TOURISM 101

Globally Competitive Destinations

Victoria

Introduction

People are fascinated by the concept of travel—exploring unfamiliar places and immersing themselves in different cultures and experiences. Over the last century, the travel landscape has changed dramatically—and, with a future full of more people travelling than ever before, destinations around the world are competing for the attention of global travellers who can bring economic, social, cultural, and environmental benefits to the destinations they visit.

To truly stand out and succeed, destinations need to be globally competitive by being aligned with the current macro trends and needs of travellers and the travel industry. To be globally competitive, a destination needs more than beautiful scenery or a compelling culture. It must also develop strengths in strategic management, effective marketing, changing technology, and the ability to adapt to shifting visitor and industry demands.

Effective management and marketing are two important components of any competitive tourism destination. While management ensures sustainable operations, destination development, and preservation of tourism assets, marketing's role is to effectively communicate the destination's offerings to the world. It's about sending the right message, to the right people, at the right time.

Destinations must constantly adapt their management and marketing activities to the environment they operate within. As consumer preferences evolve and the tourism industry undergoes transformation over time, destinations that do not adapt will not keep pace with the visitors they want to attract or the industry that shapes their destination. Whether it's the rise of eco-tourism, the digital nomad movement with remote workers, or the demand for more immersive experiences, understanding trends and implementing them in strategy is needed for a destination's long-term success.

A globally competitive and aligned destination must have a shared vision and common approach to destination management.

> For a destination, "alignment" means managing and marketing a destination in a way that suits the destination's desires, strengths, and capacity. In this way, alignment is not a point in time, but an ongoing balance.

To ensure British Columbia reaches its full potential as a tourism destination, Destination BC applies a strategic approach that follows key goals outlined in four strategies, including their Corporate Strategy, Marketing Strategy, Invest in Iconics Strategy, and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Strategy. To read Destination BC's strategic approach, click here.

Whistler

Lillooet

Understanding Destination Management

Destination management is a professional, strategic approach to coordinate the various elements that make up a destination. Effective destination management involves long-term tourism planning, and continual monitoring and evaluation of the impacts and outcomes of tourism.

A destination in the context of tourism is much more than just a place, whether a neighbourhood, community, park, travel route, region, province, country or some other defined area. It also includes experiences, emotions, and stories—what some call the essence of a place. For example, a visitor laughing all afternoon at a comedy festival creates an impression of the community being a fun place to spend time in.

In this way, destination management can be complex as it isn't just about maintaining physical sites; it's also about ensuring visitors have memorable experiences and that both the destination and the destination's essence remains unharmed.

Let's look at an example of a park. Maintenance might include ensuring litter is picked up, garbage bins are emptied, and washrooms are cleaned and restocked. While this will create an experience that meets certain visitor standards, these efforts may not necessarily contribute to the creation of positive memories associated with that park.

Naikoon Park

Richmond

Through a destination management approach, a need may have been identified for destination development projects by park operators or local entrepreneurs that create positive memories, such as:

- Interpretive signage for visitors to learn about the park and its history that is well-researched and endorsed by relevant groups, such as local First Nations and nature-based stewards.
- Guided walking tours that uncover the park's hidden gems while ensuring curious visitors respect the destination by staying on the path and viewing fragile wonders at a distance.
- A kiosk with refreshments and picnic tables for visitors who are hungry and thirsty that avoids single-use plastic and prioritizes local sourcing for its ingredients.
- The opportunity for visitors to collect stamps on a park passport, creating excitement for visiting other parks in the province while providing an ethical souvenir.

All of this could be done to increase the appeal of a destination while ensuring sound destination management principles are adhered to in a way that ensures tourism does not detract from the value and appeal of the destination. In this way, proper management can lead to increased visitor satisfaction, repeat visits, and positive word-of-mouth as well as support and engagement from the local community.

Within British Columbia, multiple organizations work together to manage visitor use of public places and parks to ensure potential impacts of resident recreation and tourism are sustainable, including the Government of BC, BC Parks, First Nations, municipalities and regional districts, Destination BC, Regional DMOs, Community DMOs, sector organizations, nature-based organizations, and residents.

