

USA Jack Meets Panama¹:

TOURISM PLANNING AND MARKETING IN PANAMA

Mission

August 31st, Washington, DC, USA:

Jack, a 25-year-old emerging markets business professional, received details of his upcoming assignment in Panama and an anxious calm came over him. He was confident that his MBA education, dedication, flexibility and caring personality would allow him to meet the challenges presented by this assignment from the US Agency for International Development (USAID). He was to travel to Panama² to help the Panamanian Tourism Ministry develop and promote the country's ecotourism business. In particular, he was to use business tools to assist an indigenous community develop a viable ecotourism product in a protected national park that would provide sustainable economic and social benefits for the community.

Jack's Scope of Work Document³ specified the contract requirements. In preparation for his posting, he attended a USAID briefing seminar that provided valuable insights into the work of the agency and his assignment site. The focus of his attention was to be the Chagres National Park⁴ just outside Panama City, Panama. USAID and the Government of Panama were promoting conservation and economic development programs to provide alternative income generating methods for the communities residing in the national park to replace the "slash and burn" agriculture currently practiced.

Of the dozens of Indian tribes that inhabited Panama when the Spanish arrived, only seven remained: the Kuna, the Ngoble Bugle (or Guaymí), the Emberá (or Chocoe), the Wounaan, the Bokatá, the Bribri, and the Teribe (or Naso).⁵ Each of these groups had their own language. The Ngoble Bugle were the largest indigenous group with 125,000. The Kuna were the most politically organized, as they governed their own autonomous region and had representation in the national legislature. The Emberá, the focus of Jack's project, were excellent craftsmen and have a population of 7,500 peo-

ple.⁶ Each group depended on their harvest of agricultural goods⁷ to survive and each was struggling to maintain the strength and viability of their traditions in a developing country trying to enter the global market.⁸

Panama is famous for its Canal, but the banking, tourism, and wholesale/retail sectors comprise a majority of the force behind Panama's economy. The services sector dominates the economy of Panama, which accounts for approximately 75% of the gross domestic product. Agriculture and fishing account for 10% and manufacturing 5%. Panama's GDP growth rate is 4.2% and the GDP per capita is \$3,313, among the highest in Latin America. The country's net tourism exports represent 11% of total exports or \$372 million and have shown a 5% growth rate over the past 3 years.⁹

The time had come for Jack to embark on his assignment and to apply his newly acquired business skills in a developing world business environment. This journey was sure to present some challenges, for it was a unique opportunity to influence the way business was done in the world and make a difference in a community desperately seeking income to meet changing economic and social needs.

September 1st, Panama, City, Panama:

Jack arrived at Tocumen International Airport in Panama with preconceived notions as to what the country would be like. Just outside customs, the services of Panama's Institute for Tourism or IPAT were available. They provided arriving tourists with general information about tourism options available in Panama and a few brochures highlighted popular sights. After slipping a tour brochure into his travel journal, he took notes on the tour options described by the people at the IPAT desk. Surfing, beaches, ecotourism,¹⁰ cultural tourism, resorts, and scuba diving were activities suggested in a poster stating: "Panama: More Than a Canal." Signs for The Gamboa Rainforest Resort,¹¹ Marriott Hotel, Chiriqui River Rafting, and The Canopy Tower¹² were prominently displayed, but nothing

was available about indigenous ecotourism. After a 30-minute taxi ride on the newly constructed toll highway, Jack arrived in the city and paid his taxi driver \$15.00.¹³ Getting a bite to eat and relaxing in a nice hotel topped the agenda.

Getting to Know Panama

The Isthmus

September 2nd

The sounds of Panama City penetrated his windows on the 12th floor of the Hotel Plaza Paitilla. The activity of a busy metropolitan city was apparent. The streets below filled with incessantly honking cars and the drone of buses peppered with the calls of street vendors. A quick look out the hotel window presented a panoramic vista of this cosmopolitan Latin American city of one million people. The hotel was situated on the Bay of Panama in a very upscale neighborhood where a large portion of wealthy business owners resided. Just above the horizon, outside the bay, many large ships including oil tankers, cargo vessels and cruise ships were anchored awaiting their turn to navigate the Canal. Although the water of the bay was very polluted, during high tide it still made a beautiful picture. Across the bay, in the distance, you could spot the Pacific entrance to the Panama Canal¹⁴.

As Jack scanned the view further, he saw many high rise buildings and a few skyscrapers along the traffic-ridden streets. Panama was a modern, thriving commercial center, unlike the stereotyped image many might expect to find in Central America—and unlike what he expected. After reading the names on the skyscrapers Jack better appreciated the very active service sectors of the economy. Many of the buildings were residential apartment buildings, but for the most part they were local and international banks and U.S.-based hotels. Most surprising was that it seemed as though every car on the street was a sport utility vehicle, Mercedes or BMW, and if not a luxury car, then a fairly new Hyundai, Toyota or Mazda. The city exuded the feeling of a developed country, but he knew there was more to the country than what initially met his eye. Then he noticed the clouds hovering over the lush green rainforest. The dense jungle, which looked like a plush green carpet from the airplane, made an intriguing background to the city.

Opinions of the People

“The Canal is Ours”

Jack's first outing was to take a taxi to the Miraflores Locks of the Canal to observe ships in the Canal. During the 20-minute ride from the city, the taxi cab driver shared much valuable information about the status of the country and showed he really cared about its future. Without much prodding, the taxi driver offered his views on the economic, political and cultural situation in Panama.

A sign that read, “The Canal Is Ours! Thanks, Omar” prompted the taxi driver to explain that Omar Torrijos was the authoritarian ruler responsible for negotiating the terms for the Canal transfer treaty with Jimmy Carter in 1978. Then he offered his opinions concerning the recent departure of the majority of U.S. soldiers from the country as part of the Torrijos/Carter Treaty.¹⁵

“I didn't want the American soldiers to go. I was making about twice as much money a day when the soldiers were here. They were always going to discoteques, eating out in the restaurants and traveling around the country. They spent a lot of money here and now the economy can really feel the loss of that money. The government says that more tourists are now attracted to Panama because of our natural and cultural tourism resources, and that their money will replace what the soldiers used to spend, but I have not seen evidence of that yet.

“I don't think the benefits from tourism will be seen where it is really needed and where it can have a lasting impact on communities. For example, my home town in Chiriqui depends on farming and cattle. We will see no money for cultural and ecotourism investment because the funds will go instead to Colon and the Canal watershed. There it will be used to build five-star resorts, remodel the bases the Americans left behind and develop cultural tourism near the Canal. The Government is focused on cultural and ecotourism investment and assistance, but many times when a lot of parties get involved, the resulting development is too commercial and the natural feel of the area is lost forever. It is important to plan these projects in the right way so they don't damage what we have but provide income.

“The government has not helped individual citizens figure out how to benefit from tourism nor empowered them to cultivate tourism on their own. A few friends of mine had a good idea for a business and they solicited assistance from the government, but they received no promotional or economic support to get started. They were located outside the areas targeted for tourism development so assistance wasn't provided. That forced them to investigate other options for fueling their entrepreneurial spirit, and they discovered some financial and technical support organizations that make it possible to start a business without government assistance. Doing so is challenging, because lending agencies require financial management experience and collateral that most smaller communities do not possess, but it is possible to overcome this obstacle with a good idea, unique resources and the help of a dedicated partner such as a non-governmental organization (NGO) or responsible tour

operator. These parties are now more open to assisting communities develop an idea that promotes conservation and economic development.

