

Coast Information Team

Review of Coastal British Columbia Economic Gain Spatial Analysis Tourism Sector Report

Reviewer: Alison Gill, PhD, Professor, Department of Geography and School of Resource and Environmental Management, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC

Introductory Comments

Unlike the assessment of resource potential in traditional resource sectors, the economic assessment of tourism potential is fraught with innumerable problems and uncertainties. In part this reflects the diversity of the industry itself. For example (as the internal reviewer noted), there are considerable difference between the types and quality of accommodation and thus, their economic impact. Further, the subjective evaluation of the quality of key attributes such as landscape introduces many challenges. Compounding the problem in the study area is the lack of consistent inventory data on existing tourism facilities and activities in the North and Central Coast region.

I concur with the points made by the previous reviewer – the report does include numerous inconsistencies and gaps. As the manuscript I reviewed had not as yet incorporated the recommended changes, it is difficult to judge the degree to which the authors will be able to respond to some of those comments. Rather than repeat what the previous reviewer has said, I have focused on other issues that I think could usefully be amended to strengthen the report. Most of my substantive comments relate to issues of validity and the need to provide clearer justification for evaluative choices. I have dealt with issues in the order presented in the report, mixing significant issues with small points. The key points are summarized in the concluding recommendations.

TOURISM PROFILE (pp14-22)

P14 World Tourism organization statistics should be updated from 1999. This would also provide information on how various world events have impacted travel numbers.

P15 at end of 2.2.1 mention of the cruise industry should be included as this is introduced later in the paper with little previous reference

2.2.2 first sentence –all places are unique – perhaps a better descriptor could be found.

P16 While the resources listed for a variety of tourism activities have relevance to the North and Central Coast, the facilities listed on p16 seem to have little relevance.

P17 A profile is presented for the “soft adventure market”. There is some inconsistency and potential confusion in terminology throughout the report. Terms such as “nature-based tourism” “ecotourism” and “adventure tourism” “cultural tourism” are used. This

should be clarified. How are market profiles for these groups different from the “soft adventure”? The “Ontario Tourism Attitude and Motivation Study” Statistics Canada (2000) has some useful data on market segments in the US and Canadian markets.

P18 It would be useful to include some remarks on the importance of currency exchange to tourist numbers.

P20 in the North Coast profile some mention of Prince Rupert’s major commitment to attracting the cruise industry should be made.

TOURISM ASSESSMENT APPROACH (pp23-31)

P23 It might be useful to mention the Tourism Satellite Accounts as a move towards assessing economic impact at the provincial scale at least.

P 26. A major concern that I have relates to the validity of the rating scale construction. While acknowledging the essentially subjective nature of the rating from VH-L, I am unclear what criteria you have used to determine quality ratings. Given that scenic value is an important attribute, I assume that you are using “general characteristics” and “features” as surrogate measures of this. Do these attributes also include consideration of such aspects as safe moorage, etc. For example, what general characteristics warrant a “Very High” rating. More details are needed.

There is a considerable amount of research on aspects of Landscape Evaluation. The US Forest Service and, closer to home, the BC Forest Service have produced extensive guides on such matters. There is no indication in the report concerning the methodological foundations of your rating scale.

The “Relative Ratings” appear to be an aggregation of scores of all attributes except “vulnerability” – although the description suggests that “facilities” and “tourism use” are also not included. The issue of “un-weighted” aggregation is a significant one and some rationale for choosing such a method should be provided. The work of agencies noted above should be helpful in this regard.

With respect to validity it is noted on P6 that the information was “vetted” with the Tourism Value maps for the LRMP regions. Does this mean that they were compared with them? Was there concurrence? What happened if the values derived from the rating method identified/ did not identify the same areas of high potential. Some further explanation should be given.

Although it is stated that various resource individuals were consulted on the overall project – it is not stated if they were used to verify the rating outcomes. I would suggest that in order to validate the results of the rating system that a panel of relevant experts assess the results. If this was in fact done then they should be identified to ensure appropriate stakeholder representation.

P 31 Summary. The summary suggests a rigorous evaluation framework – there should be some support for this statement to explain how and by what means validity was ensured. Further, given that all the judgements are qualitative but are translated into detailed quantitative form, a cautionary note should be added to highlight this fact.

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS (pp32-50)

Statement in 3rd para “ Unlike physical resource industries” I think here that some discussion of carrying capacity should be included. (Thus occurs later on p36).

Non-built activity products Table 4-2 (p41) Was any attempt made to validate this through other expert opinion?

Under Cultural Tourism it is unclear what physical resources are included. The discussion of First Nations tourism, while clearly an important aspect of tourism in these regions, is not well defined

P42 Cruise ship tourism is not described in terms of its natural resource base attributes. What about the visual landscape and relationship to logging along shoreline? Also see a very recent thesis (Dec 2003) produced by Rahul Ray, School of Resource and Environmental Management, Simon Fraser University on the spatial implications of the cruise industry around Prince Rupert.

P 43 While First Nations tourism is clearly an important aspect of tourism in these regions, it is difficult to really characterize physical resources. Are these features (petroglyphs, village sites etc) included in the resource assessment maps and the ratings?

FUTURE TOURISM OUTLOOK (pp53- 58)

The demographic data are for BC. As the market for this area is US , other Canadian and European, it would be useful to put the comment on P 54 “BC’s key markets will....” At the beginning of the section.

P 56 “Mass market” Add comment on cruise sector

P 58 Summary. The last two paragraphs on conflicts (fish farms and treaty issues) should be included in the main part of this section under a separate heading of “Conflicting uses”

ECONOMIC GAIN PROJECTIONS

As I am not an expert on economic modelling I have made no specific remarks on methods in this section. I do however concur with the previous reviewer’s comments on this aspect of the study.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Methodology

There are many challenges to the study as defined and I acknowledge the limitations that the authors have faced in accessing comprehensive and appropriate data. Overall this is fairly well done. I have questioned some of the methods used especially the rating scales. I would like to see some evidence that these subjective judgments have been validated in some way. I see this as being done by a group of expert and local stakeholders. Indeed, this may already have been done but from the text it is not evident. Some reference to resource assessments elsewhere might also add support and clarification to the method used.

Use of information

While recognizing that this is not an academic report, it would assist in making the document more transparent if it was clear through referencing how the listed Information Sources (including reports and publications and contacts) were use. The Project Manager could determine to what degree this is necessary.

Limitations

The problems of obtaining regional (and relevant) tourism data should be emphasized up front.

Results meaningful and useful

The results of the tourism sector study need to be treated cautiously and with special consideration. When comparing to other sectors the limitations of assessing tourism's economic contributions need to be borne in mind. First only a limited number of products are considered. Secondly, as noted in the study the estimated error margins, especially those relating to Activities is extremely high (+/-50-100%). However, the study does provide some basis for attempting to assess the value of tourism with respect to an analysis of the resource basis. This is a critical need and while definitely flawed due to lack of reliable data on which to base projections the report has compiled a large amount of information, that should, if used cautiously, contribute to decision-making in the LRMP process in the Central and North Coast regions.