


Summer 2012

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Marketing Vermont as a Multicultural Brand

Shambulia Gadsden Sams

PIM 69/70

A Capstone Paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Sustainable Development, with a concentration in Policy Analysis and Advocacy at the SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont, USA

July 2012

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Student name: Shambulia Gadsden Sams Date: July 27, 2012

Introduction

What initially brought me to Vermont, specifically Brattleboro, was me accepting the position as the Youth Outreach Coordinator for Youth Services. Like many of my family and friends that I've spoken with about my move, we all had the same one word question. Vermont? Yet, they knew that my love for venturing into unforeseen territory is what has always entertained my curiosity.

Getting settled into town, a co-worker invited me out to dinner to meet some of her friends. Having a great time, as we sat and waited for our dinner to arrive, one of my co-worker's friends asked, "so, you're a Black American and a woman, what are you doing here in Vermont?" An immensely uncomfortable silence came over everyone as they looked at each other, then at me. Take note that the only persons of color amongst the 6 of us were I and my co-worker who is Nepali. In haste she tried to recant her question, with an even worse question, "I mean, I mean why would, you want to be in Vermont?" At this time everyone was adjusting and re-adjusting themselves in their seats nervously, using their body language to express the air of frustration and disgust that had hovered over our table. She tried, yet again. "Well, I mean, you don't see a lot of..., I mean what would bring African Americans to Vermont?"

I remember this incident so vividly, because a) it was my first experience of being a domestic person of color in Vermont, b) I had never before had to be so aware of my race, and c) I had never been in an environment where such naïve questions would be uttered in public. Since that incident, I have regularly

come into contact with a "hello," and a list of questions and conversations about why I am a person of color in Vermont, without directly saying the word,

Black. "Hello, are you a SIT student? Excuse me, Hi are you visiting? Hello, are you a SIT student, Hi what country are you from, Hello, are you a SIT student, are you a SIT student and are you a SIT student?..." In addition to being singled out as a person who "just could not be from Vermont," not having readily accessibility to necessities of my culture—food, hair and skin products, music, movies at the theaters, reading materials (magazines, etc) and just people of my culture to share a common bond with – presents another set of challenges. Indeed a group of us get together a few times each month to talk and laugh about our experiences as "domestic people of color" in Vermont, and the experience of being the Token and Victims of Vermonters' quest for diversity and ethnic sensitivity.

During my 6-month practicum at Vermont Partnership for Fairness and Diversity (VPFD), I was privileged to have worked with VPFD's client base that consisted mainly of persons of color, people with disabilities, those who identified with an alternative sexual orientation and those who have experienced some form of discrimination in Vermont. On one particular day, an African American client, who also identifies as homosexual, was waiting to meet with the Social Justice Advocate. We began a general conversation about the systemic issues that plaque Brattleboro and Vermont in general when it comes to people of color. As we concluded our conversation, I asked him, "Why, do you feel this form of discrimination towards minorities, particularly people of color is so passive yet aggressively accepted in Vermont?" His response was clam and

direct, "because white people of Vermont do not come into contact with domestic diversity on a day to day basis and that has a direct influence on how they think, speak and act. "Why would you want to move to a state that is clearly white-centered and say it's because you want a better way of life?" "As a person of color, you just told me, that you want to move as far away from people who look like me as possible.

Literature Review

The United States of American has an estimated population of 313,424,000 as of 2010 (308,745,538 at the time of the April 1, 2010 U.S. census bureau deadline). Considered the most ethnically diverse country in the world, the United States is the nation that everyone watches to see what move to make next, whether in politics, economics, media, entertainment, or whatever. As the saying goes, if the U.S. sneezes the rest of the world catches a cold. Consistently evolving, race diversity is at its highest and most rapid growth in the U.S. due to the increase in the minority populations. It is estimated that the United States will soon become a Minority Majority (alternatively majority minority) nation. According to the U.S. census bureau, "By 2050, minorities will be the majority in America and the number of residents older than 65 will more than double." Minorities are classified as those other than non-Hispanic, single-race whites.

Due to the increasing visibility of the minority populations in the United States, it would be rational to expect a reflection of that in the marketing of the nation as a whole, and of each state specifically.

Vermont has long been one of the U.S.'s least diverse states, yet, according to the 2010 census the racial and ethnic variety grew slightly during the past decade in Vermont as the percentage of the state's population of non-Hispanic-whites dropped from approximately 96% in 2000 to 94% in 2010. The number of persons identifying as Black more than doubled to 6,277 (Blacks make-up 1% of Vermonters). The Hispanic population (which can be any race)

rose by 67% to 9,208 and Asians and those identifying as two or more races, increased by 50%. However, this growth is not reflected in the marketing of Vermont.

