

# The opportunities for cultural tourism development in Canada- case of St. Jacobs, Ontario, Canada (cocreation experience with a local community)

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#### Abstract

Community investment into culture is important in branding and strengthening of a sense of place. The importance of cultural tourism, due to aging population and an interest in more sophisticated tourism products, is growing. It is crucial not only to educate people, but to support their attachment to destinations and willingness to co-operate. There might be obstacles in a community with a different cultural or religious background. Some marketing and branding strategies can fail if the insensitive commodification of a place overrides sustain ability in tourism development. St. Jacobs in Canada is a good example of a sensitive approach to cultural tourism in a combination of rural and agritourism. The purpose of this case study is to point out at the possibilities of development of cultural tourism in culturally sensitive places and to build an attractive cultural product, e.g. to preserve a sustainable environment and apply marketing principles. For this reason, a strategic innovation concerning the approach to branding places and co-creation of local community with local businesses might be a good initiative. The existing balance of the environment, natural, social and the economic activities of a human society might be a goal of positive approach to cultural tourism.

**Key words:** cultural tourism, co-creation, commodification, branding, strategic innovation, sustainable development

### Introduction

The tourism marketing strategies are becoming more sophisticated because the tourists expect a spectrum of different experiences and tourism products while visiting destinations. Community investment into the business of culture is important for the improvement of sense of a place and marketing. A majority of marketing principles that have to be recognized by successful tourism destinations represent the main components of the product marketing mix, for example the marketing of the special "terroir" of destination (place), determining of the main attractions of the core products defining in the destination's main cultural product offer. People and knowledge potential of a region, belong to the crucial leading factors of competitiveness. Cultural tourism, which relies on highly educated and skilled labor due to the educational content, depends on the marketing tool "people". For this reason, it is crucial not only to educate people, but also to create their relationship and attachment to the destination and willingness to co-operate and be a part of the product offer. However, there might be specific obstacles in a community based on the different cultural or religious background. For this reason, even the best prepared marketing and branding strategies can [86]

fail due to the insensitive commodification of a place. St. Jacobs in Ontario, Canada is a good example of a sensitive approach to cultural tourism in a combination with a rural and agritourism. The purpose of this case study and research is to point out at the possibilities of development of cultural tourism in culturally sensitive places and to build an attractive cultural product, e.g. to preserve a sustainable environment and apply marketing principles. Nowadays, in tourism development is crucial to apply the principles of ethics and this example might be one of good practices in the world.

### Literature Review

The success of place-based development through place branding is based on the combination of the cultural atmosphere and natural environment of a place. Place-based development through place branding is aimed at increasing the quality and attractiveness of a place, creating a unique identity and image for a place and making connections between people living in a place. The place identities are highly dependent on the place and people living in a place and influence the images of a place. For these reasons, forming of uniquely appealing place characteristics, as well as connections between visitors and the place should be central in the place-based development strategy. In this concept culture is crucial for the comparative advantage. Mc Kercher and du Cros (2002) defined cultural tourism as visits by persons from outside the host community motivated wholly or in part by interest in the historical, artistic, scientific, or lifestyle/heritage offerings of the community, region, group, or institution. Creative tourism is a development of cultural tourism but goes a step further, encouraging participation, not simply observation. "Creative tourism involves learning a skill on holiday that is part of the culture of the country or community being visited. Creative tourists develop their creative potential, and get closer to local people, by actively participating in workshops and learning experiences that draw on the culture of their holiday destinations" (www.creativetourism.co.nz/index). In some cases to become a part of local community could be difficult. One of the obstacles could be a distinctive cultural group of people who cannot be forced to be a part of that tourism product. There might be some rules how to involve such communities, respectively to create them the conditions, which could be culturally friendly. Wall and Matthieson (2006) mentioned a research of Affeld (1975, p. 109) dealing with the cultural impacts of tourism on the tourist, the host and mentioned the tourist-host interrelationships. The authors also mentioned the studies dealing with the impacts of tourism on creation of different political, religious, cultural problems (among the mentioned authors by Wall and Matthieson, 2006 were for instance the authors Jafari, 1974, Ryan, 1993, McKercher and du Cros (2002), Jaffari (2001). These impacts could be based on different reasons as Wall and Matthieson (2006) mentioned, for instance traditions, religious beliefs, customs, lifestyles, dress codes, attitude against strangers. For this reason a creation of a place product offer in some destinations might be challenging and requires an enormous knowledge of local environment and sensitive place branding and marketing practices. Wall and Mathieson (2006), Go and Govers (2009) mentioned a danger of commodification and staged authenticity, which both means a loss of authenticity. Go and Govers (2009) also mentioned the idea of Dietvorst and Ashworth (1995, p. 7) that the extent by which the identity of place is experienced and to what degree places are authentic. In order to protect a community and to preserve the authenticity, Murphy (1985) argues that "tourism relies on the goodwill and cooperation of local people because they are part of its product" (p. 153). Local people can create positive environment for tourists or can be a source of tension and stress for tourists and vice versa. Co-creation factor in this relationship is crucial. Tourists can be a reason of creation of negative externalities for local people. Gearing and Swart (1976) classified these negative factors as "production externalities, externalities of consumption, externalities of environmental protection and socio-cultural externalities" (p. 14). In a community, as stated by Singh (2003) "all persons and public and private bodies are affected positively and negatively by the impacts of tourism development. People's [87]