“Also, the Panamanian government is very political and too bureaucratic. This inhibits the quality contributions of many people working in these offices. Many tourism officials are new to the industry and they were appointed by government friends. The National Park Authority (ANAM)¹⁶ is understaffed and it lacks resource management and planning skills. These inefficiencies result in inexperienced management of tourism projects and weak marketing and promotion efforts on the behalf of IPAT (Institute for Tourism). ANAM’s weaknesses are responsible for poor park infrastructure, limiting access for both tourists and citizens of Panama.”

Indigenous Tourism Focus

“What about the indigenous population here? Do they have the same problem?” Jack asked.

Surprised by the visitor’s question, the taxi driver spoke with renewed emphasis, “They have it worse off. However, my uncle says that he has seen IPAT visiting some Ngoble Bugle communities near him and holding seminars to help them prepare for tourism. IPAT focuses on cultural tourism, especially in indigenous communities, and the International Promotions department is currently looking for quality tours and sites to promote. IPAT offers basic business training on product establishment, organizational development, financial management, and marketing and sales training. My uncle said he spoke to a few of them and they are convinced that tourism will save them from poverty and allow them to quit their jobs picking coffee for the big Sitton coffee company.

“Even if that happens, these communities will still be left frustrated with their visions of future wealth unfulfilled. They will always be at a disadvantage. I respect all people equally, but I know that indigenous peoples here in Panama are at the low end of the totem pole. They have many resources but lack the skills to take advantage of them. This opens the indigenous communities to exploitation. The Kuna seem to have made some progress, but all indigenous people are discriminated against and still are intimidated by the well-established social class structures here. The Kuna have been able to realize how valuable their culture is and they have set up things so that they are complete owners or directly benefit from tourism activities going on in San Blas. They have established land rights and well-defined criteria for outside investment and have gone to great lengths to protect them.

“I bet the same thing will happen to my uncle’s Ngoble Bugle friends, who are a small Emberá group living near the new Gamboa Rainforest Resort, named Emberá Puru. I heard a

hotel was granted government concession rights to part of their land. They constructed a huge resort complex and employed residents at the hotel to do dances and sell their traditional arts and crafts to resort tourists. As part of their activities for clients, they constructed a replica indigenous community and are using the Indians to sell tours and serve visitors while paying them as wage laborers. Sure, they are making money, but they have little control over their own culture and how it is presented to tourists. Yes, they are making more money than they were before, but is it worth transforming their culture as subsistence farmers, gatherers and hunters who are self-sufficient and coexist with nature, to become consumers who instead depend on minimum wage jobs for money to buy needed food and goods? I hope this will not happen, but historically, when a large controlling entity comes in, they seek immediate profit with little investment and do not consider the consequences of the abrupt change in lifestyle they introduce, like alcoholism and dependency, rather more desirable changes like increased ownership and empowerment.”

After paying the taxi driver and thanking him for the informative discussion, Jack understood more clearly the situation facing new tourism ventures, especially indigenous ones. Upon arrival at Miraflores Locks, Jack was quickly amazed by the size of the huge cruise ships and oil tankers that pass through the Canal. It is easy to imagine the thoughts of Panamanian Government officials, hotel owners, and tour site operators concerning the potential impact tourism on the development of the country. Every month during the high season (January-July), twenty-five cruise ships pass through the Canal and 40% of those stop at a port in Panama so passengers can disembark and experience activities on land. During the slow season (August-December), sixteen cruise ships pass through each month and only 25% of those ships stop at the port of Colon.

Instituto Panameño de Turismo (IPAT)

More Information Please

September 3rd :

On the third day, Jack visited the governmental office responsible for promoting and organizing tourism within Panama, the Panamanian Institute of Tourism or IPAT. Jack’s contact there was Professor Julian Chang, the Director of Development of New Tourism Products for Panama. He was an authority on tourism development in Panama and had over twenty-five years experience. He had worked with the Parará Purú community for the last five years, and proved to be a reliable ally who would provide valuable information for getting started on the mission. His role was to cultivate community-based projects that he believed had the potential to be developed and promoted as a destination for international tourists. His department was responsible for helping to empower communities to develop ecotourism opportunities. One of his many

projects was assisting ecotourism development in the Parará Púru community of the Chagres National Park.

Upon arrival at the IPAT general office, the guard at the reception desk sent Jack to the Office of Internal Tourism where Julian Chang works. As he approached the office, he passed other departments: International Promotion, Capacity Building and Training, Marketing and Publicity, and Environmental and Sustainability Planning. He found it amazing how many people worked at IPAT and the range of activities in which it was engaged.

He entered the office of Internal Tourism and, while waiting to meet Julian, inquired about other indigenous tourism options currently available in Panama. This information would be required for assessing competitive offerings. The woman at the information desk provided details on four options currently available, and Jack later summarized them in his travel journal. She also suggested other options were in development and mentioned just the ones she could think of at the time. Jack thanked her for the information and she then introduced him to Julian Chang. After chatting for some time about life in Panama, their families, and the weather ahead, the discussion turned to the Parará Púru project and Jack's new role.

Community-Based Ecotourism Development

Julian started by explaining that the community-based ecotourism process is an opportunity for villages and communities to receive direct social and economic benefits from tourism. He related the idea to starting and managing a small business in which the community members are the employees and the tourists and tour operators are the customers. In this case, the product is the incredible natural and cultural resources that the communities have to share with visitors. The profits are the monies that tour operators spend to bring people to the village, and the money tourists spend on artwork and other goods produced by the village. Julian admitted that Western social and capitalistic influences led to social benefits in the form of organizational experience, access to education and training, increased self-esteem and improved health. In order to have a successful and sustainable operation, the business must have a viable product, proper financial and organizational management, and quality marketing and sales efforts to attract customers and remain in business.

Success is accomplished if communities have a stake in ownership, receive proper business management training, feel empowered to succeed and receive assistance from supporting actors that have the communities' best interests in mind. Of course, not all communities have the opportunity to benefit from tourism. The challenge is to position the community and their offerings with the right activity mix and then target

the appropriate consumer groups. Successful managing of the business and the environment can assure that the community receives long-term benefits. The Parará Púru community is struggling to identify what resources and activities they should include in their tour offering and where and how they should focus their selling to grow the business.

Julian continued, "As you have seen from the Scope of Work document, the community needs your assistance in the following key areas:

- Diagnosing the climate for tourism and reporting on the community's ability and desire to take advantage of tourism's potential.
- Determining what type of tour they should sell.
- Understanding how they should sell the tour."

After suggesting these points of focus, Julian began to delve deeper into Parará Púru's progress in developing their tourism business. He touched on organizational and operational facets first and then prospects for the future. This background briefing was invaluable for Jack's own visit to the community scheduled for the end of the week.

"The community is an energetic, friendly and youthful community with a population of about 150 men, women and children. They have two focused and intelligent leaders, Atilano Flaco and Tulio Rosales. These two leaders head the organization devoted to tourism called WECHA and they have had some success managing the tourism operation up to this point, but they are reaching out for assistance to further develop the business. The people in the community are very skilled craftsmen, knowledgeable about plants and animals and the surrounding forest, great fishermen and have a passion for family.