This leads me to the following question and sub questions:

How will the marketing of Vermont as a Multicultural Brand, encourage the welcoming of domestic people of color to the state?

1. What are the emerging tourism marketing trends of the United States?
2. How is Vermont currently marketed?
3. Is there a tourism market for People of Color in Vermont?
4. Is there a need for a multicultural market?

Beverly Colston of Essex Junction is an African American who grew up in Brooklyn, NY and moved to Vermont in 1989. Colston is the director of the University of Vermont's ALANA student center. "I always wanted to live abroad, and moving to Vermont became a way to do that without changing countries." "And that's the truth." Colston stated of the differences between her adopted state and Brooklyn. "The Green Mountain state is a bustling tourism destination. Skiing, foliage, hiking, camping and history are a few of the major tourist attractions that bring many onlookers and thrill seekers to the state, as well as employment for local Vermonters. Yet, the unemployment rate of the state is at a staggering 4.5%, half of the national average.

In the field of marketing, it is emphasized that the # 1 doctrine to effective marketing is the consumers' ability to visualize themselves using the product. It is the responsibility of the advertisers, to populate their ads with people who look like their prospective consumers. Reporting on a three-day Governor's conference in Florida convened to discuss how to racially diversify the state's marketing strategies, business writer Katherine Hull Scott writes in her article, "Tourism Ads Must Appeal to Ethnic Diversity," that "the one-size-fits-all approach to tourism advertising no longer works, given the increasing diversity of Americans who take vacation."

The state of Florida understood the accelerating market growth of racial minorities, and also that the retention of prospective white tourists is not the standard any more. "More than 70 percent of the nation's population growth between 1990 and 2010 will be among Blacks, Hispanics and Asians, " said Isabel Valdes, president of Cultural Access Group, a California consulting firm that studies cultural markets. "Those minority groups represent billions of dollars worth of purchasing power, and their incomes will grow," Valdes said during the 32nd Annual Governor's Conference on Tourism. "Multicultural markets are the largest growing segment of the population," said Dee Ann Smith, vice president of marketing for Visit Florida, the state's tourism-promotion agency. Florida did a major revamping of their marketing strategy to reach out to the growing

minority markets. As a result, Visit Florida developed two separate campaigns targeting Black and Hispanic tourists. As reported by Katherine Hull Scott¹

1. The campaign for Black tourists will include advertisement on nationwide cable TV, in newspapers in 10 American cities on the Tom Joyner radio show which is carried in 142 U.S. markets.
2. Visit Florida's Hispanic campaign will have ads on cable TV throughout Latin America and in several U.S. cities, in Vista magazine in 42 US cities and in magazine ads in 19 Latin American countries.

Similarly, the 2010 Winter Olympics held in Vancouver, British Columbia was used as a vehicle for new advertisements to promote in the province. Featured in the new commercials were notable Canadian celebrities such as Michael J. Fox, Sarah McLachlan, Erick McCormack, Steve Mash, Ryan Reynolds and Kin Cattrall. There are two versions of the commercial the 30-second version, which was aired globally, clearly target a potential tourist base, white tourist². Yet, the 90-second version, which was never aired, you see a "cluster spot" of people of color³.

Posted by the Kirwan Institute on their race-talk blog, titled, "Does British Columbia only want White tourists?" Bloggers debated the obvious, "We can't

¹ Katherine Hutt Scott, "Tourism Ads Must Appeal to Ethnic Diversity," August 03, 1999; http://articles.sun-sentinel.com/1999-08-03/business/9908020704_1_visit-florida-black-tourists-tourism-advertising

² <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVcQ86Omn0I>

³ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8TifoYipZD4>

really know what their intention-conscious or subconscious-was in making obviously Caucasian-centric tourist ads, but the result is the promo that exclusively targets White tourists.

1. What is Tourism British Colombia thinking?
2. Is it that there aren't any PoC (people of color) out there with money that isn't worth marketing to as well?
3. Surely, they're not thinking that the only good tourist dollar is a *White* tourist's dollar, are they?"

Despite the increased number of racial minorities in the state, as well as, the continual growth of racial diversity in the United States, Vermont's vision of tourism seems to have stagnated, in that it is still Caucasian-centric. The Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing advertises throughout the North-Atlantic and East Coast, with an additional office in Massachusetts. Vermont also markets extensively internationally, covering Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United Kingdom.

