

Tourism Rapid Assessment Tool Concept Paper

Prepared by Conservation International and the George Washington University

Background

The Tourism Rapid Assessment (TRA) Tool is designed for a multidisciplinary team and local participants to perform a rapid assessment and analysis of a tourism destination. The timely and accurate assessment can be used for policy debates, for developing a conservation strategy, for determining focus areas for development assistance, and for planning and implementing tourism development.

- ❖ Elements of this concept paper
- ❖ Assessment team composition
- ❖ Spatial scale for assessment
- ❖ Type of tourism to assess
- ❖ Time necessary for the assessment
- ❖ Tools and techniques
- ❖ Assessment implementation
- ❖ Tourism data needed for assessment
- ❖ Sources of information

Team Composition

The TRA team consists of professionals from multidisciplinary fields, in particular tourism, natural resources, economics, and community specialists. The team works closely with local participants and experts.

Spatial Scale for Assessment

This easily adapted tool is designed to gather quality information that captures the complexity of tourism in regions at different spatial scales: national level (for small countries), regional or sub-regional level, municipal level and rural community level.

Type of Tourism to Assess

This tool is primarily designed to assess nature-based tourism in rural communities and cultural heritage tourism in urban communities. This instrument takes into account the importance of large-scale mass tourism, but will focus primarily on smaller-scale, niche market tourism.

Time Needed for Assessment

The TRA tool is designed for a short but intensive appraisal and analysis of tourism in a region. Depending on location, scale and previous information, the assessment process lasts from five to fifteen days and the data gathering and report preparation can last from five to ten days.

Tools and Techniques

Due to the varied and fragmented nature of the tourism industry, TRA relies on multidisciplinary tools and techniques to increase the assessment's reliability by cross-checking information. TRA likewise neutralizes biases by providing perspectives from across the region.

Secondary Materials for Analysis

- ❖ Media materials
- ❖ Reports by tourism organizations and associations
- ❖ Project papers by developers
- ❖ Government planning/development documents



- ❖ Tourism company annual reports
- ❖ Academic research papers
- ❖ Tour guidebooks
- ❖ Destination marketing/promotion materials
- ❖ World Wide Web
- ❖ Maps
- ❖ Photos
- ❖ Videos

Primary Data to be Collected

- ❖ Questionnaire survey for tourists, residents, local tourism product providers
- ❖ Semi-structured interviews of local residents to determine social and environmental impact
- ❖ Field observations using ranking techniques, matrices, and checklists for attraction inventory, infrastructure assessment, special events and service quality performance

Other Tools

- ❖ Diagrams
- ❖ Calendars
- ❖ Flow charts
- ❖ Trend lines

Assessment Implementation

Two approaches to implementing TRA have been recommended, as well as two follow-up activities:

Implementation

Option 1. Site visits are conducted by a multidisciplinary technical team

Option 2. Workshop format is used to invite local participants to one place for data collection and analysis

Follow-up activities

Option 1. Training sessions are held to train the trainers in TRA

Option 2. "Ground truthing" workshops are held to validate the TRA results

Tourism Data for Assessment and Sources of Data

The tourism industry provides an aggregate of products and services to visitors who are away from home. Tourism data needed for rapid assessment include information from a variety of sources. The following discusses data needed and where information can be obtained, some or all of which will be relevant to assess, depending upon local information needs.

Basic Tourism History and Profile. Tourism background information is useful as the baseline for assessment. Such information reveals the demographic and economic profiles of tourists to the destination.

<p>Information includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Number of visitors ✓ Age ✓ Income ✓ Profession ✓ Travel motivation ✓ Place of residence ✓ Mode of travel ✓ Length of stay ✓ Size of party vs. FIT ✓ Expenditures ✓ Economic impact of tourism ✓ Lodging facilities 	<p>Information can be obtained from the following sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ International tourism organizations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ World Tourism Organization ▲ World Travel and Tourism Council ▲ Travel Industry of America ✓ Host-country tourism authorities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ National ▲ Provincial ▲ Local tourism office, chamber of commerce, economic development office, agricultural development office ✓ Host-country border control office ✓ Host-country tourism industry professional associations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Travel agency association ▲ Restaurant association ▲ Hotel association ▲ Airline association ▲ Attraction association ✓ Studies and reports by universities and consulting firms ✓ International and regional financial institutions ✓ Visitor surveys
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Tourism Market. The assessment of the tourism market determines potential markets for the destination. Based on tourist demographic profiles, this assessment analyzes travel interest in the destination and identifies major travel markets and future ones. The markets can be identified by nationality/country origin and by segment. Information on tourist activities, purposes of trip, and accommodations is crucial.

