. 22).

The "Other Map of Toronto"

"The Green Map System is a globally connected, locally adaptable framework for community sustainability. Green maps utilize Green Map Icons™ to chart the sites of environmental significance in urban places around the world." (URL: www.greenmap.org). The objectives of the Green Map System are somewhat distinct from those of the Green Tourism Association in

that its purpose is to "illuminate the inter-connections between society, nature and the built environment, helping residents make lower impact lifestyle choices and discover great ways to get involved in the urban ecology." (URL: www.greenmap.org). Hence, adapting the concept for the promotion of tourism meant highlighting more of the cultural, historic and community resources and businesses and disregarding toxic and contaminated "hot spots" as well as corporations that had a reputation as polluters.

The 22nd map in the international Green Map System™, the "Map of Toronto" is the first to focus on tourism and the environment. The map provides a single source of information that links tourism to the environment and celebrates a green city.

It colourfully highlights 'green' activities (as defined by the four criteria mentioned earlier) including businesses, green spaces, ecotours, galleries and heritage sites, organic and natural food stores, sustainable transportation options and more. In total, approximately 375 businesses and attractions are featured on the map.

Ø The map concept appealed to all levels of government and industry and the majority of funding/ sponsorship was raised through these avenues. In addition to funding, a broad market was reached including multiple levels of industry, government as well as tourists and residents. The map was launched by the city's mayor prime tourist season and marketing included media kits and drops, press releases and teasers to top North American travel writers in addition to attending many events. Distribution took place at all key entrance points to the city, tourist information sites, map featured sites, civic centres, the internet, and many events and conferences.

Because of the wide appeal and the unique concept, the map was a success as seen through the following:

Ø Total indirect & direct reach of the map (as of

education directed at urban tourists about supporting a sustainable environment. The map provided a collective source of information that was appealing, unique and useful. As many of the 21 million tourists who visit Toronto are using the city as a gateway to other destinations, successfully marketing the concept of sustainability to visitors will hopefully influence tourists behaviour on other destinations visited. The Green Tourism Association has demonstrated the challenges of incorporating the concept of urban green tourism and the values of ecotourism with the principals of marketing. The positive conclusion of the green map was evident through its aim to conserve the resources on which the product is based.

Six key strategies are therefore recommended when marketing ecotourism products:

1. **Broad distribution** – your product must be accessible to your market through as many key locations as possible. Systems to facilitate both distribution and tracking should be set up in advance;
2. **Partnership development** – Many environ-

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