

Providing communities with improved marketing intelligence



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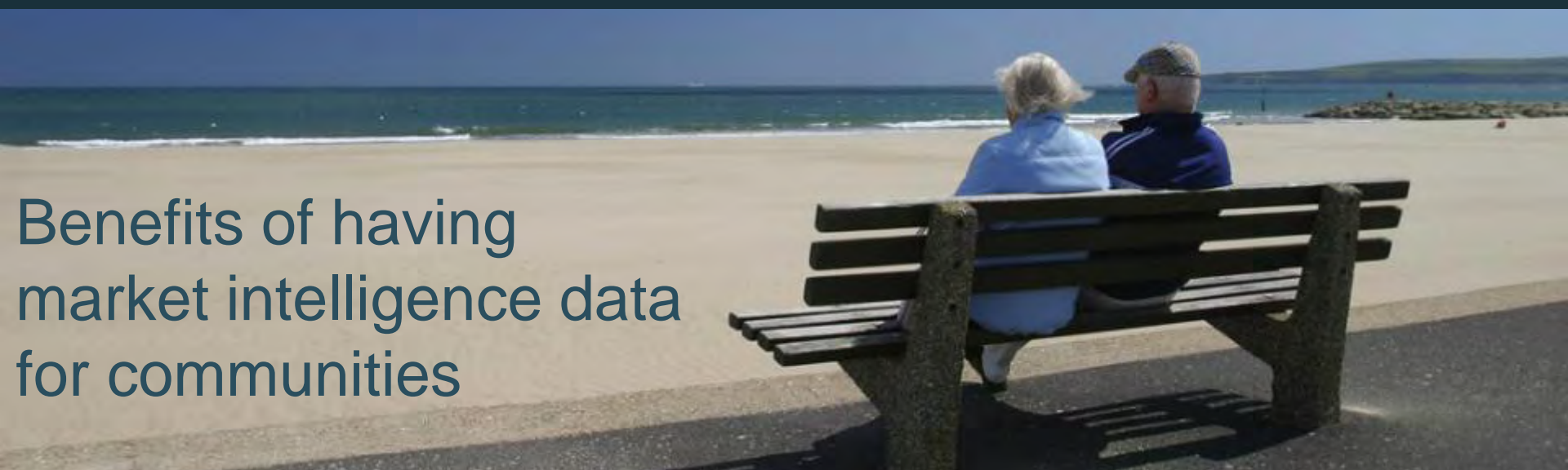
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Communities using tourism as an economic development strategy often have limited funds for marketing. Making decisions based on sound evidence of who their target markets are reduces risky marketing decisions and increases the likelihood of positive return on investment. Most communities however, do not have a system to provide ongoing, locally relevant data on their visitors. Models that enable communities to understand their visiting markets (that are financially viable and accessible) are needed.

The premise



A photograph of an elderly couple sitting on a wooden bench on a paved promenade. They are facing away from the camera, looking out over a wide sandy beach towards the ocean. The woman is wearing a light blue jacket and the man is wearing a dark blue jacket and a cap. The ocean is a deep blue with white waves breaking on the shore. The sky is clear and blue.

Benefits of having market intelligence data for communities

Having “market intelligence” enables operators and communities to:

- Know the origin of their current markets;
- Know the characteristics of their visits (length of stay, spend, motivations, products used etc.)
- Understand trends in the market and be able to respond;
- Be able to make wise investment decisions in marketing and business planning;
- Forecast the future with more confidence and identify potential markets

Time and scale matter

Scale

- Canada, BC or regional data is helpful to understand the bigger picture BUT
- The more local research is, the more likely it will help to understand visitors

Time

- Visitor volume, origin and characteristics vary by season
- So... need to understand yearly changes yes – but also know more about fluctuations throughout the seasons