Destination Management Principles

Destination management principles should be present in all of a Destination Management Organization's (DMO's) role. DMOs strive to create benefits from tourism in an environment that is always changing. As such, the list of destination management principles will change for each destination. Common principles include:

- Sustainable development
- Community engagement
- Visitor satisfaction
- Economic benefits
- Cultural respect and preservation
- Environmental protection
- Crisis management and preparedness
- Marketing and branding
- Innovation

Cranbrook

Who Manages a Destination?

Various people and organizations contribute significantly to overall destination management. In a given destination, all or some of the various destination management roles may be handled by one or more of the following:

- Destination management organizations
- Local chambers of commerce
- Business improvement associations
- Economic development organizations
- First nations, municipal, regional, provincial, or federal governments
- Community groups, e.g., nature-based organizations, volunteer groups
- Tourism sector organizations
- Individual tourism businesses

Each brings a unique perspective, resource, and expertise to the table. More and more we are seeing the local residents being involved in destination management, and new trends are including visitors in this framework as well by asking them to pledge to travel responsibly. One example is the Camper's Code by Camping and RVing BC, which encourages visitors to camp responsibly by following their nine rules.

Because there can be many people and organizations involved, collaboration and alignment of effort is important for successful destination management. When people come together under a shared vision, they can pool resources, knowledge, and networks, and make a bigger impact.

> Read more about DMOs in BC's tourism ecosystem.

Read more about destination management & development, and find out which planning area and tourism region your location falls within by using our Planning Area Look Up Tool.

DESTINATION MANAGEMENT MULTI-STAKEHOLDER FRAMEWORK

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Pavilion

Radium Hot Springs

Destination Marketing Explained

Destination marketing is promoting a specific place and the essence of that place.

In the past, travel marketing often utilized printed materials like brochures and posters showing cross-country trains, art deco cruise ships or enchanted jungle monuments. In a digital age of global connectedness, destination marketing has changed its form. While you will still find printed materials, you will also find digital campaigns, social media strategies, influencer collaborations, and more.

Behind these efforts, destination marketing is an intricate system requiring immense collaborative effort. It's essential to remember that no single entity can effectively market a destination on their own. It relies on a network of partners, each contributing their marketable products and services. Hotels, tour operators, local artisans, and residents play integral roles in crafting and promoting a destination's story.

Imagine a DMO decides to create a new marketing campaign for their destination, a small town surrounded by mountains. They would likely hold discussions with sector organizations, and provincial and national DMOs to understand how their marketing campaign fits in with the broader marketing going on. Perhaps the BC Ale Trail sector organization is promoting local craft breweries to Canadian tour operators, Destination BC is promoting skiing through a digital campaign in the USA, and Destination Canada is promoting farm-to-table dining experiences through an international social media campaign. The local DMO may want to engage the community's craft brewery to participate in a travel trade familiarization tour, engage the ski resort to host a day of skiing with a well known outdoor adventure influencer, and engage the restaurants in the national social media campaign. They may also want to engage local hotels to discover opportunities for packages, or to determine when the lowest occupancy is in consideration of promotion timings.

In some cases, responsible destination management means promoting a destination in non-traditional ways that may not bring more visitors. This might be the case if a DMO has followed a community engagement process and discovered that a community's residents do not want more visitors than the level they already host.

In this case, a DMO might focus on shifting their marketing messaging to attract respectful travellers and high-value visitors that increase the economic benefits of tourism without increasing the quantity of visitors. A DMO's marketing efforts may also go towards inspiring travellers to come in the season when there is capacity or educating visitors on appropriate behaviour in the destination. A DMO may even play a role in restricting promotion or access to a destination, such as working with a park that is experiencing large crowds. Understanding when and where to promote a destination requires working with others to identify the best approaches.

WHO IS A RESPONSIBLE TRAVELLER?

This is a term that Destination BC has chosen to define a new segment of travellers. Generally, responsible travellers contribute to the well-being of communities and residents of BC. These are some of the characteristics of a responsible traveller:

LOW IMPACT
Mindful of their impact on a destination, especially highly visited destinations.

SMALL FOOTPRINT
Will consider when they visit, the resources they use, and the footprint they leave behind.