<p>Information includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Tourism market by nationality/country origin ✓ Tourism market by segment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Eco-tourists ▲ Leisure tourists ▲ Convention attendants 	<p>Sources for visitor market profiling include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Visitor market profiles compiled by state/provincial tourism offices ✓ Studies on local travel market and special events ✓ Market studies by local community ✓ Studies by universities or consultants for local business or agencies ✓ Local hotel registration and guest survey ✓ Guest book registration and comments at local visitor center and other attractions ✓ Visitor survey
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Attractions. Attractions are the magnets that draw visitors to the destination. The assessment examines existing and potential attractions for future development. The identification and assessment of tourism attractions are based on the type of tourism markets the destination wants to develop. Attractions include natural, human-made features, recreation activities, and special events:



Natural attractions with unique physical features, such as mountains, rivers, forest, or deserts.

Cultural and heritage attractions of human-made environments that offer a sense of time and place in a particular destination, such as archaeological sites, battlefields, farm houses, or mining towns.

Amusement and recreation activities for visitors to enjoy human-made theme attractions, wilderness leisure and recreation, amusement parks, camping, and mountain biking.

Special events such as festivals, rituals, ceremonies, sporting events, music festivals, golf tournaments, or local centennials.

Other attractions that may not fit the above categories, such as local oddities.

Information sources for attraction assessment:

- ❖ Travel accounts
- ❖ Tour books
- ❖ Interviews with local tour guides/companies
- ❖ Field work to conduct attraction inventory

Infrastructure. The development of a tourism destination with unique attractions can be hindered if there is inadequate infrastructure. Accessibility, communication, and treatment of wastewater and solid waste are essential to tourism development. The assessment of tourism infrastructure will include:

- ❖ Transportation network
 - National/regional airport and regularly scheduled commercial services
 - Railroad station and regularly scheduled trains
 - Highway and informative signage
 - Scenic byway
 - Ports and regularly scheduled ships and cruises
 - Taxi service
 - Parking space
 - Public buses
 - Seamless connectivity among all transportation modes
 - Transportation mode used by most visitors
- ❖ Communication
 - Telephone service/international direct dialing
 - Fax service
 - Internet access/e-mail
 - Mobile phone
- ❖ Water
 - Drinking water
 - Safety
 - Availability
 - Sewer

- Treatment
- Disposal
- ❖ Solid Waste
 - Recycle
 - Disposal

Sources of information for destination infrastructure can be obtained from the following:

- ❖ Timetables of regularly scheduled modes of transportation
- ❖ Local transportation companies
- ❖ Local utility companies
- ❖ Field observation of how sewer and solid waste is handled
- ❖ Study by local tourism or business office on the most frequently used mode of transportation to the destination

Hospitality and Retail Services. Hospitality and retail services include lodging, food service, and retail shops for selling local products and tourist souvenirs. The quality of the facility, products and service is essential to the satisfying travel experience. This assessment will evaluate the amount and type of lodging, food service and retail facilities and will determine adequacy of the facilities.

- ❖ Lodging assessment:
 - Number of lodging facilities
 - Type of lodging facilities
 - Level of service
 - Number of rooms
 - Average daily rate
 - Room occupancy by season
 - Types of guests, length of stay, purpose of stay
 - Ownership/management/number of employees
 - How to market the facility
- ❖ Food service assessment:
 - Number of food service facilities in destination
 - Types of food service facilities
 - Number of seats and operating hours
 - Average check for breakfast, lunch and dinner
 - Customer/or sales by month
 - Proportion of local patrons versus visitors
 - Ownership/management/number of employees
 - How to market the business
- ❖ Retail shops
 - Number of stores
 - Types of shops in tourist and downtown areas

- Types of local tourist souvenirs
- Customer/sales by month
- Proportion of local patrons versus visitors
- Ownership/management/number of employees
- How to market the business

Sources of information on hospitality and retail facilities and services include:

- ❖ Registration of hotels, restaurants and retail shops with local business council or chamber of commerce
- ❖ Studies and reports on these business establishments
- ❖ Survey of these business establishments in the destination

Services and Human Resources. The tourism business is a people-oriented business and depends on quality service from trained service managers and employees. Assessment of local destination tourism service and current service managers and employees reveals the level of service quality, the availability and qualification of service managers and employees, and the need for employment training and professional education.

- ❖ Information needed for assessment
 - Tourist experience/satisfaction/impression of destination
 - Education level of managers and employees
 - Proportion of expatriate managers versus local managers in developing countries
 - Service training programs by local businesses
 - Local tourism and hospitality management education programs or professional schools
- ❖ Sources for gathering the information
 - Local government plan and strategy for training its workforce
 - Tourism service company information on service delivery system and service training program
 - Studies and reports on tourists' positive or negative experience
 - Satisfaction survey of tourists
 - Survey of managers and employees on service performance and need for service training
 - Secret shopper to evaluate service quality in tourism establishments

Resident Attitudes. TRA is a tool designed to enable local residents to share and analyze their knowledge of the destination, and their views concerning tourism development in their community. Local residents' receptivity to tourism development and promotion is essential to the success of project assessment, planning, and implementation.