The closest Vermont has come to embracing and expanding their message of multiculturalism is in their advertisement for international (i.e. non-American) tourists. Even then, the message is still Caucasian-centric; for instance, the Vermont tourism websites and magazines targeting Japan do not reflect images of the market or ethnicity.

The lack of diversity in tourism marketing has grabbed the attention of many scholars and educational institutions. At East Carolina University located in

Greenville, North Carolina, their MS in Sustainable Tourism degree has developed a Race, Ethnicity, Social Equity and Tourism (RESET) initiative. Through this program scholars investigate the economic and environmental sustainability of the social-cultural aspects of tourism development. As is states in the description of the RESET initiative:

The concept of sustainability stresses responsible management of the social-cultural aspects of tourism development as well as its economic and environmental aspects. RESET is a research and outreach initiative that seeks to identify, study, and challenge patterns of social inequity in the current tourism industry. Special attention is focused on enhancing the role of racial and ethnic minorities in tourism-as visitors to destinations, employees and entrepreneurs in the industry, and the focus of marketing and tourist site development. Little sustained work has been done on the preferences, characteristics, and challenges of minority travelers and there is a need to incorporate the natural and cultural heritage of racial and ethnic populations into tourism products available to the consuming public. In addition to being a convenient acronym RESET captures the progressive nature of the initiative and the belief that tourism development, if done in sustainable and responsible ways, can be tools for racial reconciliation and minority

empowerment—in effect pushing the “reset” on the inequalities and insensitivities of the traditional tourism industry.

The need to research, shape and reshape the trends in the tourism industry where minority travelers are concerned is a focus that will be around for a long time. Presently, as stated by the RESET initiative, the research focus appears to be based on the following themes or the thematic areas:

1. Social Equity and Representation of Slavery in Plantation Heritage Tourism
2. Racial Diversity and Social Responsibility | Tourism Marketing
3. Constructing the African American Traveler Profile
4. Opportunities and Challenges Facing Civil Rights Movement Heritage Tourism

What is clearly evident from the literature review is those professionals understand the shift in the tourism market, and the increasing need to expand marketing efforts to include different racial and ethnic profiles. The research focus conducted at East Carolina University is more relevant to the southern states, yet, 2 of the four points are also germane to the northern states with the inclusion of relevant research topics:

1. Racial Diversity and Social Responsibility in Tourism Marketing
2. Constructing the African American Traveler Profile
3. Opportunities and Challenges facing African Americans contributions to Vermont dating from slavery.

4. Social Equity and Representation of African American in Vermont's Cultural Heritage Tourism.

Racial diversity and good business go hand in hand, and the changing domestic demographics are forcing tourism markets to be more inclusive to maintain a competitive advantage. Vermont, like all other states and countries, must be cognizant of this, and must double their efforts to embrace the demographic changes in their populations, and in the tourism market at large.

Research/Practitioner Inquiry Design

Located far up north near the Canadian border, Vermont is also called the Green Mountain state, a reflection of its foliage, agriculture, state parks, ski slopes and people. Full of colors at different times of the year—reds, oranges, blues, greens, whites and more whites—if the colors of nature could represent the population of the state, it will be like the 1998 movie Pleasantville.

Pleasantville is a movie about two teenagers from the 21st century who get pulled into a 1958 black and white sitcom where everyone and everything is undisturbed. As the two teenagers begin to introduce the citizens of Pleasantville to the nature of the world, Pleasantville begins to change from black and white into color, including the flowers, books, paintings, cars and the faces of people who have experience passion or change. As more citizens of Pleasantville become more colorful and passionate, and others, who are resistant, stay black and white, they begin to discover the insavory aspects of the 20th century human culture, such as racial segregation, the burning of books and the public harassment of anyone who is “colored.” The resistant “black and white” citizens, see the changes as eating away at the “moral values” of the town and begin painting everything black and white. Being unsuccessful, the remainder of the black and white citizens of Pleasantville begins to accept the change of the town and begin to turn into color also. As a result, the entire town becomes colored, and the people of Pleasantville are finally introduced to the rest of the world.

