

Excellence in destination management for Marine Tourism

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CED

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1 CED

Created in December 2006, the World Centre of Excellence for Destinations, CED, a non-profit organization based in Montréal, Canada, is an innovative and powerful tool formed with the assistance of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), with which it is linked through a memorandum of understanding.

Partner organisations

- National Geographic Society
- George Washington University
- Université du Québec à Montréal
- Tourisme Montréal
- Atmosfair
- PATA

CED's mission is to guide destinations around the world toward excellence by,

- Developing their competitiveness
- Delivering strategic information on the major issues related to destinations.
- Facilitating the achievement of their sustainable development objectives
- Improving the quality of the experience offered to tourists
- Strengthening the geographic character of destinations, which includes their environment, their culture, their aesthetics, their heritage, and the well-being of their inhabitants

SMED

The CED's foremost priority is the design and the implementation of the System for Measuring Excellence in Destinations, or SMED. This unique system focuses on short-term and long-term goals of sustainable tourism. Destinations receive concrete and feasible recommendations for strategic interventions and continuous improvement.

To do so we work hand in hand with the local authorities, local ministries of tourism or local DMO's

• How the SMED works: step-by-step

SMED evaluations are conducted by SMED experts over an average period of five months. These experts are academics holding doctoral degrees or tourism professionals with recognized expertise, possessing a minimum of ten years of industry experience and established international reputation.

STEP 1: DESTINATION PROFILE QUESTIONNAIRE (DPQ)

STEP 2: CUSTOMIZED SMED QUESTIONNAIRE (C-SMEDQ)

The SMED is composed of 4 fields and 11 categories that serve as valid and reliable indicators for measuring excellence within a destination. SMED experts in consultation with the destination manager carefully select the most appropriate indicators for the destination profile, and then use develop a web-based **C-SMEDQ**, for the destination. The data enables the experts to prepare the visit.

STEP 3: THE ON-SITE VISIT

The **on-site visit** is performed to gather any missing data through consultation workshops and interviews with local experts. The visit is also used to target the main areas for improvement within the destination, in close collaboration with all participating stakeholders.

STEP 4: THE REPORT

The **confidential report** includes the destination's current opportunities and challenges, a qualitative analysis per field and category, comparative studies of similar destinations as well as general recommendations. Recommendations address both short-term goals (1 to 2 years) as well as long-term goals (3 to 5 years). The report is submitted for peers review before delivery to the destination.

STEP 5: FOLLOW-UP FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

A destination evaluated becomes part of a worldwide destination network. These destinations and their stakeholders will benefit from ongoing follow-up and receive additional information over time. After three to four years of a SMED evaluation, it is expected that a destination will invite SMED experts to return to track how recommendations were implemented, explore new solutions and provide new information for the destination's continuous improvement.

Diagnostic tool; Progress tool; Management tool; Collaboration tool; Market positioning tool; Comparative analysis tool; Communication tool;

2 DESTINATION MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS (DMOs)¹

The role of a Destination Management Organization is to lead and coordinate tourism related activities under a coherent strategy. It does not control the activities of its

¹ World Tourism Organization. *A Practical Guide to Tourism Destination Management*. Madrid: World Tourism Organization. 2007.

partners, but brings together resources and expertise with a degree of independence and objectivity to lead the way forward. The DMO must develop a high level of skill in developing and managing partnerships. Although DMOs have typically undertaken marketing activities, their remit is becoming far broader, that is, to become a strategic leader in destination development.

Destination Management Organizations generally fall under one of the following categories:

- National Tourism Authorities (NTAs) or Organizations (NTOs), responsible for the management and marketing of tourism at a national level;
- Regional, provincial or state DMOs (RTOs), responsible for the management and/or marketing of tourism in a geographic region defined for that purpose, which is sometimes, but not always, an administrative or local government region such as a county, state or province; or
- Local DMOs, who are responsible for the management and/or marketing of tourism, based on a smaller geographic area or city/town.

What is Destination Management?

Destination management is the coordinated management of all of the elements that form a destination (attractions, amenities, access, marketing and pricing). Destination management takes a strategic approach to link-up these sometimes very separate entities in order to improve the management, coordination and integration of the destination. Cooperative management can help to avoid duplication of efforts with regards to promotion, visitor services, training, business support, as well as identify any management gaps that need to be addressed.

There are various options for destination management governance:

- A department with single public authority;
- A partnership of public authorities, serviced by partners;
- A partnership of public authorities, serviced by a joint management unit;
- A public authority(ies) outsourcing delivery by private companies;
- A public-private partnership for certain functions – often in the form of a non-profit driven company; and
- An association or company funded purely by a private sector partnership and/or trading – again for certain functions.

Why does the destination have to be managed?