LOCAL BUSINESSES
Supportive of the local economy, favouring locally owned accommodations, restaurants, businesses, and guides.

LOCAL CULTURE
Knowledgeable and interested in the local culture and language.

BC's Globally Competitive Ecosystem

Over 92% of tourism businesses in BC are small businesses, with less than 50 employees. The reality is that most small tourism businesses and many communities in BC don't have the staff or funding to compete globally in attracting travellers and building their visitor economy. However, the BC tourism industry can reach beyond the limitations of individual capabilities and make a greater impact by working together.

Source: 2024 Value of Tourism, Destination BC

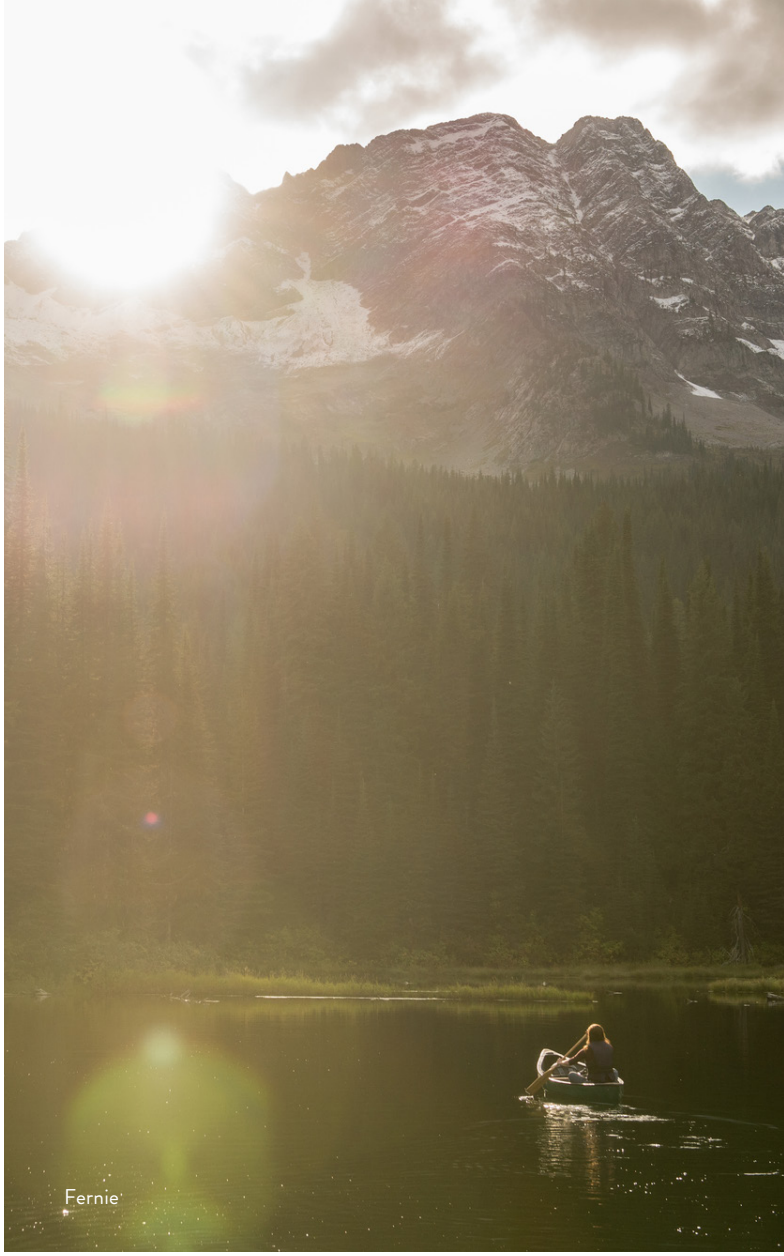
Around the world, the BC tourism industry has a reputation for working in a collaborative and cooperative way; an impactful way that achieves results. This is an important competitive advantage.

By fully leveraging the ecosystem of partners across the industry, working cohesively to share intelligence, integrating go-to-market strategies and systems, and combining individual resources and expertise, the BC tourism ecosystem is more able to meet goals, sustain profitable businesses, and provide benefits to the people living in BC through tourism.