The current situation

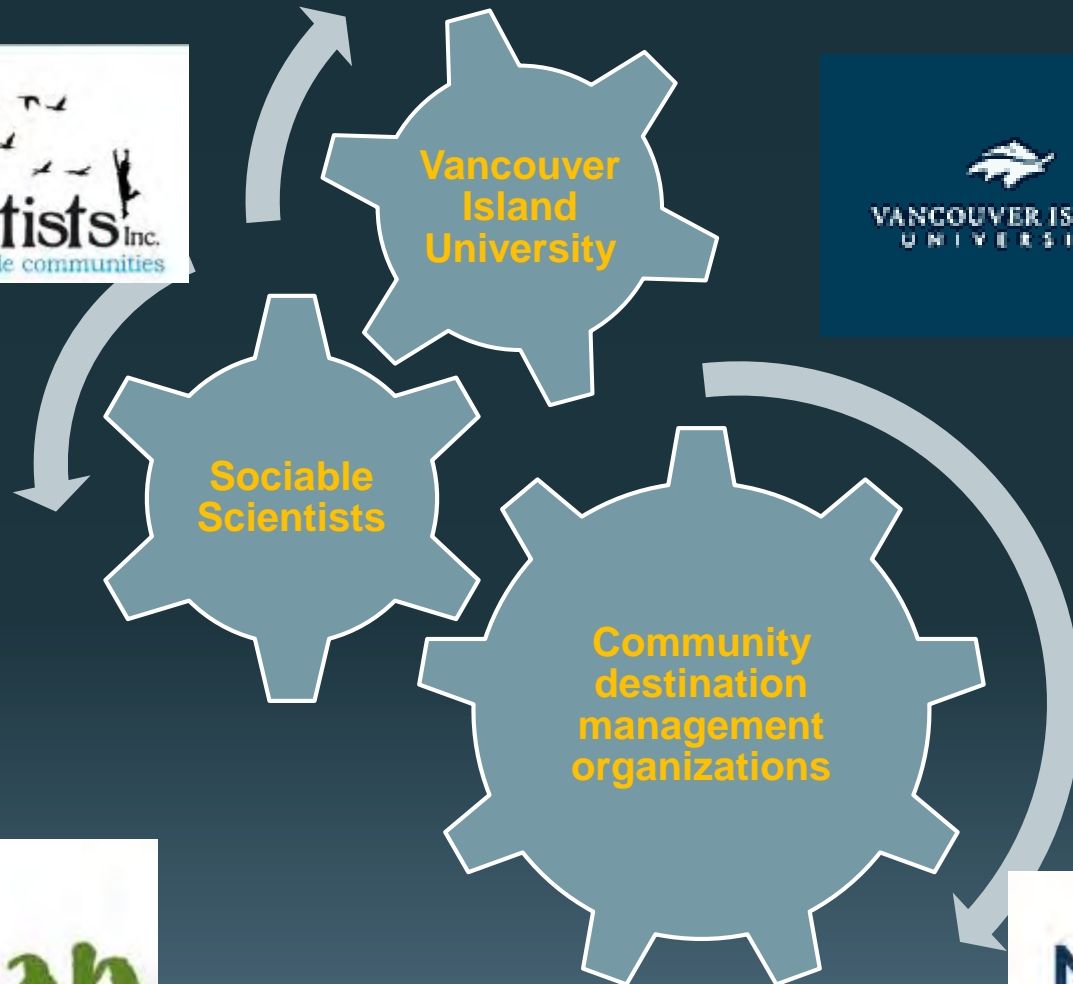
- While we have better than average macro level data in Canada/BC – understanding of visitors at the local level is sparse.
- Data is not collected **consistently** by any organization at the regional/sub-regional level

Efforts are needed to enhance current market intelligence at the **local and regional levels** in tourism in order to make wise use of marketing dollars, and to make effective (less risky) decisions about tourism growth and development.

Vancouver Island Map



Community based research model- *public – private partnership*





Leisure.

Spans all sectors.

Leisure is the link between public, private, non-profit, community, & volunteer organizations. Leisure blurs the boundaries of our lives & provides a unique perspective to observe & explore social interactions, engagements, relations, phenomena, & ultimately social impacts.

Research.

Is a process.

The research path is one of inquiry & discovery that can help to:

- Troubleshoot
- Problem solve
- Generate ideas and solutions
- Evaluate ideas and challenges
- Gain a new perspective
- Create new knowledge

Innovation.

Stimulates new ideas.

Innovation inspires creative solutions that are simple, accessible, & affordable. Social innovation refers to new ideas that resolve existing social, cultural, economic, & environmental challenges for the benefit of people and the planet. Social innovation fosters change. It changes behaviours, attitudes, perceptions, structures, & systems that previously gave rise to these challenges.