Tourism is an extremely competitive industry and, to compete effectively, destinations have to deliver excellent value to visitors. This depends on many aspects working

together in unity. From the time that the visitor arrives at the destination, until he/she leaves, visitor value is affected by many services and experiences including a range of public services, private products, community interactions, and, of course, hospitality. Effective destination management allows destinations to maximize tourism value for visitors while ensuring local benefits and sustainability.

Advantages of managing a destination

Establishing a competitive edge

Two requirements are critical for destinations to achieve a competitive advantage over their rivals, namely:

- Establishing a strong and unique positioning, i.e. offering a different kind of experience compared to other destinations, by developing the destination's attractions and resources in a way that highlights their unique characteristics; and
- Delivering excellent quality experiences and superior value for money by ensuring that all aspects of the visitor experience are of the highest standard, and are well coordinated.

Both of these success factors require a coordinated management approach based on a collective vision and strong partnerships.

Ensuring Tourism Sustainability

Sustainable tourism development, with proper planning and management, ensures that the destination maintains its environmental integrity, and that the resources and character, that make it attractive in the first place, are protected. Good management also helps to avoid social and cultural conflicts, and prevents tourism from adversely affecting local lifestyles, traditions and values.

Spreading the Benefits of Tourism

Tourism expenditure and consequent benefits can be more widely dispersed by: supporting community-based products and experiences, advancing rural and experiential tourism, promoting small business development, and exploring the potential of arts and crafts industries, etc.

Improving Tourism Yield

Through focused spatial development and targeted marketing, destinations can lengthen the visitors' average length of stay, increase per capita visitor expenditure, and reduce disruptive seasonality in visitor arrivals; each contributes to an improved return on investment and yield per visitor.

Building a Strong and Vibrant Brand Identity

Destination Management Organizations are increasingly realizing the value and power of strong destination brands. By consistently delivering excellent value, brand loyalty return visitation to the destination on a regular basis, and the spread of positive word-of-mouth.

3. Maritime destinations

3.1 Galicia, Spain.

In Galicia, the sea has never been a frontier, as since time immemorial, Galicians have known how best to take advantage of the wealth it offers, in a unique symbiosis. In this sea, in fact, in the world's seas, Galician fishermen have fished for all manner of species, from the smallest shrimp to the very largest of tuna, and even whales.

All of this has led to what is today a state of the art industry, in which we can find fish farming, shellfish harvesting, canning, advances in shipbuilding etc. all play a key role. The sea has also defined this singular landscape, with 1,200 km of stunning coastline offering great biodiversity which include wide sweeping beaches with fine white sand, hidden bays, spectacular cliffs and beautiful islands and islets, as well as the characteristic rías or estuaries which represent one of Galicia's most distinctive features. This landscape, so entwined with the unique cultural heritage offered by the sea and fishing can be visited and enjoyed throughout the year, ably complemented by a sumptuous and varied gastronomy which bases itself on products of excellent quality, and charming accommodation in over one hundred rural guest houses.

Marine tourism is a new tourism product which brings together the authenticity and uniqueness of Galicia's maritime culture with a carefully selected range of rural guest houses which offer the visitor truly unique experiences such as:

- Visit one of the 55 lighthouses that you can find at ports, on cliff tops and on islands.
- Sail on an old fishing boat which has been converted into a floating museum.
- Discover how cockles, clams and razor clams are "farmed" on the same beaches where people swim and sunbathe.
- Dive right into the hustle and bustle of a fish market and discover for yourself the peculiar auction system used to sell sea produce.
- Visit some of the thousands of beds which produce the finest mussels in the world, order a dish and accompany it with a fine Galician wine.
- Go sailing among dolphins, porpoises and finback whales.
- Wander around one of the many fishing harbours and enjoy the bars and taverns where fishermen meet after a hard day at sea.

Most of these activities are guided by sailors and fishermen, offering the visitor a completely different experience, one which has the real "taste and smell of the sea"