When I look at the environment of Vermont, I can't help but to align the state with the citizens of Pleasantville, the rapid recent growth of racial diversity and attempts at marketing the state more broadly notwithstanding. Vermont is still slower and more resistant than the rest of the United States to demographic shifts, even as the same shift is accelerating in the mid-Atlantic region (New England including New York) in which Vermont is situated. In the not too distant future, fewer white tourists will be filling Vermont's ski slopes, state parks, restaurants and lodgings. Like many states and countries worldwide, Vermont uses the tourism industry to aggressively market the state as a travel and business destination. To date, however, Vermont's tourism has not been effectively marketed to the growing number of ethnic and racial minorities, same sex couples, and persons with disabilities who are increasingly becoming major consumers of tourism services.

As I stated previously, one of the key doctrines of effective marketing is that consumers must be able to visualize themselves using the product. The responsibility for attracting potential, non-white tourists lies with the advertisers who market the state, who need to populate their ads with content that reflects the image and interests of those prospective consumers. So what message is Vermont trying to send?

Even though Vermont is the 2nd Whitest state in the United States, it's unofficially known as "the whitest state in the United States." This visual representation of Vermont translates into an unintended message of ostracizing

minority tourists, as well as diverting attention from the emerging multicultural marketplaces that exist here in Vermont. For prospective Black/African Americans tourists, the image of “the whitest state in the United States” sends a message that provokes thoughts of the continual historical and contemporary isolation of White Americans and Blacks/African Americans.

As quoted earlier in the paper, Colston argues that “I always wanted to live abroad, and moving to Vermont became a way to do that without changing countries,” as she teased out the differences between her adopted state and Brooklyn. Focusing exclusively on prospective Caucasian-centric tourists places the state’s tourism and hospitality industry at unnecessary risk. According to the Vermont Travel Industry Conference, visitors to Vermont spend \$1.61 billion dollars annually on goods and services that directly support 37,500 Vermont jobs. Yet, this is a great decrease from the \$1.84 billion dollars spent, and that directly supported 40,500 jobs 10 years ago. That is a decrease of 3,000 jobs over the past ten years. Can Vermont afford this continual downward spiral?

Sending a powerful message to prospective minority tourists that they and their dollars are welcomed can be achieved via the following strategy. Minority agricultural producers and processors, innkeepers, restaurant owners and general business owners, skiers, cyclists, hikers and other outdoors enthusiasts and everyday people could be regularly showcased in Vermont tourism media sites and publications.

According to the article African-American Travel Preferences Detailed in New Poll, "A new poll conducted by the Washington, D.C.-Mandala Research suggest, "that cultural heritage plays a key role when it comes to destination selection for African –Americans travelers, with more than one-third "very likely" to take a trip where stories and sites related to Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement are available. "In Vermont alone I was able to identify and catalogue 94 historical African American sites and influential people from slavery to the 20th century. However, Vermont only recognizes just 1 site, the Daisy Turner site. Daisy Turner, born in Grafton, VT, was the daughter of freed slaves born. Daisy was famous for her oral recordings of her family's history, which can be traced back to Africa and England. She lived to the age of 105 years old.

The Mandala Research, outlines the travel habits and preferences of African-American travelers, and also suggests, "A significantly higher percentage of these vacationers would visit more parks if they saw greater diversity among employees and visitors." Sheila Armstrong, chair of the U.S. Cultural heritage Tourism Marketing Council state African American travel community, and will go a long way to significantly improving the travel experience for this market." The specific findings include the following:

1. 44 percent of African Americans would visit more parks if they saw greater diversity among employees and visitors, a number that