"A vision for the future of the community does not exist. They live day-to-day from the little money they gain from tourism and selling artwork. After visitors leave the village, the money collected is distributed throughout the community. This leaves a negligible amount for maintenance, improvements or expansion. It is hard for the community to grasp the ideas of investment and saving money. They have always been a subsistence-based society and now they are attempting to move toward a currency-based society. This transition is very challenging, especially because, as a whole, the community is not very well educated and lacks basic business skills. That is not to say they are not able or willing to learn. Actually, within the past few years, a few of the men have shown a tremendous willingness to learn and understand how to document expenses and revenues and design a basic budget."

Income Statement	May 1998	Income Statement	October 1998
Number of tourists	61	Number of tourists	21
Average Price per Tourist	\$22.00	Average Price per Tourist	\$23.00
Total Revenue	\$1,342.00	Total Revenue	\$483.00
3 Boat Drivers	\$105.00	3 Boat Drivers	\$35.00
5 Boat Assistants	195.00	5 Boat Assistants	65.00
1 Speaker	40.00	1 Speaker	13.00
1 Nature trail guide	40.00	1 Nature trail guide	13.00
6 Musicians	99.00	6 Musicians	33.00
7 Dancers	196.00	7 Dancers	65.00
2 Cooks	132.00	2 Cooks	44.00
1 Treasurer	40.00	1 Treasurer	13.00
1 Nature Guide Assistant	13.00	1 Nature Guide Assistant	5.00
Total Payroll Expenses	\$860.00	Total Payroll Expenses	\$286.00
Food	\$65.00	Food	\$21.00
Gas	159.00	Gas	63.00
Miscellaneous	20.00	Miscellaneous	6.00
WECHA Fund	125.00	WECHA Fund	41.00
NOKO Fund	34.00	NOKO Fund	11.00
Motor Fund	34.00	Motor Fund	11.00
Cell Phone	35.00	Cell Phone	35.00
Total Operating Expenses	\$472.00	Total Operating Expenses	\$188.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$1,332.00	TOTAL EXPENSES	\$474.00
NET PROFIT/SAVINGS	\$10.00	NET PROFIT/SAVINGS	\$9.00

Exhibit I. Income Statement

Julian provided a copy of their income statements for two different months in the past year (see Exhibit I). “These reports show revenues and expenses incurred from providing the tour to independent travelers who came to the village during the high and low tourist seasons. With IPAT’s help and their own experiences, these communities are developing business knowledge. They are learning Western styles of customer service and enjoy providing the visitor with a fun, worthwhile experience. Over the past five years, the community has been building its tourism business. They started with a few visitors and since then the community has developed and grown what they offer.

“Making artwork also contributes to an individual community member’s income. Tourists buy directly from the person who made the Chunga woven basket or the carved marble-like tagua nut. 100% of the profits from a sale are received by the artisan. On average, two pieces are sold for every three tourists with the average price for artwork sold as \$10.00. Not every person is skilled at

making artwork, but there are many opportunities for individuals to contribute and receive income from tourism operations.

“Over the years, the community has made significant organizational and operational decisions with long lasting effects. Some have proven to be positive, while others turned out negative. Parará Púru built an organization based on a few guiding principles that have evolved over the years. They work hard to achieve success. They have defined this as enabling the community members to have enough money and resources to provide adequate food, health conditions, education and security for every child growing up in the community. They enjoy the opportunities for cultural interaction and interchange. Sharing their rich environmental and cultural resources and knowledge, and spending time learning about foreign traditions and cultures from visitors, are activities the majority of the community enjoys. They trust the government, aid organizations and people in general, but this has led to a

dependency on the money and services these groups provide. They do not operate self-sufficiently in a completely autonomous business.”

Julian then outlined the challenges facing the Parará Púru community, including:

- Experienced competition exists worldwide. Historically, Costa Rica has been the destination of choice in Central America. In the past, the international tour operators and tourists have not recognized Panama as a destination for cultural exploration and ecotourism.
- The people in the community do not speak English and can only communicate with visitors in Spanish. This English language barrier underscores the potential for dependency and exploitation by outside interests.
- In general, Panamanians do not appreciate or understand nature and culture-based tourism. Beaches and nightlife are more in demand by Panamanians who have disposable incomes to spend.

After the discussion concerning the project, he said that the community was anxiously awaiting Jack’s arrival, wished him well on his trip to the village, and said that he looked forward to receiving his recommendations. Finally, he quoted from a book he was reading about a key distinction relevant for this kind of business:

“Marketing is the most important component of the travel industry, and promotional materials for nature tourism and ecotourism are designed to sell experiences, not products.”¹⁷

The Tourism Industry and Ecotourism Trends

September 4th

Long-term success in any area of tourism depends on a better understanding of customer priorities, preferences and motivations. Jack was confident that valuable information that would assist the community in product definition, positioning, promotion and distribution decisions, would be found in available secondary market research.¹⁸ The first document he found provided an interesting description of four ecotourism niches. This description categorized ecotourism travel styles into recreation, education, wilderness and adventure, providing a description for each type. Along with the ecotourism niche description, a table displaying the results from a questionnaire was provided. Jack made a copy of each and put them in his travel journal. This questionnaire was given to a statistically significant sample of international leisure travelers at the Miami Airport. It provided answers to the following questions.

- In what manner do you prefer to travel? On a cruise, with a tour operator or independently?
- What description suits your travel desires? Recreational, Adventure, Educational or Wilderness. The respondents were provided the descriptions outlined in the Ecotourism Niches document.

Tourism has become the world’s largest industry.¹⁹ It offers communities and countries a tool to attract foreign investment and receive much-needed foreign exchange. Many developing countries are depending upon the potential of this industry to be the main force behind their economic development. Countries possessing vast natural and cultural resources are trying to tap into the huge market for ecotourism. Costa Rica heads the list with tourism revenues topping \$1 billion dollars. Ecotourism has been the focus for these countries and many studies have examined the characteristics of the market.²⁰

- Ecotourists tend to seek wide-ranging activities and multi-destination vacations and prefer modest, intimate accommodations. Many are socially-minded and interested in the history, culture and people in developing countries.
- They tend to travel individually and independently or use nature tour operators to find an appropriate fixed-itinerary tour. By going directly to the tour operator, an ecotourist’s primary motive is to customize his or her tour or find a more ecologically sensitive package
- Ecotourists roughly fall into two main categories: dual income no children or DINC’s, and couples with grown children called “empty nesters.” They are discriminating and recognize quality and are willing to pay for it. Many come from the some thirty million Americans who belong to environmental organizations or profess an interest in conservation.
- They fit a broad profile. Most are between thirty-one and fifty years of age, but there are also a considerable number of mature adults. They are equally divided by gender and most are physically active, well-educated professional people and often from dual income families with a combined income of \$50,000 or more who have a genuine interest in learning something about nature. Geographically, the ecotourism market exists in virtually every major metropolitan area in North America.
- For strictly independent travelers, adventure, wilderness or education are the key components. They do not like to affiliate themselves with a large group and like to discover a site, activity or destination on their own or in a small group. Most do not like to spend much money, but appreciate paying a price if a defined value is associated with it and small-scale communities receive the monetary benefits. If a destination becomes mainstream, the independent traveler will look for more remote spots to explore. Most are young, conservation- and adventure-minded, looking for a unique experience.