Roles

- Select intercept locations
- Provide response categories on some survey questions
- Determine incentive prizes

Community
DMO



- Design survey
- Design and distribute ballot boxes
- Collect ballots
- Send out surveys
- Collect data
- Train operators

Sociable
Scientists



- Analyse the data
- Prepare the visitor profiles
- Assist in presenting the reports where requested

University



How the model works



1. Selection of operators to represent areas where visitors would frequent (10-16 locations)
2. Overview with operators and invite to participate
3. Determine incentive prizes
4. Train staff/businesses on their role
5. Set up ballot boxes at businesses (ballots collect visitor email in exchange for incentive prizes)
6. Collect ballots weekly/biweekly for 12 weeks
7. Send visitors an email survey (49-56% response rate)
8. Draw winners of prizes
9. Analyze data and prepare visitor profile report
10. Share data with operators and tourism stakeholders

**Visitor
Experience
Survey Ballot**

*Thank you for
participating!*

Name: _____

Date: _____

Email: _____



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The results- shared widely

Summer 2013

Visitor Profile - Nanaimo

The Project

The Visitor Experience Survey was a pilot project initiated by Tourism Nanaimo, Tourism Tofino, and Vancouver Island University. The goal is that this survey method can be implemented throughout the Vancouver Island region for ongoing, year-round visitor data collection.

This summary provides a profile of visitors that visited Nanaimo during the months of July through September 2013. The data was obtained from the Visitor Experience Survey Project initiated by Tourism Nanaimo, Tourism Tofino, and Vancouver Island University. The intention is that the results of this survey can help inform regional stakeholders on tourism-related decision-making.



Methodology

The approach used for this pilot survey involved setting up ballot collection stations at various locations in Nanaimo. Ballot collection locations were chosen to maximize visitor intercepts and to be representative of the various sectors of the tourism industry. Each location had a small ballot box and framed poster that asked visitors to write their name and email address on a ballot form. In exchange for agreeing to participate in the online survey, visitors had a chance to enter a contest to win a Nanaimo prize package.

Ballots were collected weekly and email addresses were entered into a spreadsheet then inputted to the online survey platform, Survey Monkey. The visitors were sent an email link to the survey and at the end of the survey there was an email address they had to contact for their contest entry. This method ensured confidentiality. One week after the initial email had been sent a follow up reminder email was sent to those who had not yet replied. Two winners were drawn using a random number generator for the two prize packages.

Special points of interest:

- Visitors were intercepted from July 3 to September 30, 2013.
- There were 542 ballots collected and 225 completed surveys, resulting in a response rate of 47%.

Summer 2013

Visitor Profile - Tofino

The Project

The Visitor Experience Survey was a pilot project initiated by Tourism Tofino, Tourism Nanaimo, and Vancouver Island University. The goal is that this survey method can be implemented throughout the Vancouver Island region for ongoing, year-round visitor data collection.

This summary provides a profile of visitors to Tofino during the months of July through September 2013. The data was obtained from the Visitor Experience Survey Project initiated by Tourism Tofino, Tourism Nanaimo, and Vancouver Island University. The intention is that the results of this survey can help inform regional stakeholders on tourism-related decision-making.



Methodology

The approach used for this pilot survey involved setting up ballot collection stations at various locations in Tofino. Ballot collection locations were chosen to maximize visitor intercepts and to be representative of the various sectors of the tourism industry. Each location had a small ballot box and framed poster that asked visitors to write their name and email address on a ballot form. In exchange for agreeing to participate in the online survey, visitors had a chance to enter a contest to win a Tofino prize package.

Ballots were collected weekly and email addresses were entered into a spreadsheet then inputted to the online survey platform, Survey Monkey. The visitors were sent an email link to the survey and at the end of the survey there was an email address they had to contact for their contest entry. This method ensured confidentiality. One week after the initial email had been sent a follow up reminder email was sent to those who had not yet replied. Two winners were drawn using a random number generator for the two prize packages.

Special points of interest:

- Visitors were intercepted from July 4 to September 30, 2013.
- There were 971 ballots collected and 474 completed surveys, resulting in a response rate of 49%.

- Repeat data collection by communities due to perceived value for money and relative ease of their involvement
- Expanded from year one (2 comm's) to year 3 (9 communities)
- Interest from other provinces
- Strong uptake from DMO's on the profiles used to communicate results (on websites, at meetings)
- Used in strategic planning and follow up marketing campaigns

Indicators of success



On the research side

- Intercepts visitors **when they return vs. during the trip** – getting a complete picture of their experience
- Strong response rates – **49-56%** of email invitations complete the survey
 - Likely due to pre-consent and University involvement
- Strong n sizes (ranging from 250 to 1500)
- Survey piloted and fine tuned with communities, showing unique community visitation profiles