The opportunities for cultural tourism development in Canada-case of St. Jacobs, Ontario, Canada (co-creation experience with a local community) participation through power sharing, social cohesion and knowledge enhancement is very important in community development" (p. 19).

### **Methods And Materials**

A case study dealing with cultural tourism examples, which has been collected in the primary research (personal experience during 4 years of study stay and work in Waterloo region) and the secondary research (documents, videos, literature) has been used. Creswell (2007) describes a case study as cases bounded by time and activity and the researcher collects detailed information by using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time, involving multiple sources of information rich in context to understand the phenomenon. He states that a case study is a strategy of inquiry that allows researchers to explore in-depth a program, event, process or one or more individuals.

Smith (2010) considers case studies as designed to offer 'deep' insights, including conclusions based on the context of the topic being studied, and involves the use of multiple methods and data sources. The author (ibid, 2010) stresses the importance of case studies for the rich understanding of interest and deeper insights into the phenomenon under study, which cannot be achieved through other methods. Three possible approaches are familiar in case studies and Stake (2005) recognized intrinsic, instrumental and multiple case study design. The discussed case study could be categorized as intrinsic due to a fact that it provides a space to learn about a phenomenon, to understand it and this is a main purpose of a study, e.g. to understand a case without testing a theory.

In order to pursue this goal, our advantage is to be able to participate at several excursions and study trips in St. Jacobs and to participate at classes with experts in tourism community development, tourism marketing and cultural tourism at the University Waterloo, Canada. The case study is based on several discussions and personal interviews with academics, personal observations and discussion with local people and business representatives as well as employees of businesses in St. Jacobs (stores, farmer market representatives), visits of St. Jacobs and personal experience. The existence of several academic research studies, which have been also studied, contributed to the knowledge of problematic and cultural milieu (Dahms, 1991; Mitchell & de Waal, 1998, 2009; McClinchey & Carmichael, 2010) as well as personal discussions and lectures and visits of St. Jacobs with Prof. Stephen Smith, Waterloo University (now Guelph University in Canada), Prof. Geoffrey Wall from Waterloo University and Prof. Marion Joppe, Guelph University in Canada. In order to support and justify a choice of case study for our research we use the argument of Yin (2003a) who claimed a case study to be "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 13). A typical example in tourism and management studies might be the implications of cultural tourism, where different methods and topics could be applied to deal with the commodification of culture, acculturation, empowerment of host communities, globalization, etc. In the future, socially responsible tourism topics will have even more influence on research and practice. For this reason sometimes blending of methods and disciplines is also a good example of a holistic view of the phenomena, as is drawing on results obtained through the lenses of different disciplines, methodologies, cultures, etc. In our case, we decided to look at the problem from the point of view of marketing, management and partially also applied social sciences as history, cultural studies, anthropology, and geography in order to understand a problem with more complexity. The innovative approaches in tourism policy, management, marketing and environmental protection has embraced the need to look at tourism as an activity requiring a more holistic approach. Based on systemic thinking (Mulej's Dialectical System Theory), which has been also explained by Boži nik and Mulej (2008), the synergy of different viewpoints within economic, social, and environmental development (in which

tourism development is also embedded) have to be taken into account. Tourism development has to be attained by accepting the rules of socially responsible activity, not only seeing it as a phenomenon of value creation and economic growth.