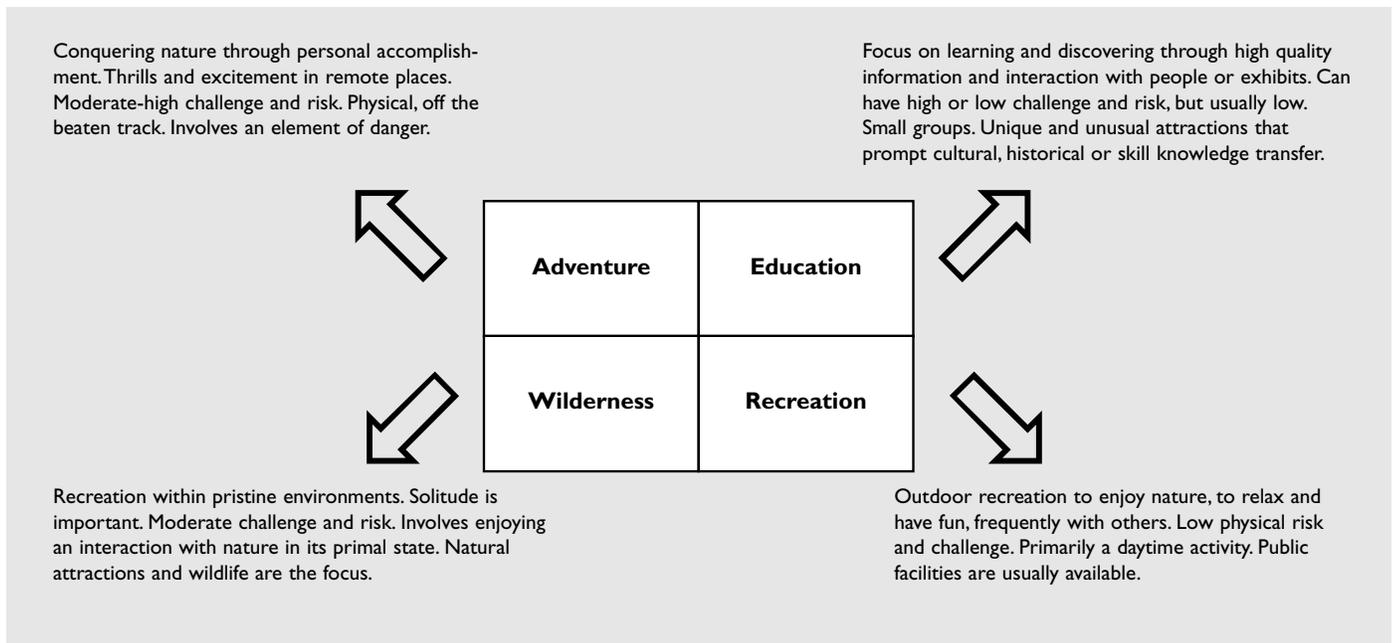


Exhibit 2. Niche Tourism Descriptions, Resource-Based Tourism Niches

Tour Operators

“Inbound operators are the essential link, making upstream connections to industrialized countries and downstream economic ties to local businesses within a particular country.”²¹

September 5th

For the most part, travelers use tour services as a resource to arrange excursions and guide them on their visit to a particular country. Though many travelers enjoy the challenge and spontaneity of figuring out where to travel independently, without the help of tour services, the majority of travelers depend on tour services to show them around a new country. To further understand the dynamics of the tour industry, it was important for Jack to talk with different tour services that specialized in particular niches of the tourism market. This provided him an opportunity to check into tour pricing and logistics, get a feel for package tours available and understand the extra services that service providers offer for the premium price they charge. Jack was able to visit two different tour services that cater to different tourism niches. One was a tour operator/outfitter that catered to in-country travelers needing assistance exploring the country. The other

focused on passengers on cruise ships, passing through the Canal, who stopped off in Panama for day-trip excursions. Jack recorded notes from the visits with the two tour services in his travel journal.

Welcome to the community

September 6th-13th -

“Mehna Java, Sawánbu Java?” Good Day, How are you doing brother?
 “Biabúa, Bu?” Good, and you?
 “Biabúa, Biabúa” Good, real good, thanks for asking.
 “Evari bianúmua” It’s a nice day today, huh?
 “Mai java” It sure is, my good friend

These are a few phrases of the Emberá language that were first spoken upon Jack’s arrival to the community. This linguistic exchange characterizes the friendliness of the Emberá people. It is a typical conversation communicated to greet a person and let them know that everything is going well. This is the welcoming sentiment given to visitors to the Emberá villages of Panama.

After arriving, Jack met with community members and got a feel for the tourism operation. As part of the first day, the community treated him to their standard tour that they had been providing to independent travelers. Jack experienced many things in the week’s visit and he noted details of the trip in the travel journal.

% of respondents	Cruise	Tour Operator	Independent
Recreation	50	25	0
Adventure	0	25	40
Education	35	25	20
Wilderness	15	25	40
Total	100	100	100

Exhibit 3. Market Research Results

In various discussions, the community explained how they were becoming bored offering the exact same tour to every tourist and how they wanted to introduce other activities for visitors to enjoy. They put together an activity brochure to highlight the other activities available.²²

After some time getting to know the community, various members sought out Jack’s opinion. They explained that they knew that publicity and promotion was very important for generating more visitors to their site, but they were unsure what type of promotion they should be using. With a proud look in their eyes, they showed a magazine cover²³ from the Panamanian national airline, Aeroperlas. They were excited about having their picture on the cover of a National magazine, but were unsure how publicity works and what type of interest this picture would create.

Characteristics of the community

September 14th

After spending a week living with the Parará Purú community, Jack was able to reflect on what the community had to offer tourists and their readiness to provide a tourism site. The piragua canoe turned to head back up the Chagres River and Jack yelled to his new friends,

“Muhrna Wan Burua Java Emberana!”
 “I’ll see you later friends! I will be back soon.”

As Jack headed toward the concrete jungle of Panama City, he was focused on providing recommendations to the community in response to Julian Chang’s criteria for assistance and USAID’s scope of work. The experience of the last two weeks provided fuel to begin that analysis.

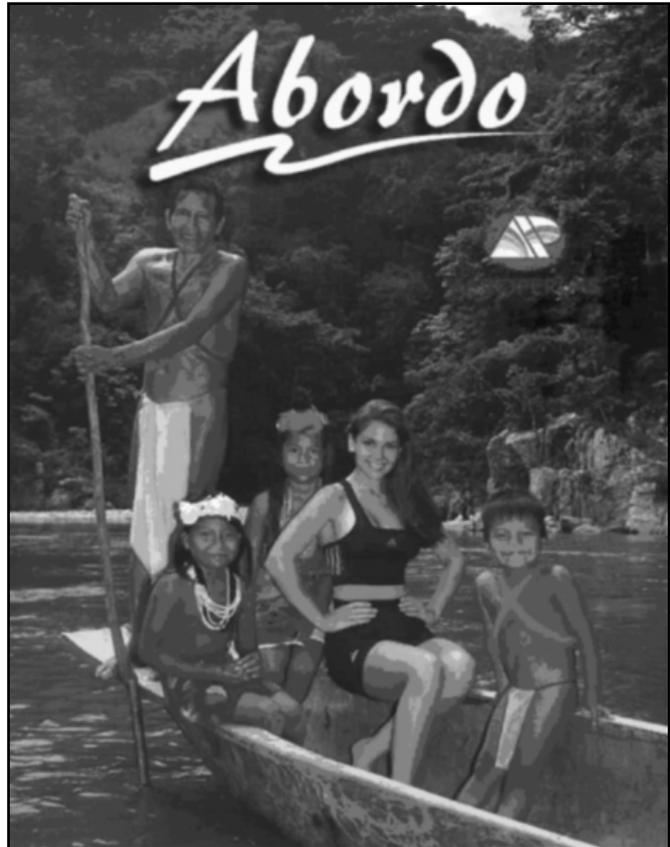


Exhibit 5. Magazine Cover of Members of Parará Púru and Panama’s Miss Hawaiiin Tropic Model

It was time to organize the notes, assess the situation and use the information gathered to give the Parará Púru community something to build upon. What can Jack do? Where does he start? What actions are recommended?