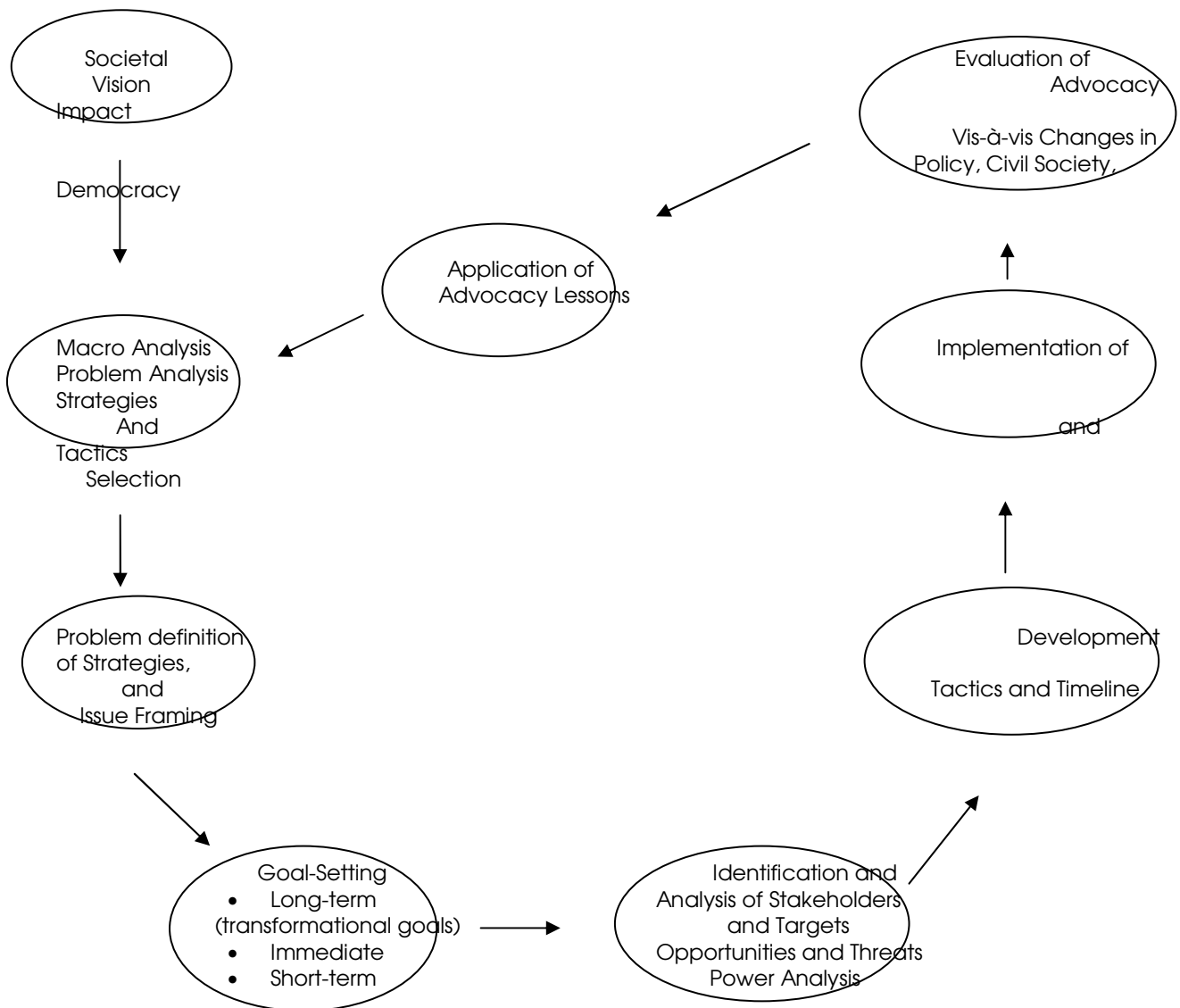
increased significantly to 65 percent amongst the “Curious and Engaged” segment.

2. 46 percent indicating it is very important for leisure trips to include activities that teach their children about African American history and culture.
3. Entertainment magazines are effective mediums for reaching this market, with more than 40 percent of travelers acknowledging they read Essence. Facebook is another popular outlet for African-Americans with more than two-thirds indicating they read and post to the social website.

This brings me to why I choose to use Black/African Americans as the focal point/case study for research:

1. It's who I am, it's my culture
2. Majority of studies focused on race, ethnicity, etc tend to compare Caucasians and Black/African Americans.
3. The Vermont Department of Tourism and marketing has begun an intensive initiative in researching Black History and contributions to the state of Vermont.
4. Highest number of race crimes and discrimination (violent and non-violent) in the state of Vermont are committed against African-Americans.

Using the Advocacy Process and Strategy Development Model from the institute from the Development Research, Advocacy Sourcebook, I was able to outline the steps that could be taken in advocating for the Effective Marketing of Vermont as a Multicultural Brand. The Advocacy Process and Strategy Development Model is presented below:



According to the census bureau, Maine, Vermont and New Hampshire all have predominantly Caucasian populations-at least 96% of the state's populations.

1. The 10 whitest states, which are more than 90% white (5-10 in no particular order):

1. Maine 96.9%	6. Wyoming
2. Vermont 96.7%	7. Idaho
3. New Hampshire	8. Montana
4. West Virginia	9. Kentucky
5. Iowa	10. North Dakota

According to John Tucker of the Race and Justice Center in Burlington, VT, "a small number of people with the same background combined with a lack of job opportunities and cultural offerings keep minority populations away." "Being Black in Vermont today is like being Jackie Robinson when he broke baseball's color barrier." "They are evaluated differently." They are put under great pressure and that certainly happened to Jackie Robinson for the first two years after his entry into baseball. Yet, "there are small communities that exist in rural outposts, who are trying to pave the way for growing diversity."