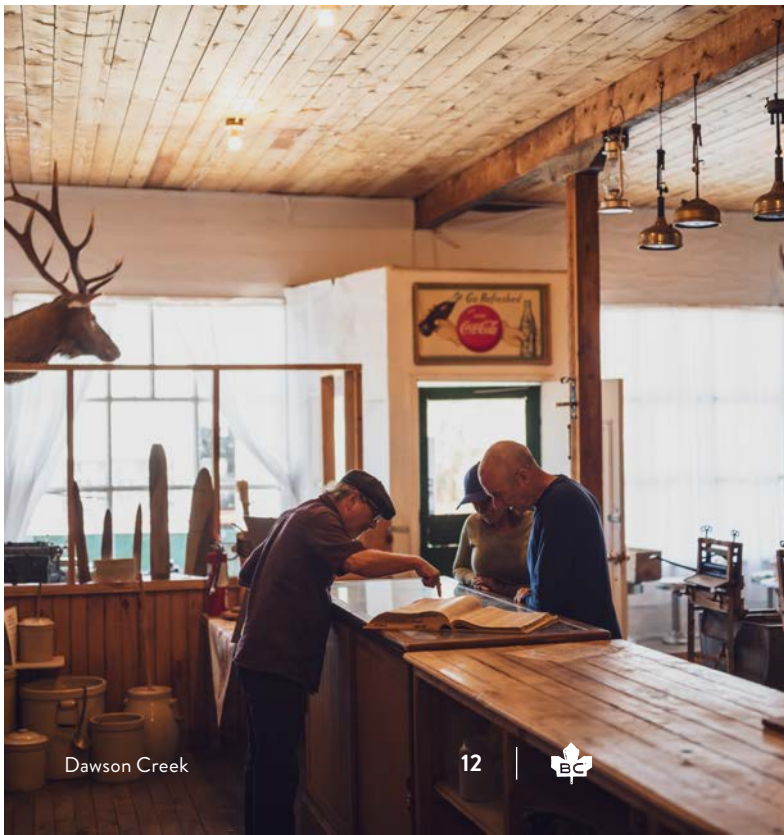
The Integral Role of DMOs

DMOs have undergone a significant transformation over the decades. From entities focused primarily on marketing, they've expanded their scope, embracing a myriad of roles that contribute to a destination's global competitiveness. This is why many DMOs have changed their title from "Destination Marketing Organizations" to "Destination Management Organizations".

The tasks of DMOs have evolved to match the needs of the destinations they represent and the demands of the modern traveller. Today, they take part in everything from sustainability initiatives to community relations, all while continuing their primary management and marketing activities.



