

Towards a Typology of Community Engagement by Heritage Tourism Attractions: Findings of a Barbados Pilot Study

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Introduction:

Community engagement goes beyond philanthropy. It is a desirable expression of corporate citizenship and involves more than periodic donations to charities or social activities (Tracey, Phillips and Haugh, 2005). Engagement has been defined by Fawcett et al (1995) as working collaboratively with and through groups of people, and often involves partnerships and coalitions that help mobilize resources and influence systems, change relationships among partners, and serve as catalysts for social change.

Attractions are a primary travel motivation (Swarbrooke, 1995) and are central to the destination experience. Heritage attractions have greater social responsibility because they are a manifestation of the host community and should engage that community as they portray the uniqueness of that place (Smith, 1977).

Review of the Literature:

Literature on engagement has focused on the community's perception of engagement, inclusion, involvement, and development (Rothman, 1995; Arai, 1996; Reid, 2003), and comes from community health and education. The tourism attractions literature has also focused on the host community (Mitchell and Reid, 2001; Mordue, 2003; Hoffman, 2003) and less on the enterprise that developed the attraction (Scantlebury, 2003).

Purpose of the Study and Methods:

Scantlebury (2003) examined heritage attractions and their involvement with the local community, testing the hypothesis "heritage tourism attractions do not engage the local community". The survey, based on Arnstein's (1969) was developed and senior management was interviewed. The survey contained 17 statements that ranged from "No involvement with the local community", to "The community owns the business". Respondents rated the level of importance attached to each statement using a 5 point Likert scale. Barbados' 26 privately-owned heritage attractions (Barbados Tourism Authority, no date), were invited to participate. Fifteen enterprises completed the survey (57.7% response rate). Data were tabulated and the categories of interaction summarized.

Findings:

Of the 15 enterprises, 12 (80%) indicated involvement with the local community (see Table 1). This involvement took the form of charitable and social contributions. Only two enterprises, 13%, were involved with community-based ownership.

**TABLE 1:
Type of community involvement by heritage tourism enterprises and level of importance**

Level of importance	Areas of community interaction															
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
1 = Low	2	2	1	2		1	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	2		
2	4	2	2	1	1	3	2			1	2	1				
3	4	4	2	2			1	1	2	1	2		1	2		1
4	2	1	2	1		1			1	3	2	1			1	1
5 = Very High	-	2	2	-	1	4		2	2	1	2	1				
TOTAL	12	11	9	6	2	9	4	5	7	8	9	4	2	4	1	2

KEY to areas of interaction:

- A. = Sponsorship of local activities**
- B. = Sponsorship of local community groups**
- C. = Contributes to local charitable organizations**
- D. = Community consulted from time to time, but not on a regular basis**
- E. = Community consulted on a regular basis**
- F. = Community provides the staff**
- G. = Community provides an advisory committee – seldom acted upon**
- H. = Community provides an advisory committee – frequently acted upon**
- I. = Community provides an advisory committee – used to educate committee members**
- J. = Community provides information to the business**
- K. = Community provides operating supplies**
- L. = Community consulted in developing business policy**
- M. = Community involved in business operations – annual**
- N. = Community involved in business operations – day-to-day**
- O. = Community owns shares in the business**
- P. = Community owns the entire business**

(Source: Scantlebury 2003)

Figure 1 applied those data to a centrality index dividing the data into four quadrants;

- Importance attributed to the activity by the enterprise (high to very high or low to moderate)
- Importance of the activity to enterprise’s operation (activities A - G and H - P).

The following typology of enterprise interaction is suggested (Figure 1):

- Area 1: “Social interaction” – low importance and non-vital activities (39%)
- Area 2: “Opportunistic involvement” – high importance and non-vital activities (26%).
- Area 3: “Pseudo Engagement” – low importance and vital activities (17%).
- Area 4: “Community Engagement” – high importance and vital activities (18%).

FIGURE 1:
Proposed typology of community interaction by heritage tourism enterprises

Activity	High	Area 3 PSEUDO-ENGAGEMENT <i>(17%)</i>	Area 4: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT <i>(18%)</i>
	Low	Area 1: SOCIAL INTERACTION <i>(39%)</i>	Area 2: OPPORTUNISTIC INVOLVEMENT <i>(26%)</i>
		Low	High
Importance			

(Source: Based on Scantlebury 2003)

Concluding thoughts:

Questions arise; does the nature of community engagement vary depending on the ownership structure, number of years in operation, or size of the enterprise? Are heritage attractions more disposed to engagement than entertainment-based attractions? If community engagement is indeed the desirable social good portrayed, perhaps attractions that successfully engage community should be recognized for their social contribution.

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