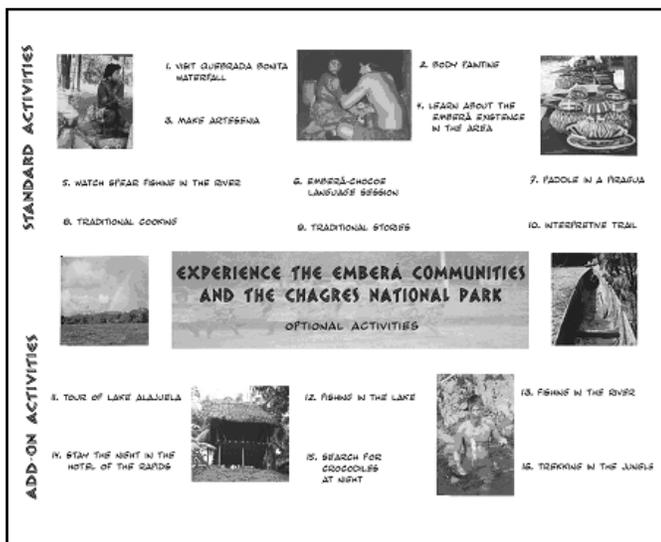


Exhibit 4. Community Activity Brochure

1. This case was written by Jared Elling of University of Pittsburgh under the supervision of Professor Richard Linowes of the Kogod School of Business at American University in Washington, D.C. It was written as the basis for class discussion rather than to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of an administrative situation.
2. Appendix 2, Map 1 -The Country of Panama
3. Appendix 1- Travel Journal - Section I Scope of Work
4. Appendix 2, Map 2 - The Panama Canal Zone, and Map 3 - National Parks in Panama, Chagres National Park
5. Appendix 2, Map 4 - Indigenous Communities in Panama.
6. This number represents the entire Emberá population living both in the Darien and The Chagres. Three Embera communities reside in the Chagres Park: Emberá Drua (population 100), Parará Purú (population 75) and San Juan de Pequení (population 200). The first two are located on the Chagres River and are 35 minutes apart by boat . Both are referred here as Parará Púru. The 3rd, San Juan, is located on the other side of Lake Alajuela about a 2-hour boat trip away.
7. The Kuna harvest coconuts, Ngoble Bugle harvest coffee and The Emberá grow platano (plantains).

8. Providing education and health to children who have the desire to assimilate and succeed in urban Latino culture is increasingly difficult with the limited monetary resources that a campesino (farmer) can earn selling his goods on an open market. Based upon modern standards of education, health and welfare, a traditional, subsistence-farming way of life does not fully support the needs of an indigenous community living in Panama.
9. Panama Investor's Monthly. "Investors Guide to Panama," April 2000
10. In 1991, The Ecotourism Society defined ecotourism as responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well being of local people. It also includes the minimization of environmental and cultural impacts, contributions to conservation and community projects in developing countries, and environmental education and political consciousness raising.
11. www.gamboaresort.com This is a newly constructed \$30 million dollar hotel and jungle resort complex on the banks of the Chagres River on the Panama Canal which bankers and the Panamanian Government hope will attract some of the growing ecotourism market. The 107-bedroom facility showcases rainforest surroundings in a theme park style. Facilities include boat trips and aerial tram rides to see the surrounding nature. It offers onsite, educational and adventure packages for \$250 a night or \$550 for three nights.
12. www.canopytower.com
13. Since 1904, Panama has used the U.S. dollar as its currency. Although as a matter of national pride Panamanians use the word Balboa interchangeably for dollar, the population uses the U.S. dollar in all transactions.
14. Appendix I, Section 4 – Description of the Panama Canal
15. At one point in the middle of the 20th century, upwards of 50,000 U.S. troops were stationed in Panama. By the end of the 1990s, most troops had been relocated. As of December 31st, 1999, the only U.S. military presence remaining were the 6 Marines left to protect the U.S. Embassy in Panama City.
16. The National Authority of the Environment is equivalent to the U.S. Park Service. (See Appendix I, Map 3.)
17. Honey, Martha. "Ecotourism and Sustainable Development, Who Owns Paradise?" Washington DC: Island Press, p. 125.
18. Secondary research data relates to the collection of data from sources that already exist.
19. Tourism generates \$4.4 trillion in gross annual output and attracts \$757 billion in capital investment. It provides approximately 230 million jobs annually. (The World Travel and Tourism Council, 1998)
20. Wight, Pamela. "North American Ecotourist Market Survey," Journal of Travel Research. Spring 1996.
21. Honey, Martha. Ibid.
22. Exhibit 4 - Activity Sheet
23. Exhibit 5 - Magazine Cover

QUESTIONS

1. Diagnose the climate for tourism in Panama and report on Parará Púru's ability and desire to develop a successful tourism site
 - Develop a Mission Statement for the community
 - Do a SWOT Analysis for the community
2. What type of tour should they sell?
 - Organize the activities described in the text in a table or chart. Pinpoint where the activities fit within particular ecotourism niches. Use the niches described in Figure 2 as axis. Plot the characteristics of the tour offerings of Darien, Parará Púru, Scuba at Portobelo, Kuna Islands, Gamboa, Mi Pueblito, City Tour, Chiriqui River Rafting, El Valle, Surfing, The Canopy Tower, Isla Contadora and Mi Pueblito. Use the data from Figure 3 to highlight or group together activities positioned by the travel styles of Cruise, Tour Operator or Independent.
 - Write a market research questionnaire that could be used by the community to obtain primary data to define their visitor's profile, preferences and satisfaction levels.
3. How should the community promote and sell the tour?
 - Describe a proposed promotional brochure. Include a slogan. What brand image or personality should be communicated to properly highlight the community's distinctive offering? What is the best strategy to assure that the brochure targets the right visitors and accomplishes Parará Púru's positioning and segmentation goals? Describe the audience. How does the cover of AeroPerlas magazine reflect the image of the community?
 - Explain what is the best distribution strategy to use in selling the tour and how it can be used to target the desired segments.