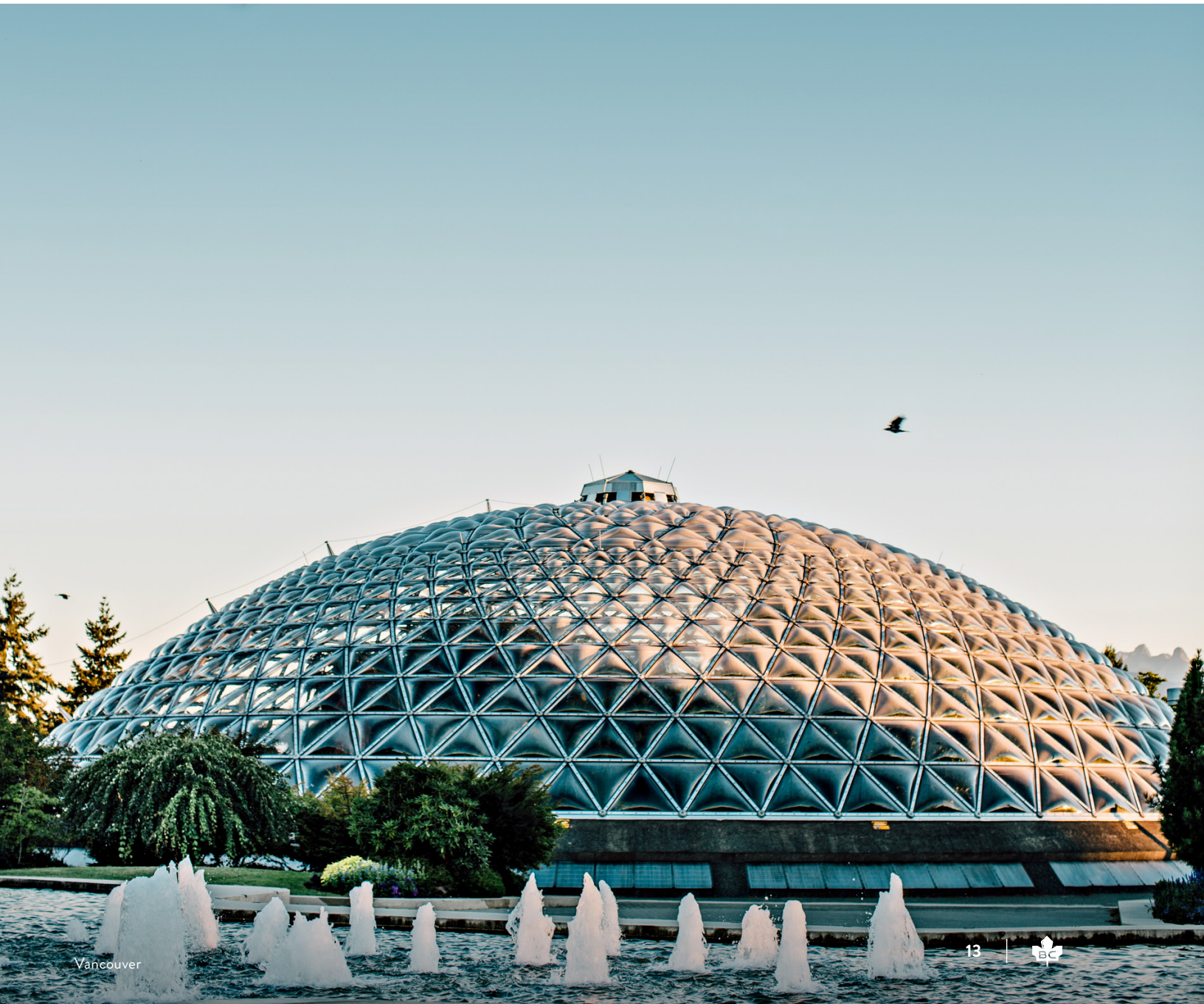
Fernie



Dawson Creek

Think about how the DMO role may change when considering these destinations:

- A small, rural farming community
- A vibrant urban city with a large convention centre and multiple sports arenas
- A coastal community next to a protected marine environment
- A suburban village close to a large urban area
- A four-season mountain resort with dozens of hotels
- A large popular lake area known as a summer playground for BC residents
- A small town that sees a lot of drive-through traffic from the highway
- A community that is a major transportation hub and cruise ship port of call



Vancouver

A Competitive Edge

DMOs play a crucial role in understanding and sharing the unique identities of destinations. Through research, strategy, and delivery, they position destinations in ways that make them stand out, while ensuring visitors get value-for-money experiences. The list of roles a DMO can take up is vast. At a high level, here are some primary functions of DMOs:

- **Destination management:** The coordinated management of all the elements that make up a tourism destination. Destination management takes a strategic approach to link-up these sometimes very separate elements for the better management of the destination*.
- **Partner collaboration:** They work closely with local businesses, government agencies, and communities to ensure an aligned and cohesive approach to tourism development.
- **Visitor services:** They provide information centers, maps, guides, and other resources to assist visitors.
- **Destination stewardship:** A multi-partner approach to maintaining the cultural, environmental, economic, and esthetic integrity of their country, region, or town.**
- **Research and data analysis:** DMOs gather and analyze data on visitor trends, preferences, and behaviours. This helps in understanding the market dynamics and forecasting future trends.
- **Marketing and promotion:** DMOs undergo market selection, work with travel trade and travel media, create content, design and implement both online and offline marketing campaigns, and more, all to attract potential visitors.
- **Community relations:** More than just representatives, DMOs are listeners. They give voice to local residents and tourism businesses, ensuring their concerns, ideas, and aspirations regarding tourism are heard and addressed.
- **Education and training:** DMOs often provide training programs for local businesses and partners to help build skills needed within the changing tourism ecosystem and uplift the overall quality of services offered to visitors.
- **Advocacy:** They represent the interests of the destination and local tourism businesses and organizations at regional, national, and international levels, advocating for supportive policies and funding.
- **Budgeting and funding:** DMOs manage budgets for tourism promotion and development, and often seek additional funding through grants, partnerships, or other means.
- **Digital presence:** In today's digital age, DMOs manage and update destination websites, social media channels, and other digital platforms to engage with and attract potential and current visitors.