Vermont's demographic shift is slower than the remainder of the nation, and even slower in comparison with their neighbors in the regional market that

starts in New York through the mid-Atlantic states to Canada. There is clearly enough room for the state of Vermont's Department of Tourism and Marketing to begin aggressively marketing Vermont as a multi-cultural brand, as a destination for the growing number of ethnic and racial minorities. How precisely might the department utilize the advocacy model schematized above to achieve this end?

Societal Vision:

Effectively Market Vermont as Multicultural Brand, with the objective of attracting people to, or retaining them in, the state of Vermont regardless of their current demographic profile in the state.

Macro Analysis

The current marketing of Vermont succeeds only in perpetuating the state's distinction as the "Whitest state" in the nation. This sends an unintended and implicit message to minority populations that the state may not be hospitable to them.

Problem Definition and Issue Framing

One of the key doctrines of effective marketing is that the consumer must be able to visualize themselves utilizing the product. The responsibility of attracting potential non-traditional tourists therefore lies with Vermont's marketers, who must populate their ads with images and content that reflect the interests of the prospective consumers.

Long Term Goal Setting

Race, Ethnicity and Social Equity representation in Tourism Marketing will become the norm as the nation’s demography shifts towards ethnic minorities.

Immediate Goal Setting

VPDF has successfully advocated for the development of an African-American Cultural Heritage Trail, sponsored by the Vermont Department on Tourism and Marketing as a model representation of multicultural tourism marketing and advertising.

Short-Term Goal Setting

I was appointed as the consultant on the marketing of the Legal Rights of Women in Vermont report, which is circulated throughout the state of Vermont, as well as, the neighboring New England states.

Identification and Analysis of Stakeholders and Targets

Identification of Stakeholders

Resource	Functions	Stakeholders	Comments
Tourism Marketing	Managing all aspects of Vermont’s Tourism and Marketing	Vermont Commission on Tourism and Marketing	
Historical sites and records	Historical sites	Museums Schools	All communities have open access to this resource.

		Tourists Tour operators Business community	Those individuals and institutions who visit the historical sites for educational value.
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Analyzing the legitimacy of stakeholders

During the planning process to establish an African American Cultural Heritage Trail Tour in the state of Vermont, a stakeholder analysis was carried out, for the purpose of assessing and comparing the rights of the various stakeholders. At the time when this was done, there were a variety of existing and potential users of the resource that included farmers, local business owners, conservation groups, tourism developers and a number of government agencies with different and at times diverging agendas. The stakeholders that were found to be of immediate importance was the Vermont Commission on Tourism and Marketing, museums, schools, tourists, tour operators and the business community.

To assess and compare the stakeholders, the following criteria were ranked against each stakeholder:

1. The extent to which they depend on the resource to sustain and/ or contribute to their livelihoods.
2. The compatibility of their resource to contribute to the marketing and retention of current and prospective consumer.

3. The present and potential impact of the activities of the stakeholder on the resource base.
4. The knowledge and skills that they are able to contribute to the marketing process.
5. The extent to which there is equity in access to, in distribution of the benefits from, the use of the resource.
6. The compatibility between local and national development.
7. The level of financial input to manage the process.
8. The extent to which the stakeholders group is truly representative of the interests it purports to represent.
9. The extent to which they are willing to partner and cooperate with other stakeholders.
10. The geographic proximity of the group to the resources.

This analysis concluded that the Vermont Commission on Tourism and Marketing has a particularly strong claim to the use of the resource, because they have the advantage to revise and execute a marketing strategy that will target prospective tourists.

Development Strategies, Tactics and Timeline

To complete the proposed scope of work within a six-month period, the two tasks for the VDTM that is being proposed—one is the proper marketing/advertising of the state to attract non-white visitors, and the other is the creation of an African-American Cultural Heritage Trail. In six months I would

like to see both scopes of work executed. Below is a listing of the development strategies:

1. Established criteria (including public and physical accessibility issues, historical accuracy, and public programs availability) to determine what to include in an African American Cultural Heritage Trail. Created a criteria review committee with membership or representation from the Vermont Department of Tourism & Marketing and the Vermont Historical Society.
2. Identified and catalogue a minimum of 15 sites of historical significance to African American history in Vermont, and ensure that they are publicized on websites, hotels tourism information centers, etc.
3. Vermont Partnership for Fairness and Diversity provided advisory assistance as needed to VDTM for the development of the African American Cultural Heritage Trail.
4. Facilitated the promotion of the African American Cultural Heritage Trail concept to Vermont hospitality and tourism business through meetings with VDTM staff and Visit Vermont, Vermont Attractions, and Vermont Tourism Network staff to develop outreach efforts via the Vermont Chamber of Commerce.