Appendix 1

TRAVEL JOURNAL

Section 1: Scope of Work Free Market Development Advisor for Sustainable Heritage Tourism in the Panama Canal Watershed (PCW)

Background

As Panama enters the new millenium, the country assumes for the first time the responsibility of managing the operation of the Panama Canal. With its consumption of upwards of two billion gallons of water per day to pass ships, the Canal depends upon the surrounding natural watershed to regulate and maintain water flow. A healthy, forested watershed serves as a sponge that dampens extreme fluctuations in surface flow by storing and releasing water gradually. The challenge faced by Panamanian institutions that manage the Canal and surrounding watershed will be to safeguard these natural conditions in the face of increasing pressures on the natural resources from expanding populations. Thus, USAID continues to provide support to Panama towards the strategic objective that "Panama sustainably manages the Canal watershed and buffer areas."

One critical element of sustainable management of the PCW is the development of income-generating activities for residents as an alternative to slash-and-burn agriculture and other destructive practices. Residency in the watershed is likely to continue to grow, and various destructive practices are rapidly degrading the water quality and other natural resources. Suitable, environmentally-friendly livelihoods are key elements of any conservation program, in that resident communities have both the most direct impacts on natural resources as well as the most direct means to mitigate

impacts. Recognizing this challenge for communities that inhabit the watershed, USAID has identified the fostering of income-generating activities that contribute to biodiversity conservation as an activity that supports the intermediate result of "natural resources in the PCW and buffer areas managed effectively."

One income-generating activity with potential to benefit inhabitants while encouraging conservation of protected areas is ecotourism. If managed properly, ecotourism can have a protective effect on the natural environment. A recent movement for "sustainable heritage" tourism in Panama emphasizes the integration of tourism, conservation, and research to provide tourists with an experience that is both informative and beneficial to local cultures and natural environments. It encompasses ecotourism and, additionally, emphasizes the importance of culture-based tourism in safeguarding traditional ways of life in indigenous communities. The sustainable heritage tourism concept has gained support from IPAT, whose representatives have chosen the PCW as the initial pilot area for its development.

Article I. Objective

The Advisor will work to elaborate strategies for augmenting sustainable heritage tourism in the Panama Canal watershed. This should be focused on promoting community-based ecotourism for an Embera Indian community residing in the Chagres National Park; Namely Parara Puru

Article II. Statement of Work

Advisor will undertake, but not be limited to, the following activities:

1. Become familiar with the ecotourism opportunities and activities available in and around the Parara Puru village by visiting projects, meeting with tour companies, and otherwise exploring the touristic landscape. Use particular tools to gather, organize and categorize information that shows the potential for sustainability of a tourism site at the Parara Puru community. Develop an in-depth understanding of the community and their opportunities and abilities to develop and operate an ecotourism business.
2. Analyze instruments used to define the opinions and characteristics of the Watershed/Panamanian tourist market. Use the market information provided to develop of a community-based ecotourism and microenterprise development strategy for the watershed community of Parara Puru. Analyze, drawing upon existing data, the profile of the Indigenous ecotourism market with the objective of segmenting and positioning Parara Puru's product in competition or collaboration with other existing tourism products in Panama. Make recommendations for development of tourism activities or

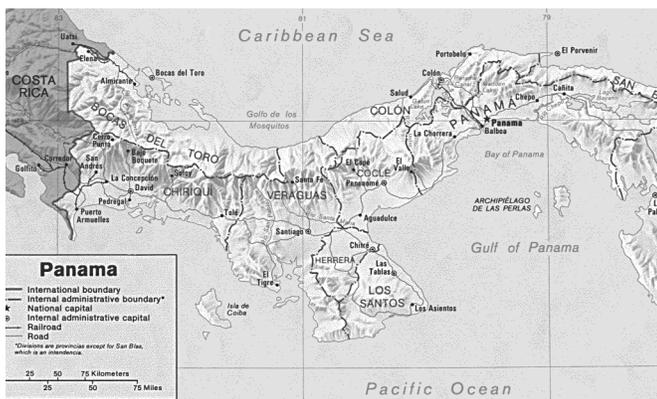


Exhibit 5. Country Map of Panama

related products. Describe tour packages that would appeal to each segment of the national market, identify marketable products and activities.

3. Formulate strategies, instruments, and techniques to further develop the Parara Puru tourism market. This should include methods for selling products, aligning PCW communities with tourist agencies, and advertising or otherwise promoting touristic opportunities in the watershed.

Section 2: Tourism Brochure

Panama Tourism Alternatives

 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See the Spanish ruins of Panama Viejo \$2.00 entrance fee. Spanish-English guide included • Visit the Panama Canal Locks and see a ship pass through, an entrance fee, bilingual presentation provided • Visit an art craft mall and purchase crafts from various indigenous groups • Eat dinner at a typical Panamanian restaurant or enjoy Panama's nightlife • Tour operators charge \$40 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecosent situated within a remote area of La Amistad Biosphere Reserve • Nightly rentals @ \$65 - \$100 • Knowledgeable Guides and a network of hiking trails that provide incredible views • Relaxation spa • Cool Climate • Home of the Resplendent Quetzal • Guaymí families, employed at the site, offer bird calling expertise and other services to guests • Project funded by a conservation based investment fund 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Converted radar tower inside the Soberania National Park offers an amazing vantage point for bird watching. • Smithsonian Tropical Institute scientific exhibition. • Day trip from 11am, offering breakfast, food, bird expert as a guide and an elevated platform ideal for spotting unique bird species - \$55.00 • 30 minutes from city • Facilities for group tours
--	---	--

Section 3. Travel Options

Adventure

Chiriqui River Rafting offers class IV rafting trips for 5 or more people at a cost of \$70.00 per person. It requires transporting oneself to the Chiriqui Highlands at a cost of \$15.00 by bus or a 6 hour drive by car. This spot offers high adventure white water rafting through a pristine wilderness environment.

The Canopy Adventure offers a thrilling ride through the canopy of a rainforest. One can zip on a series of cables through a remote forest at tree level. It is located near the beautiful town of El Valle, backdropped by a magnificent 150 foot waterfall. This trip would cost \$4.00 to reach El Valle by bus in 2_-hours, and then the activity costs \$45.00. El Valle is a neat town with an Artesenia market, a zoo, waterfalls, ancient petroglyphs, hiking and camping opportunities, cooler temperatures and nice accommodations. The site employs local residents as guides and caretakers. It is easy to get to and it offers plenty of activities for the independent-minded traveler. Tour operators do arrange trips to this destination for a price of \$90.00.

Beaches

Panama is a country encompassed by beaches. Although some are better than others, all of them offer nice sand, decent waves and various levels of accommodations and tourism services. Many quality beaches are within 2 hours of the city.

Isla Taboga is a charming, historical island that is an hour boat ride from Panama City, at a cost of \$5.00. It has a nice beach to which Panamanians like to retreat, a patch of protected rainforest for easy hiking and wildlife searching and it has a storied history as a stop-off point for pirates and conquistadors during the Spanish gold transfer from Peru. It has a nice hotel for \$65.00/night, but an excursion to the island makes for a great day trip. It is a nice spot to obtain historical and natural interpretation from an educated guide, but it also offers remote areas to get a sense of undisturbed natural beauty.

Isla Contadora offers a beach resort atmosphere that people dream of. The island has a high class resort offering golfing, white sand beaches and other great activities, such as fishing and snorkeling. Planes depart daily to the island at a cost of \$50.00 each way and weekend package deals are available with the resort costing \$200 per person, including airfare. It is a nice location for spending time with family or relaxing peacefully on a white sandy beach.