- ❖ Information needed for residents' attitude assessment
 - Level of support or lack thereof for tourism development
 - Division between residents for or against tourism development
 - Concerns residents have about tourism development
 - Whether residents perceive that they benefit personally from tourism development
 - Places or events that local residents do not want to be developed for tourism

Sources of information on local residents' opinions and perceptions:

- ❖ Studies and reports on local resident survey
- ❖ Local focus group interview
- ❖ Local resident attitude survey

Economic, Sociocultural and Environmental Impact. The proposed tourism development can have positive impact on a local destination's economy, society and environment. However it may also bring with it costs. It is important to assess the potential benefits and the costs to the local community in terms of economic, social and environmental factors influencing tourism development.

- ❖ Information needed for economic assessment
 - Estimated total visitor days
 - Estimated total visitor expenditures
 - Estimated total costs for developing and operating the project and costs for providing and maintaining public facilities and services
 - Unmeasurables such as seasonality and highly skilled workforce
- ❖ Sources for obtaining the information
 - Potential developers
 - Contractors
 - Local public service office
 - Tourist arrival record by local/regional tourism office
 - Tourist expenditures record by local/regional tourism or business office
- ❖ Information needed for social impact assessment
 - Local census information
 - Population increase or decrease
 - Migration out of the community due to lack of opportunity
 - Source and level of income
 - Population structure
 - Employment structure
 - Local residents' lifestyle
 - Local residents' entertainment and recreation opportunities
- ❖ Sources for gathering the information
 - Local library for census information
 - Local labor department
 - Focus group interview
 - Local residents' attitude interview
- ❖ Information needed for environmental assessment
 - Air quality
 - Water quality

- Traffic congestion
 - Noise level
 - Pressure on existing utility and sewage system
 - Potential impact on local vegetation/plant community
 - Potential pollution to local water system
 - Potential threat to local wildlife habitat
 - Potential disturbance to local physical landscape
- ❖ Sources for gathering the information
- Local planning office
 - Local environmental protection agency
 - Local/regional wildlife conservation organizations
 - Local/regional transportation office
 - Local/regional public service office
 - Developer/contractor
 - Focus group interview
 - Local residents' attitude survey

Organizational Analysis of Tourism Sector. A well-established tourism organization at different levels can effectively facilitate tourism development. An assessment of current tourism organizational structure can reveal the key stakeholders in the coordination and management of the industry.

- ❖ Information needed for tourism organizational structure
- Government tourism organizations and their hierarchical structure
 - Responsibilities of government tourism offices at various levels
 - Tourism budget
 - Relationship and cooperation with USAID Missions
 - Coordination and facilitation with the private tourism sector
 - Local/regional tourism industry professional associations
 - Local/regional tourism non-profit organizations
 - Marketing/promotion agreement with neighboring communities in the region
- ❖ Sources for gathering the information
- Government tourism offices
 - Tourism master plan by government tourism offices
 - Financial report by government tourism offices

Legislative Review. Tourism can be used by government as a political tool to either encourage or curb economic development in the destination. A review of the government's attitude toward tourism development is a necessary step.

- ❖ Information needed for this assessment
- Government policy on tourism development
 - Pending legislation in favor of or against tourism development

- Legislation on environmental protection
 - Legislation on poverty reduction program
 - Legislation on sustainable development
 - Policy on repatriation of earning by international companies
 - Policy on expatriate professionals working in the host country
- ❖ Sources for collecting the information
- Government offices
 - Libraries
 - World Wide Web

Destination/Community General Information. A quick snapshot of the destination or community under study provides a description of the physical, economic, and sociocultural characteristics.

- ❖ Information needed for assessment
- Geography
 - Climate
 - Population profiles
 - Economic development
 - Religion practice
 - Political system
 - Local/regional maps
- ❖ Sources for gathering information
- Libraries
 - World Wide Web
 - USAID Missions

Competitiveness Assessment. Destinations in the same region often offer similar products and services, and compete to attract the same overseas travel markets. An assessment of the competition in the region can give the destination a clear idea of what the competitors are doing and how to compete with established destinations.

- ❖ Information needed for assessment
- Direct competitors and secondary competitors in the region
 - Products and services offered in these destinations
 - What makes the destination unique
 - Accessibility
 - Price of the products
 - Development involvement by multinational tourism firms
 - Local government incentives for tourism investment
 - Effective marketing organization and budget

❖ Sources for gathering the information

- Media reports on the competitive destinations
- Travel industry reports
- Tourism and business offices
- Tourism products providers
- Direct observations

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