

Destination Analysis Demonstrates Strategic Planning for Sustainable Tourism

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Destination planners in all locations seek to be as fashionable as possible and to attract high spending visitors. The featured article in the August 2008 Cornell Hospitality Quarterly demonstrates one mechanism that planners can use to determine where they stand among the world's destinations.

The article, 'Using Tourist Travel Habits and Preferences to Assess Strategic Destination Positioning: The Case of Costa Rica,' is written by Zhaoping Liu, Judy A. Siguaw, and Cathy A. Enz. They apply the analytical structure developed by Stanley C. Plog to assess Costa Rica's status as a demonstration of how to use Plog's analysis for strategic planning by destination managers. The featured article is available at no charge from Cornell's Center for Hospitality Research at www.hotelschool.cornell.edu/research/chr/pubs/quarterly/featured/.

To analyze the case of Costa Rica, the authors surveyed the travel preferences of 118 U.S. travelers to Costa Rica. Using Plog's model for destinations' psychographics their analysis found that Costa Rica may be increasingly appealing to the middle of the psychographic distribution. While this trend is not inherently bad, it gives Costa Rica's destination managers a chance to focus on their plans for developing the destination. In particular, the study illustrates the means by which destination planners can assess their own positioning to ensure that they are using strategies to attract the most profitable tourist segments.

Most poignantly, the study found that the U.S. travelers in this study visit Costa Rica primarily because they view it as an unspoiled destination. Their major activities focus on ecotourism, sightseeing, and beach and waterfront activities. Costa Rica's planners need to take this information into account as they look ahead. Plog's analysis has demonstrated that destinations which become too developed may lose their cachet.

At the time of the study, Liu was a doctoral student in strategic management at the Cornell University School of Hotel Administration, where Siguaw holds the J. Thomas Clark Chair of Entrepreneurship and Personal Enterprise and Enz is the Lewis G. Schaeneman, Jr. Professor of Innovation and Dynamic Management. Siguaw is also the founding dean of the Cornell-Nanyang Institute of Hospitality Management. This and other articles from the August 2008 issue of Cornell Hospitality Quarterly are available for view or download from Sage Publishing (www.cqx.sagepub.com/), which manages the journal.

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