Scuba diving

Panama still has vast coral resources surrounding the country. Bocas del Toro and Portobelo offer exotic and colorful Atlantic/Caribbean marine life. Each have world class diving opportunities and Bocas del Toro offers a city with nice accommodations and diverse Caribbean lifestyle. Bocas del Toro costs \$50.00 to fly to and requires 7 hours for driving. It is situated near a protected marine park, ideal for scuba enthusiasts who enjoy the solitude of a coral marine park. Portobelo is situated close to Spanish Ruins and offers the diver many dive shops from which to choose. It is a perfect spot for beginners and families to enjoy a taste of scuba adventure and learn scuba techniques from experienced guides. It is 1 1/2 hours from Panama and group boat trips and equipment rental are made daily for \$45.00 per person.

Surfing

Surfing in Panama has been developing as a world renowned adventure tourism offering. Many spots offer tremendous waves and basic infrastructure for the surfers, but Santa Catalina on the Azuero Peninsula has been known as the king of all spots in Panama. Waves reach as much 10-foot swells and consistently offer good surfing. Just the spot to prove yourself against the power of nature. Budget cabanas are available minutes from the beach at a cost of \$5.00 per night per person. Other higher class spots are also available. Santa Catalina is 4 hours from Panama City and costs \$5.00 by bus.

Panama has been described as the undiscovered tourist gem of the world that offers an adventure suited for anyone. There are many unique tourism destinations that have activities to offer various types of travelers. Panama provides any type of traveler various activities from which to choose. If one wants to rent a car or take a bus, practice speaking Spanish and see a bit more of the "real Panama." There are many destinations where the independent traveler can find his or her way around and have a memorable experience.

Section 4: The Panama Canal

The 51 mile canal cuts through Panama and was the impetus to widespread US influence on the isthmus since the late 1800s. The US influence was initially established when they constructed a railroad across the shortest land route between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans during the US gold rush, but plans to construct a canal through Central America were also being considered. After diseases, lack of financing and engineering design flaws led to a failed attempt by the French to construct a canal in Panama, the US bought the rights from France, negotiated independence from Columbia for Panama and established a military presence, that lasted until December 1999, to protect Panama and US interests in the canal. In 1914, what is considered one of the world's best engineering feats, The Panama Canal, was completed. The project that took 10 years and over 75,000 workers to finish, also was responsible for the eradication of Malaria and Yellow Fever. In 1977, President Jimmy Carter signed a treaty that allowed for the transfer of the canal and its associated 233,000 acres of protected rainforest land. Canal Zone facilities, schools and residential complexes make up part of the 7000 buildings involved in the transfer. The realization of this treaty presented a number of key issues to the government of Panama. To replace the \$352 million of foreign exchange the US Military provided for the economy, to use the buildings and real estate inherited from the US in a sustainable manner and to manage the profits from the canal to help in the widespread development of the country. Today the canal provides \$550 million in income to the government of Panama.

Section 5: Cultural Tourism Options

Trekking to the Darien

A visit to the Darien would take some effort and it presented some danger, but would be worth it for the hard core tourist. The Emberá indigenous communities of the region lived in a remote area of pristine wilderness. This wilderness offered the opportunity to see an incredible biodiversity of plants and animals living in untouched jungle wilderness. The communities living there are not organized for tourists, but would welcome the money that visitors bring if they wanted to visit informally. Because of Colombian Guerrilla insurgency to the area, it was not entirely safe for foreigners, but not many incidents have occurred recently. There are no estab-

lished itineraries or scheduled trips, but if someone wanted to visit, they would arrange with ANAM to enter the protected area then wait to find transit to the community with a member of the village and share a spot in his boat. It was warned that hours could be spent waiting for a village member to pass by. A trip to a village would require a 10-hour journey from Panama City, 7 hours of ground transit and 3 hours of boat travel. Once a visitor arrived, they would be treated to an authentic experience, amazing even to the most traveled photographer, anthropologist or nature lover. The cost of the experience would be minimal: \$100 in transportation costs and a \$5.00 a day contribution for food. The experience would be one that meant coexisting with the village as an outsider, immersed in the traditional way of life that has been practiced for over 500 years. The Emberá are a lowland tropical rainforest group dependent upon subsistence farming, hunting, fishing, gathering and river transit and adept at coexistence with nature. This trip seemed very exciting and would be a challenge and an adventure for even the most seasoned traveler.

Kuna Yala (San Blas)

A trip to the San Blas Islands, to visit the Kuna, sounded a bit more tranquil. They, in contrast to the Emberá of the Darien, have had years of experience hosting tourists on their islands. This has had an impact on their environment and culture. Although the area is still considered a Caribbean Island paradise, some of the coral reefs have been destroyed by the practice of dumping waste into the ocean. In addition, much of the ocean waters have been overfished for lobster and crab to fulfill the growing tourist demand. The culture is more attached to the need for the dollar and has been influenced by Western thought and consumerism. It is not uncommon for Kuna women to charge a dollar to have their picture taken and tourists have been left feeling that the Kuna are constantly focused on money. This being said, an excursion to one of the 113 islands does offer a tourist abundant fishing, coral and diverse marine life for snorkeling, cultural learning opportunities or a tranquil setting on an isolated island that resembles paradise. Daily air transportation is provided between a few San Blas airstrips and Panama City because the Kunas frequently visit the city to sell their mola artwork and purchase food and supplies and the tourism demand is substantial. Air travel to the islands is available by calling the domestic airline-company or can be arranged by a tour operator. The cost is \$60.00 each way and takes about 30 minutes. For the more cultural experience, travelers can stay on the main island situated within the overcrowded island community with basic accommodations that cost \$30.00 per night. Although one would be living near the main populations of Kuna, the members of the community are private in sharing personal aspects of their culture. The other option is to stay on a remote, isolated island with a bit nicer accommodations and a bit higher price tag. The Kuna prepare meals for visitors, such as lobster and coconut rice, but the opportunity for cultural interaction

is limited. Snorkeling coral reefs and resting in a hammock are the principal activities available. The final option must be arranged with a US tour outfitter called Mountain Travel Sobek before arriving and it was only offered two times a year. They offer an island-to-island sea kayaking adventure for 10 days. It is an expensive "luxury camping and kayaking" trip that costs \$2300, not including airfare, but everything is taken care of for you. Informed guides cook gourmet camping food, arrange the opportunity to participate in ceremonial events and provide isolated island accommodations. It is an incredible tour that offers every aspect of the Kuna culture and San Blas islands. A trip to these islands sounded very unique, but not ideal for a person focused on a cultural experience.

Mi Pueblito

The final location suggested was in the city, called Mi Pueblito or My Little Town. Created in 1994, it was the Panamanian version of miniature Epcot Center. It was a place to get a taste of the spectrum of Panamanian culture in one spot. It was a replica village with Emberá huts and carved canoes or piraguas, life-sized replicas of a rural Afro-Antilliano village and daily exhibitions of indigenous and folkloric dance. One of its strengths was the numerous crafts shops, where one would find handicrafts from throughout the country, but at a price much higher than would be found at the destination of fabrication. A restaurant was also on the premises that specialized in typical Panamanian dishes. Although it was not authentic, it seemed like an easy location to get a quick introduction to Panamanian culture and tradition.