### **Research And Results**

According to Multicultural Canada, in the world live about 1.7 million baptized Mennonites in 83 countries. In Waterloo Region live about 20,000 Mennonites in three main groups, e.g. Old Order, Conservative and Modern. The Old Order Mennonites are a unique culture with own faith and life style. They reject modern life (prefer traveling by horse and buggy) and live on the farms. Visitors to St. Jacobs are interested in rural and especially cultural tourism. They are looking for the opportunity to authentically experience other places, peoples, and cultures. Mennonites' rural history in the area has now become a part of the cultural tourism setting that attracts many visitors each year. Tourism brochures and travel articles about St. Jacobs highlight many examples of built heritage, such as The Village Silos, The Mill, the original Home Hardware, and the West Montrose Covered Bridge (Luke and Durand, 2009). Several critics and academics have warned of the possible loss of heritage and culture through tourism and its commodification. One example comes from the tension in St. Jacobs between the locals and the tourists. Using religion, history, and lifestyle as a tourism attraction can be a difficult and it requires sensitivity and forward-looking planning. Tourism academics and experts are cautious against tourism development that strays too from the original culture of the area and allows tourism to overwhelm the culture it is promoting (Mitchell, 2009).

Based on several former studies and discussion results (McClinchey & Carmichael, 2010, Mitchel & de Waal, 1998, 2009, Dahms, 1991), St. Jacobs was originally only a settlement of Mennonites, which is situated in the Waterloo Region in Ontario, Canada. The village is situated very close to the important knowledge triangle of cities Kitchener, Waterloo and Guelph as well as a town Cambridge. St. Jacobs is also not too far from a financial centre of Canada, Toronto and a capital of a province Ontario. Dahms (1991) mentioned that a location to major junction and transportation facilities (Highway 401) and close distance from the Greater Toronto Area was a reason of good connection with markets interested in special cultural places with a distinct Mennonite culture. People who are interested in excellent rural products offered by local farmers and Mennonites as well as in cultural heritage of Mennonite people and clean environment with culinary specialties and family attractions, might be fully satisfied in this small village. St. Jacob is very popular with regular farmer markets, which take place twice a week in the southern part of the village. Market is well known for livestock sale and exchange and visitors have the opportunity to taste local food. Mennonite families participate regularly at these markets and their products bear names of producers (brands of a family). In many cases, they present also pictures of their farms and photos of family members in the stores where they sell their products. The quality of production and a way how they sell products, for instance, in traditional cloth, which is typical for their lifestyle, is very attractive for the buyers. Despite of it, their role is not to become a stage of authenticity or tourism attraction, but it is only their way of life and everyday routine. In branding, very important might be not only to create an image for a destination and brand identity, but to use a special ambassador of a place with a vision to promote a place. In case of St. Jacob this role was fulfilled by a person who was one of Mennonites and his name was Milo Shantz. Milo Shantz was a leader of the livestock exchange business and one of the creator of the Mennonite Visitors Centre.

Another great example of successful development and co-creation among the community and local entrepreneurs was a case of the Mercedes Corporation, which is the owner of 50 % of real estate and outlet mall and participate also in Farmer's Market. It seems to be very important also for this company and local people to be attentive to the Mennonite Story Visitors especially from the point of view of preservation and sensitiveness to local distinct

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culture of Mennonites. This might be a good example of a symbiosis of local business representatives, community, public sector and a specific distinct culture like Mennonites and also it might be a good example of the implementation of ethical approach in entrepreneurship and community development. The brand "St. Jacobs Country" is owned by a private Mercedes Corporation, there is an active co-operation of other community partners who are also creators of branding strategy of St. Jacobs. In this case, partnerships are very effective due to a majority of ownership of Mercedes Corporation and this is a good example of private and public partnership in tourism. An important fact for success in branding and marketing strategies as well as in business strategies plays a coordinative function and hegemony of ownership which is embedded in Mercedes Corporation. Trust, leadership, and cultural sensitiveness are crucial for successful stories of destinations, especially with the ambition to be also popular places for business, leisure and entertainment. Similarly has approached this problem also Dahms (1991) who underlined not only the entrepreneurial success, but also heritage and amenities. Strategic management, strong leadership and vision, governance and coordination through partnerships are key elements of successful stories of cultural and historical places as well as places with the ambition to succeed generally. For instance in case of Mercedes company, which is a brand owner of this place, the opportunities for co-operation and participation are very effective and a strong image and message is a result of common synergy. Ownership of Mercedes Company in St. Jacobs might be a good example of the successful branding and financing of tourism and community development.

#### **Discussion And Conclusion**

Tourism development creates in a community new relations, partnerships, positive environment and multiple beneficial economic effects or negative effects. Impact of tourism on communities is crucial in creation of communities' attitude to the development. The synergy of community interests and entrepreneur's interests in tourism development is the optimal outcome of a symbiosis of these two elements in economic, social and natural environment. There could be 4 scenarios in this relationship (Singh 2003, p. 26) in the relation to community and tourism:

- Win-win development of tourism in community is beneficial also for community,
- Win-lose community benefits, but tourism suffers,
- Lose-win the case when tourism entrepreneurs benefit more as a community and community suffers due to the decisions against community,
- Lose-lose a case where both community and tourism suffer (in a case of mass development of tourism and a creation of negative externalities).