*https://www.unwto.org/policy-destination-management#:~:text=Destination%20management%20consists%20of%20the,better%20management%20of%20the%20destination

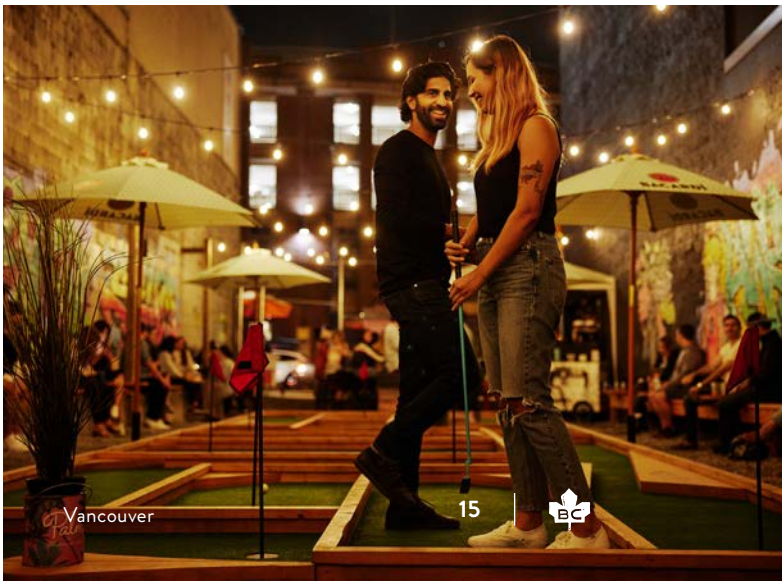
** https://www.gstcouncil.org/gstc-releases-destination-stewardship-starter-kit/

- **Sustainability initiatives:** They promote sustainable tourism practices, ensuring that tourism growth does not adversely affect the environment or local communities.
- **Crisis management:** In the event of a crisis, such as natural disasters, DMOs may take the lead or work with others in managing tourism-related communications and recovery strategies.
- **Feedback and continuous improvement:** DMOs actively seek feedback from visitors and partners, using this information to continuously refine strategies and initiatives.

New roles are emerging for DMOs as well. As a result, these organizations have become more sophisticated as they take on greater challenges within the tourism industry.

Ksan

Sombrio Beach


Vancouver

Every DMO is Unique

DMOs operate within diverse landscapes, and each has its own set of social, cultural, economic, and environmental characteristics, just as every destination has its unique charm, history, and challenges.

A DMO's strategies and initiatives should be tailored to highlight its destination's strengths and address its specific needs. For instance, a coastal town might partner with neighbouring communities to focus on promoting whale watching tours and marine conservation, while a network of mountain resorts may work together to promote themselves to climbing enthusiasts in international markets.

A DMO does not need to do everything in order to have a globally competitive and aligned destination.

Victoria

Collaboration Between DMOs

Collaboration is a theme throughout this resource, and collaboration between DMOs is no different. Instead of viewing neighbouring destinations as competitors, DMOs should see them as allies. By sharing insights, best practices, and even resources, DMOs can collectively elevate the entire region's appeal.

For example, two neighbouring towns could collaborate on a joint cultural festival, drawing visitors to both areas and sharing the operational, logistical, and promotional responsibilities. Alternatively, one town known for horseback riding that has multiple ranches may cross-promote a neighbouring town that has world-class river-rafting but no accommodations, and vice-versa.

The global community of DMOs is a resource to look to for knowledge and ideas. Challenges faced by one destination might have already been addressed and overcome by another. By encouraging a spirit of collaboration and knowledge-sharing, DMOs can learn from each other. This accelerates problem-solving and encourages a sense of global camaraderie among destinations.