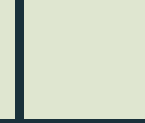


Benefits to DMO's

- Stronger understanding of visitors
- Locally relevant data on their own visitors
- Easy for them to be involved and customize content
- Results indicate their success as marketing organizations and enable broader support for tourism investment
- Value for money is considered high
- Locally calculated visitor spend figure which can be used for economic impact studies

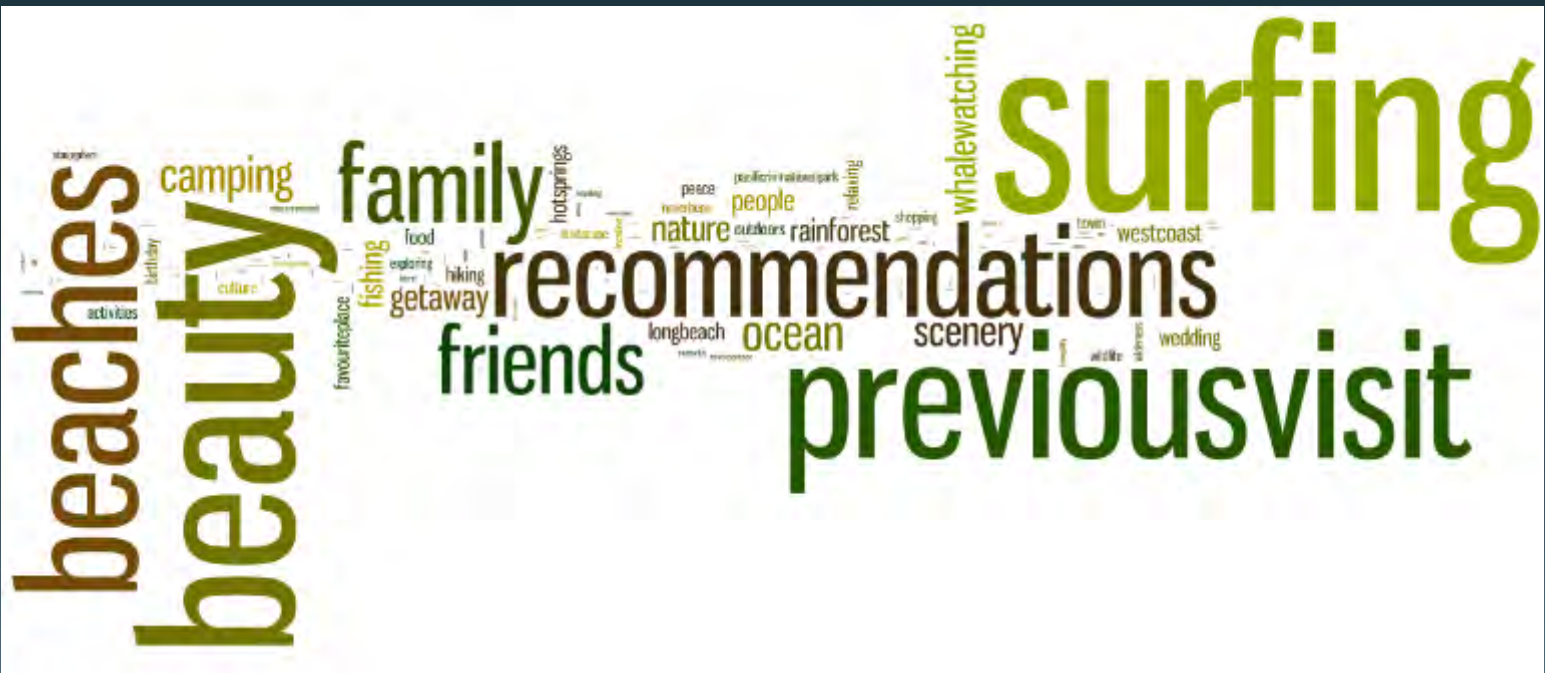


DAILY GROUP SPENDING



The average total spending per day per group was \$471.35

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Benefits to the region

- Better understanding of our **unique niche** as community destinations
- Better idea of the **similarities and differences** in visitor profiles, flow, origins, and experiences
- If ongoing, we will be able to **track changes** at the micro level and provide communities the opportunity to respond
- Businesses could access the profiles to develop more robust business plans – **encouraging investment and product development**



Expanding the model

- Plans for continued expansion of the model to other communities/regions
- Need to try to find ways to make it more affordable for smaller communities with limited/no market research funds
- Plans to utilize existing data sets for student thesis at VIU and faculty research projects



Questions and discussion



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