"When examining the role of the community in tourism it is impossible to separate the social, economic and political processes operating within a community from the conflict which occurs between stakeholders" (Singh 2003, p. 100). There exist distinctive communities created by specific cultures and religious groups, which require a specific approach. The authors as Ap and Crompton (1993), Brown and Giles (1994) mentioned the possible responds of residents, a community to tourism development, e.g. embracement, tolerance, adjustment and withdrawal. There exist specific minorities or communities, which might be difficult to demonstrate this approach due to their cultural and religious belonging. Despite of being a part of cultural product in a community, the lifestyle of these people should be respected and the community and visitors have to be tolerant to their specific way of life as well as people involved in business activities of destinations. For this reason it is crucial to be able to combine marketing and management of a community with the sensitive and sustainable development of a place as a part of the ethical approach to entrepreneurship.

Case of St. Jacobs is a real story of success of the cultural sensitivity, tourism development, partnership co-operation and branding strategy effectiveness. Despite the fact that St. Jacobs is a village and a rural destination, the way how local initiatives are managed, [90]

development is understood and the trust is created, is a reason why brand St. Jacobs is so successful. Despite a fact that Farmer Market has been fully destroyed by a fire in 2013, the local initiative to revive new place with the same function, joint the local community and businesses (a documentation in appendix). People were so attached to this place and not only local people, but also people from neighboring communities and visitors. Sense of place, place attachment, good image and feeling about a place are crucial for successful branding strategies.

There might be visible one important factor, which is crucial in branding, e.g. the brand identity and brand personality concept. In case of St. Jacobs was the identity formed by the existence of a distinctive cultural group of people which influences the uniqueness of brand of this village. The uniqueness means also the protection of a place against copying the special character of a place. Despite of a fact that some managerial and marketing strategies could be somehow copied or implemented (sometimes with more or less success because not all copied or benchmarked processes are the same as the original), the distinct culture and uniqueness is hardly to be copied and transferred because it is specific only for that particular place.

In conclusion, a strategic innovation concerning the approach to branding places and cocreation of local community with local businesses might be a good initiative in the improvement of processes in destinations. Existing balance of the environment, natural or social and the economic activities of human society might be a goal of positive approach to cultural tourism development in destinations. St. Jacobs must be thankful to the attributes of such people as Jacob C. Snider, one of famous people of this region and entrepreneur (Dahms, 1991), Milo Shantz and the representatives of the Mercedes Corporations and its partners, however, also a community of local patriots and Mennonites who create a mosaic of this special place, which is so difficult to forget.

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### About the Author

Marica Mazurek 's research interest is competitiveness of tourism destinations, branding, marketing, place marketing and place branding, innovations in tourism. She participated in several academic exchanges and Visitor Professorship activities in Canada(Brock University, University of Waterloo), where she participated in research activities dealing with tourism marketing and branding, innovations and tourism destinations competitiveness. She is the author of several academic publications, for example in the International Journal of Emerging Markets, Journal of Internet Commerce, the book chapter in Tourism Marketing: On both Sides of the Counter edited by Cambridge Scholars Publishing (edited by Prof. Metin Kozak et al.), Kybernetes. Recently she participated at the international conferences in Turkey, Fethiye (2<sup>nd</sup> Interdisciplinary conference in Tourism research), 4th ATMC international conference in Maribor, Slovenia, the 5th ATMC international conference in Algarve, Portugal and the Multidisciplinary International Conference in Porvoo, Finland (Haaga-Helia University), the 5th International Conference of Marketing in Algarve, Portugal, the International Conference of Tourism, Hospitality and Recreation in Pozna, Poland, and the 3rd Interdisciplinary Tourism Research Conference in Istanbul, Turkey, conferences in Taipei, Taiwan and Joensu, Helsinki. Her project activities deal with Co-creation and Innovations (LIPSE project with the EU and several EU universities), Branding, Image and Reputation (Canada and Saudi Arabia), Marketing and Ethnocentrism (Canada, Brock University and Matej Bel University), Social Economy [92]

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### **Appendix:**



Photo of former Farmer's Market St. Jacobs and after a fire Source:

 $\frac{https://www.google.sk/search?q=st.+jacobs+farmers+market+new+building\&biw=1680\&bih=885\&noj=1\&site=webhp\&tbm=isch\&imgil=TueZqG5Ccy3LIM\%253A\%25$ 

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