Prince George

Nakusp

For inspiration on how to evolve a globally competitive and aligned destination, review the following case studies on Revelstoke and Chilliwack for practical insights into how these two BC-based destinations have managed to stay globally competitive, offering lessons in strategy, delivery, and innovation.

Strategies for Leveraging Destination Management

To ensure destinations are managed effectively and remain competitive, certain strategies and resources can be leveraged:

- **Funding avenues:** The Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT) is a significant source of funding for many DMOs in British Columbia, but there are other grants, partnerships, and private sector collaborations that can be explored. To find out more about MRDT, click here.
- **Continuous learning:** Find free resources and tools, featured articles, videos, and guides on specific destination management and marketing topics via Destination BC's Learning Centre on our website.
- **Best practices:** For more information on Destination BC's resources and opportunities to assist communities and tourism industry operators in growing and developing their businesses, click here.

CASE STUDY

GOING HOLISTIC

REVELSTOKE'S JOURNEY FROM TOURISM MARKETING TO DESTINATION MANAGEMENT

Revelstoke has long been a haven for outdoor enthusiasts. Tucked between the Monashee and Selkirk Mountain Ranges, adjacent to Mt Revelstoke National Park and home to four nations: the Sinixt, the Secwepemc, the Syilx and the Ktunaxa, the area abounds with natural beauty. Rail, forestry and natural resource industries built and sustained the town for more than 100 years. However, it has always served as a visitor destination, with its accessible mountain recreation luring mountaineers, hikers, and skiers to what was once referred to as "the capital of the Canadian Alps".

As Revelstoke is a small resort community with tourism playing a large role in its economy, there became a need to rally the community around the power of tourism and ensure it benefited residents.

Local DMO Tourism Revelstoke responded to the city's growing appeal to visitors. As a partner-driven DMO, it comprises the Revelstoke Accommodation Association and the Tourism Marketing department of the Revelstoke Chamber of Commerce. Above all else, the organization focused on destination marketing and worked in cooperation with the City of Revelstoke, Community Economic Development, Revelstoke Mountain Resort, Parks Canada, local clubs, local tourism partners, Kootenay Rockies Tourism, Destination BC, and Destination Canada.

However, a realization dawned within the community: despite the economic significance of tourism, it was believed there was a disconnect between the industry and the residents. This prompted Tourism Revelstoke to make a strategic decision to expand its mandate beyond marketing, leading to the ambitious decision of developing a Destination Management Plan (DMP) in 2021. The DMP aimed to guide the community's tourism vision while supporting broader values of life quality, stewardship, and economic prosperity.

While developing the DMP, Tourism Revelstoke adopted best practices from Destinations International's DestinationNEXT Futures Study. This gave the evolving DMO an approach focused on destination stewardship, community alignment, and digital conversion, marking a transition towards a more inclusive and holistic management strategy.

The DMP process emphasized leadership, engagement, and alignment, which ensured community support and direct commitment from everyone involved. Sustainability, evidence-based decision making, and destination development were given as much importance as marketing. The plan gave prominence to community-focused strategies like asset management, infrastructure, workforce development, and small business support.

The formation of the Revelstoke Tourism Alliance was another step in bringing industry and community together. The organization's goal was to harmonize the relationship between residents, visitors, and tourism operators, and this new alliance broadened partner involvement beyond the traditional actors in the tourism industry by bringing in diverse economic development groups including municipal government. This also symbolized Revelstoke's efforts to build unity.

While broadening its role towards comprehensive destination management, Tourism Revelstoke did not lose sight of marketing. Instead, it enhanced its approach with sophisticated digital strategies, including augmented reality, dynamic pricing, and hyper-personalized messaging. This tech-savvy approach aimed to integrate seamlessly with travel trade and e-commerce platforms.

Revelstoke, with its inherent tourism sensibility, is navigating the complex dynamics of a growing tourism industry. There is a concern that without careful management, a divide might emerge between residents, visitors, and operators, potentially hindering future investment and opportunities. Tourism Revelstoke's DMP process was a leading effort in the province, explicitly seeking input from residents as partners.