5. Provided a list of up to 10 Vermont organizations that represent or service the needs of Vermont's ethnic and racial minorities (including title, scope, website, contact information) that VDTM should contact to promote the Heritage Trail.
6. Prepared written reports summarizing existing African American history sites in Vermont, and include recommendations for potential state stewardship of selected sites. Meet with representative of Vermont Historical Society and Vermont Division for Historic Preservation to present and discuss report.
7. Assisted the Vermont tourism industry in promoting the Vermont brand to recreational and professional associations of ethnic, racial and linguistic minorities throughout the United States by providing a list (including title, scope, website and contact information) of a minimum of 50 such organizations and media outlets. Promote brand messaging to VPFD's core constituents of ethnic and racial minorities in their e-newsletter Fairness Matters, website, website (www.vermontpartnership.org) and social media.
8. Identified a minimum of 13 prospective freelance writers and photographers from Vermont and New England's population of ethnic and racial minorities and supply sample images and writing samples of up to one half of those identified.

9. Recommended up to 10 story ideas for Vermont Life magazine.
10. Recommended to the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation African American historic sites for inclusion on their register of Vermont State Historic sites.

Evaluation of Advocacy Impact vis-à-vis Changes in Policy, Civil Society, and Democracy

1. Identified and authenticated 94 prospective sites for the African American Cultural Heritage Trail.
2. Received a state grant to develop the African American Cultural Heritage Trail.
3. Gained Governor Shumlin's endorsement on the need of changing the public perception of the marketing of the state of Vermont's tourism marketing, as well, as within political representation.
4. Media monitoring
5. Coordinated a blue ribbon committee, charged with reviewing the criteria by which prospective sites will be evaluated for inclusion on the Heritage Trail.
6. Had one in-person meeting with email updates over the past three to four months.

Application of Advocacy Lessons:

I am advocating for the Effective Marketing of Vermont as a Multicultural Brand. During my research I particularly advocated towards the push for:

1. Equal representation of minorities in Vermont tourism marketing
2. The expansion of Vermont's tourism marketing beyond a Caucasian-centric audience.
3. Advocate for the creation of an African American Cultural Heritage Trail.

The application consisted of the following:

- Choose 15 potential sites for the African American Cultural Heritage Trail.
- Received confirmation or participation from members of the Blue Ribbon Committee pane. The Blue Ribbon Committee consisted of (names are withheld for confidentiality):
 - i. Commissioner to the Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing
 - ii. Commissioner to the Vermont Commission on Women-myself
 - iii. Cultural Heritage Tourism Coordinator- Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing
 - iv. Director of the Rokeby Museum
 - v. Arthur of African American history in Vermont
 - vi. Educators from the University of Vermont

- vii. Marlboro College Dean of Admission
- viii. Direct Services Coordinator for the Vermont Center for Independent Living
- ix. Cultural Heritage Tourism Coordinator for the Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing
- x. Executive Director of Vermont Partnership for Fairness and Diversity

- Sent out Blue Ribbon invites to potential Blue Ribbon Committee, with criteria list for review attached for the convening of the first panel discussion and presentation.
- Developed 2.5 hour presentation for the Blue Ribbon Committee.
- Developed potential story ideas for the VT Living Tourism magazine.
- Facilitate initial Blue Ribbon Committee panel discussion, with 7 or the 15 initial members of Blue Ribbon Committee present, held in Montpelier, VT.
- Developed a model African American Heritage Cultural Trail.
- Evaluated social media sites.
- Successfully modified the marketing image of the Legal Rights for Vermont Women report and rack cards. This report and rack cards were requested by Governor Shumlin, distributed to all political offices and institutions and general institutions throughout Vermont, as well as, neighboring New England states.

Analysis of Data

This study utilized qualitative research to describe and assess an advocacy case study. The objective was to bridge the knowledge and operations gaps to strengthen the Vermont brand in order to attract previously overlooked non-traditional tourist from ethnic and racial minority groups to the state. Vermont Partnership for Fairness and Diversity formed a mixed Blue Ribbon Committee, consisting of 15 professionals of different races, different professional spheres, gender and who have resided in the state of Vermont for more than 5 years consecutively. VPFD structured the panel to include a 2.5 hour presentation and a packet including the Vermont African American Cultural Heritage Trail Tour selection criteria, identified listing of media outlets that represent or service the needs of African American tourist and a timeline of progress.