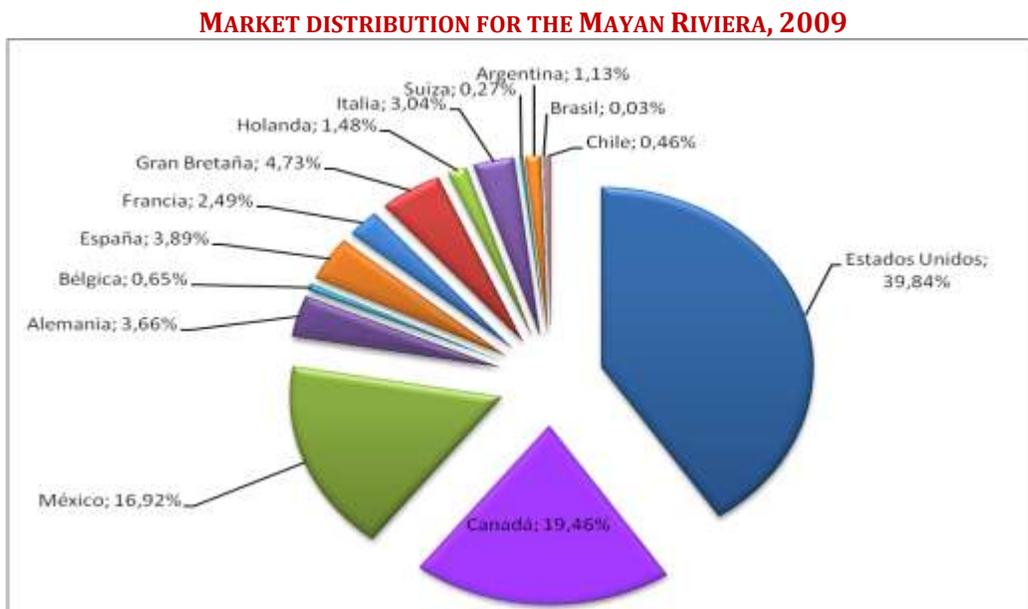
3.2 Mayan Riviera, México

The Mayan Riviera is a young destination with an impressive growth and development rate. In only 15 years this destination became the 3th largest tourism destination in Mexico, while in the 80's this region counted only a few villages.

The great attractiveness of the destination resides in the fact that it combines several activities around the maritime attractions. The destination offers maritime activities with archeological sites, adventure and nature activities, discovering indigenous cultures, great gastronomic offer, and culture, urban and social attractions. A very important point for this development is the accessibility guaranteed by the Cancun airport and a first class highway infrastructure.

Nowadays the Mayan Riviera counts 37,185 rooms, in 361 hotels.² They also offer 900 restaurants of all kinds of cuisines including of course, Mexican, Mayan, Yucatan, international and fusion.

The main markets for the Mayan Riviera are presented in the following chart, we can appreciate that the US, Canada and Mexican markets are the main ones, but also the diversification of many other markets is interesting.



Source: Barómetro turístico de la Riviera Maya, Agosto de 2009

The Mayan Riviera DMO's goal is:

« To consolidate the region as a leader multi-destination, with highly competitive enterprises that offer high quality services and products, with full respect of the natural, social and cultural environment, were the State authorities will play a

² Barómetro turístico de la Riviera Maya, Agosto de 2009.

role of facilitator to generate favorable conditions to attract private investment».(SEPLADER. 2005:33)

Their 2005-2011 strategic plan has 8 strategies and 14 lines of action that we present here:

1. **Tourism is a State priority:** Create and promote a State policy for tourism.
 - Up-date the legal framework to better implement the tourism development programs.
 - Reinforce the local tourism leadership and escalate it to regional, national and international levels. Obtaining statistic information about the tourism activity and the development of the sector trough time.
2. **Diversification of the tourism offer:** Promote the diversification and specialization of the touristic offer, reinforcing a position of leadership in high value added segments.
 - Establishing new touristic products of higher value added with equilibrated regional development criteria and environmentally friendly. Incorporate new touristic corridors and diversify the offer of natural and historical attractions.
3. **Quality tourism infrastructure:** Promote the development of quality tourism infrastructure to increase the value added of the maritime tourism destinations in the region.
 - Coordination between the various governmental levels for infrastructure programs that contribute to the tourism activity, for the urban image and the wellbeing of the local communities.
 - Covering the touristic signage in cities and highways in coordination with the federal, municipal and private stakeholders to identify touristic services, attractions and natural protected areas.
4. **Sustainable tourism destinations:** Contribute to the sustainable development of the tourism activity.
 - Implement actions to protect the coasts, beaches and lagoons within the destination, applying approved criteria to the tourism projects that might affect these areas.
5. **Increase of the tourism services quality:** Competitive human capital formation as means to improve the quality of services and attract foreign direct investment.

6. **Reinforce the tourism promotion:**

- Design and coordination of promotion and marketing policies analyzing the offer and the demand under a strategic marketing plan.
- Consolidate the Mexican Caribbean as a host of sports, cultural and art international events.

7. **Security:** Improve the information, security and assistance services for tourists.

- Security and assistance in highways, attention to tourists, train specific human resources to attend tourists in need.

8. **Competitive tourism firms:** Enhance micro, small and medium tourism.

- Strengthen improvement and quality programs, encourage formal and on the job training.

Maritime tourism destinations have many challenges and face also the impacts of the global warming effects. Populations that live in these areas have a very strong responsibility towards environmental protection and conservation that tourism can help to leverage.

A strong experience has allowed us to assist destinations, to bring value information adapted to every destinations reality, there for we have contributed to the development of DMO's in the following Destinations:

- Samos, Greece,
- Tela, Honduras
- Douro Valley, Portugal.