This shift from a marketing-focused role to a comprehensive destination management approach represents a significant stride towards a sustainable, community-focused tourism future in Revelstoke, ensuring tourism will remain a significant economic contributor in the city.

Mount Mackenzie

CASE STUDY

FRIENDS WORKING TOGETHER

HOW TOURISM CH'ILLIWACK EMBRACES INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES IN DESTINATION MANAGEMENT

East of Vancouver, through the farms of the Fraser Valley, Chilliwack is becoming a burgeoning tourism destination. With over 100,000 residents, the city is recognized for its outdoor experiences, attracting families from the Lower Mainland and beyond who are looking to unwind with sport fishing, resort experiences, and a flourishing arts and culture scene.

Chilliwack's Destination Management Organization (DMO), Tourism Ch'illiwack, began in 1998, evolving from the Chilliwack Economic Partners Corporation. It became an official DMO in 2006, representing not just Chilliwack but its surrounding rural areas. Initially, its focus was largely on destination marketing, but a significant shift was on the horizon.

The 2017-2021 Strategic Business Plan of Tourism Ch'illiwack emphasized marketing, partnership development, and organizational excellence. However, the 2022-2027 Tourism Strategic Plan marked a pivotal transition from a marketing-focused DMO to a broader, management-oriented approach, particularly in collaboration with Indigenous communities.

A key element in this transition was the desire to work closely with local First Nations, leading to the creation of the Síyá:ya Yóyes Friends Working (Together) Plan. Developed in collaboration with the Stó:lō Nation and Four Directions Management Services, this plan was created to ensure Tourism Ch'illiwack was inclusive in their work and contributes to the National Truth and Reconciliation plan and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The values embodied in the plan went well beyond the marketing realm into matters of Indigenous visitor experiences, cultural sharing, labour market issues, and environmental sustainability. Importantly, engagement enabled Tourism Ch'illiwack to integrate their existing strategies, frameworks, and policies and expand their collaboration, skills, and expertise to make a "culturally safe organization" in partnership with the Stó:lō.

Chilliwack

Immediate progress followed. Stó:lō representation on the Tourism Ch'illiwack Board and the integration of Indigenous themes into marketing and visitor experiences were significant steps. The well-loved Welcome Figures at the Tourism Ch'illiwack Visitor Centre and the inclusion of Indigenous symbols in tourism branding exemplified this new approach. Since the plan, new Indigenous experiences and businesses have emerged, such as the Bad Rock Place Names Tours and the Stó:lō Gift Shop.

The 2022-2027 plan of Tourism Ch'illiwack builds on these foundations, focusing on cultural sensitivity, responsible tourism, and accessibility. It seeks to ensure sustainability in tourism practices, diversity, and inclusivity in business operations, and the development of more Indigenous experiences.

Tourism Ch'illiwack stands out as a pioneer among Canadian community DMOs for integrating Indigenous participation and values into its core operations and planning. Its evolution into a partner-based destination management organization reflects a broader, Indigenous-informed worldview of tourism.

The Síyá:ya Yóyes Friends Working (Together) Plan, developed with the Stó:lō Nation, represents a holistic approach to destination management. It not only acknowledges but actively incorporates Stó:lō values, principles, and perspectives into Ch'illiwack's tourism narrative, making it a better way forward.

Summary

Destinations around the world are competing for the attention of global travellers who can bring economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits. In this environment, a destination's competitiveness relies on its ability to manage and market itself.

Destination management requires a shared vision and common approach to keep a destination aligned and globally competitive in an ever changing world. A DMO, working together with the tourism industry and partners, must ensure a balanced approach is taken in the sustainable operation of a destination, support its growth, and protect its tourism resources. Additionally, it must work collaboratively to share the destination's appeal with a global audience through strategic marketing efforts.

To maintain relevance and attract their desired demographic of travellers, destinations must have strengths in strategic management, partner for effective marketing, and be able to adapt their activities to shifting visitor and industry demands. A great DMO is able to facilitate the power of travel.

Vancouver

For additional information and comments, please contact the Destination and Industry Development team at Destination BC by email at destinationandindustrydevelopment@destinationbc.ca

Squamish

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BRITISH COLUMBIA®

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