Section 6- Travel Services

Colon 2000

This group works with the cruise industry to provide the cruise passengers day itineraries which provide a good taste of what Panama has to offer in a short time period. They demand efficiency and quality at a low price. They need a consistent tour that offers no surprises. It is important that the cruise passenger gets to the site, experiences the destination and gets back to the ship. The plan is to shuttle passengers by bus or helicopter to a particular destination and provide them with high-class excursions. In May, they have 10 cruise ships docking at a port in Colon. Each ship they handle needs various activities that can accommodate the 200 passengers who will be participating in the day-trip activities. They are looking to identify four activity site providers in the Panama City area to split equally the visitors. They need sites that can handle their needs for 90 cruise ships in the next year.

The clients are older and are interested in low impact, recreational activities that offer an opportunity to learn about culture, nature or history. They are very interested in nature and wildlife but do not have the physical capacity or patience to exert a lot of energy. Peaceful and tranquil locations are desired by this group, but easy access is a must. Meals and

beverages need to be quality and readily available. Their clients have refined tastes, and the volume of visitors they bring to a particular destination will provide a large amount of money to the location. Colon 2000 expects a wholesale price of \$7.00 per person from the site provider in order for them to consider the destination.

Panama Jones

Tour operators are nice because for the variety-driven tourist they can arrange an itinerary that includes a few destinations that capture distinct interests. For example, a package that includes activities such as white water rafting in Chiriqui for adventure and nature; two days in the cloudforest of Parque La Amistad at The Hotel de Los Quetzales for ecotourism that involves birdwatching and hiking; a couple of days with the Kuna in San Blas for photography and beaches; and finally, the weekend in Panama City for historical and informational tours, nightlife and shopping. This type of tour may cost \$2000 to be fully arranged by a tour operator, but it would be completely setup upon your arrival. Many travelers today do not simply fit into one tourism category, like adventure or ecotourism. The demand trend is moving towards tourists experiencing a few diverse activities that satisfy a variety of interests rather than focusing on just one. Tour operators need activities to satisfy the traveler's growing need for diversity.

Panama Jones was an outfitter agency that provides adventures for everyone. They have every available tour in Panama at their disposal and they choose to visit the site that best fits their clients' needs. It is important for them to know what activities are available so they can communicate the offerings to clients. They use some sites more than others and respect the value of building a quality relationship. For 7 months of the year, during their busy season, they have an average of 30 visitors to a site per week, but the slow season is not as predictable.

Their main clients are Americans who do not speak Spanish, wanting to experience something different. They were looking for a well-rounded, diverse trip that offered adventure and education, as well as wilderness and recreation. Clients work with their US office to tell the type of trip they would like to experience and Panama Jones arranges the itineraries and books the trips in advance. For the most part the tourists are looking for a unique experience in the form of culture, wildlife/nature or history. These travelers are coming to Panama for a week trip, and it is up to outfitter agency to make sure that they have an enjoyable and memorable experience. They want the company to set up the itineraries and then cater to their needs. They offer transportation, knowledgeable and bilingual guides and the security that the trip is taken care of. The operator does their own marketing and promotion of the sites through the internet and direct mailings and they work with destinations that provide unique and varied activities. They were willing to pay about 40% of the

\$85.00 trip price to the community or tour site, but they expected a few things in return. Open and easy communication lines, stable prices, security and safety, relatively easy access and a leader or commercial manager whom they could work with and trust was important. They expected the community or location to act as the host for their guides, providing food, hospitality and other services. It was also important that the community invest in site improvements and distribute the money effectively.

They were always looking for the right sites to use with our tourists but were not always able to investigate what was available themselves. The company needed to know what was out there. They depended on the sites to help them know what tours were available. The clients on average were 31 years old with a desire for participatory and educational trips. Services, such as transportation to a wilderness site, translation and trip planning, added value for the customers.

After visiting, it was obvious that although tour service providers offered similar services, each was distinct in the manner they provided them and the consumer segments they targeted.

Section 7- The Trip Description

The tourism offering was developed using a day-trip itinerary that allows the visitor to spend 4 to 5 hours with the community. Independent travelers arrive at the port and start their journey with the Emberá village. This time includes transport to the village in a dug-out piragua canoe that lasts approximately 45 minutes. During this journey across Lake Alajuela and up the Chagres River, visitors experience the natural wonders of the jungle of the Chagres National Park. Also, the traveler experiences the river expertise that the Emberá Indians possess as they maneuver the rapids of the Chagres in a 20 foot piragua. Upon arrival, the tourists are greeted on a sand bar below the village by a welcoming committee playing traditional music. After being invited into the community and meeting various members, tourists and the community gather in the community penca shelter for a cultural "charla" or talk. The head of the community addresses the visitors and shares their story. This usually takes about 45 minutes to an hour and allows for time where tourists can ask any questions that come to mind. The standard talk explained the village's history, tourism business, the kinds of artwork available for sale and general facts about the surroundings, culture and situation of the community Parará Púru. The next activity was the traditional music and dance. This was a colorful spectacle. The men of the community play instruments, including handmade bongo drums, turtle shells and flutes, while the women dance rhythmically circling and bouncing to the music. It was an interesting activity to watch, but they also ask for the participation of the tourists to dance along. A traditional lunch of fried fish with limejuice, rice and patacones

(fried platano) was served next. The food was presented using banana leaves as plates and coconut-like gourds as bowls. They served the visitors and allowed them to enjoy the food, while the community goes to their respective homes to eat lunch as well. After resting, the tourists are invited to join the village medicinal plant expert on a tour of the interpretive nature trail. As part of the Emberá culture, the community has a stock of medicinal plants on hand within the community. If a tourist were not interested in hiking on the trail and looking for wildlife or did not have the physical capabilities to climb the steep incline, a medicinal garden is closely in the surrounding areas of the community. After the medicinal plant tour or trail hike, the visitor had the remaining time, about an hour, to swim in the fresh river, relax in a hammock, take pictures or browse the village's artwork selection. This was what Jack did on the first day and the presentation seemed a bit prepared and not very natural, but very informative and interesting. After the community became comfortable with my presence and the regular group tourists left, Jack found out that there is so much more to their culture than what was displayed in their standard activity package.

Experiencing the Community

As Jack went to sleep his first night, he was fascinated by the sounds of life that emanated from the jungle. Frogs, insects and owls made a chorus of sound that was highlighted by the deep reverberations of Howler monkeys heard from miles away. Jack listened and thought about the various experiences that Parara Puru could share with tourists and that not just any tourist would have the genuine interest or inclination to learn from the community. It seemed to be a delicate situation for the community to be placed in. On one hand, they enjoyed sharing their culture and jungle paradise with interested visitors. On the other hand, this offering was making the community members feel like they were putting on a show and they seemed bored and tired of doing the same offering repeatedly. The challenge was to package and present an informal-natural experience into something that could be reproduced for money.

Jack was looking at an activity poster that IPAT and the community had put together. It showed the various activities, such as fishing, extended hikes into the jungle, and traditional body painting ceremonies that the community practiced as part of their culture and day-to-day activities. Jack was very interested in experiencing many of the activities. Before he arrived, he was not aware of the wealth of experiences available.

Over the next few days, Jack enjoyed the experiences of a lifetime. He was able to learn a bit of the Emberá language, try his hand at spear fishing, hike into the jungle and see spider monkeys, sloths and various bird species and listen to traditional myths and stories. There were many other activities available, but he just did not have enough time to experience everything. We did the various activities on an informal basis