The panel took place at the Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing located in Montpelier, VT and comprised of members of the Blue Ribbon Committee. The Blue Ribbon Committee included 7 of the 15 committee members. The 7 members included 1 male, 6 women, 2 African Americans, 5 Caucasians, 2 Commissioners, 1 educator and 4 museum curators/historians.

The data on the African American Cultural Heritage Trail was gathered through library and historical society research. That data produced 94 potential African American historical sites, people and contributions to Vermont's history. The structured 2.5 hour presentation included an open-ended discussion,

approval and recommendations of proposed sites. The first part of the presentation focused on the project objective and the economic imperative, the second part emphasized the site selection process and the triage matrix, the third part focused on the preliminary site picks and the final portion of the panel and presentation entailed the details of the discussion, decision making process, implementation discussion and progress timeline. Data was recorded during the panel and presentation by means of detailed hand-written notes that were taken by the facilitator, myself.

The data compilation consisted of the discussion, decision making process, implementation discussion and progress timeline. Each section was categorized by the responses of the members of the Blue ribbon Committee, as well as, their stated approval or disapproval. Once the responses were collected, I determined the emergent trends and themes. As a final part of my analysis I noted any new submissions of historical sites that the group researched and discovered to submit for consideration.

I encountered one limitation. The limitation was that of the Blue Ribbon Member Committee. The study was designed to sample 15 members; however, the scope of data that was obtained was very limited due to the small sampling of 7 Blue Ribbon Member Committee members and 1 member that had to leave 30 minutes before the conclusion of the panel. With the data collected, VPFD submitted it to the Blue Ribbon Committee for evaluation. During the remainder of the 6 months the data will a) go through the 3 meeting process

with the Blue Ribbon Committee, which is stated below b) submitted to the Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing for Approval c) develop a model diagram and GIS mapping of the historical trail and d) develop a marketing strategy. The Blue Ribbon committee was charged with reviewing the criteria by which prospective sites will be evaluated for inclusion on the African American Cultural Heritage Trail. The work of the Committee consisted of the following:

First Meeting

Finalize the proposed selection criteria

Second Meeting

- a) To discuss sites that VPFD research has found meets the criteria.
- b) Recommend to the Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing sites for inclusion to the Trail.

Third Meeting

To designate sites to the Heritage Trail rests with the Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing.

Here is a general synopsis of my findings:

1. There are 94 African American historical sites, people and contributions to Vermont's history.
2. Identified 25 media outlets to market the African American Cultural Heritage Trail and Vermont tourism in general.
3. Identified 10 African American outdoors clubs

4. There was 1 African American park ranger in Vermont's history.
5. Small business owners not born in Vermont came first as tourists and relocated to the state afterwards.
6. 17% of Vermont's minority population own business and create jobs versus 12% for Vermont's white population.

Conclusion

As the United States forms a 'majority-minority' nation, Vermont continues to hold tight to the Caucasian-centric image of its population which is reflected through their tourism marketing. Studies have shown that the advantage of diversifying the marketing strategies of the state will not only diversify Vermont's market in terms of business, it will also diversify Vermont's population. As stated previously, racial diversity and good business goes hand in hand, and the changing domestic economy is forcing tourism markets to become more competitive than ever. Vermont, like other states and countries, must be cognizant of their efforts in embracing the demographic shift in the marketplace, and program the implications of that shift into their marketing strategies.

The economy of the state of Vermont depends heavily on tourism, ski season, foliage, fishing, summer hikes and camping. However, even in such a small state, with a population of only 625,741 as of the 2010 U.S. census, the state of Vermont has been suffering economically due to ineffective marketing of the state's tourism sector. 17% of Vermont's minority population own business and create jobs (as compared to 12% of the white population), for the local economy. The majority of these business people were actually not born in Vermont but came initially as tourists. This suggests that the state has a ready-made platform to build on in projecting its hospitality industry to potential minority-group visitors.

I believe that once Vermont's tourism industry begins to market itself as a destination for the growing number of ethnic and racial tourists, same sex couple, persons with disabilities and spiritual and religious backgrounds, etc., the state's tourism sector will see its competitiveness improve against the remainder of the United States, and will even become an attractive relocation destination for many, to establish a business or raise a family. Once the tourism market gets diversified, the states demographic will also diversify, making Vermont a more welcoming community for all.

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