

# Book Mark

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## The Rise of the Creative Class

Richard Florida



"Access to talented and creative people is to modern business what access to coal and iron ore was to steel-making," writes Prof. Richard Florida, Heinz Professor of Regional Economic Development at Carnegie Mellon University. "It determines where companies will choose to locate and grow, and this in turn changes the way cities can compete."

Florida's tremendously popular work defines the creative class, estimated at 38 million or 30% of America's working population, on the basis that they create products, processes and ideas. The 'supercreative core' includes scientists, engineers, tech people, artists, writers, musicians and other bohemian types. Surrounding them are others employed in academic institutions, arts and cultural organisations, software development companies, entertainment and media outlets, think-thanks, etc. This wider creative class also includes professionals who engage in "creative problem-solving" such as doctors, lawyers and accountants (!).

"Cities and regions that attract creative talent are also those with greater diversity and higher levels of quality of place. That's because location choices of the creative class are based to a large degree on their lifestyle interests, and these go well beyond the standard "quality-of-life" amenities."

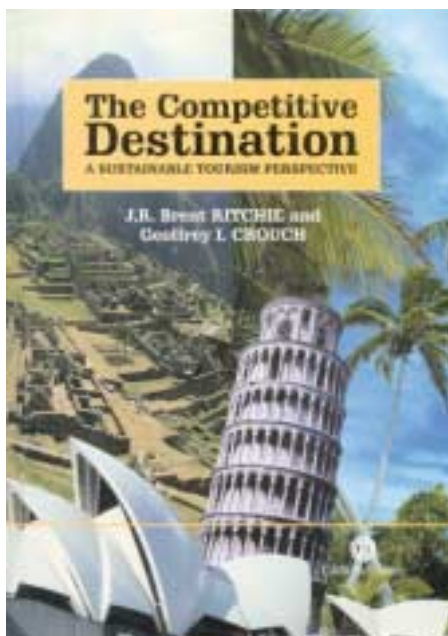
Florida's research has found that a concentration of amenities focused on the creative class (live music venues, art galleries, cafes, and so on), signals a city's attractiveness to the businesses which will drive its economic success. "My theory uses the three T's: technology, talent and tolerance. You need to have a strong technology base, such as a research university and investment in technology. That alone is a necessary but not in itself sufficient condition. Second, you need to be a place that attracts and retains talent, that has the lifestyle options, the excitement, the energy, the stimulation, that talented, creative people need. And thirdly, you need to be tolerant of diversity so you can attract all sorts of people -- foreign-born people, immigrants, woman as well as men, gays as well as straights, people who look different and have different appearances."

This book has suggested that instead of "underwriting big-box retailers, subsidizing downtown malls, recruiting call centers, and squandering precious taxpayer dollars on extravagant stadium complexes", cities should instead focus on developing an environment attractive to the creative class by cultivating the arts, music, night life and historic districts. It's all about creating unique, authentic places (and according to this study, the creative class doesn't attend sporting events).

Cities are leaping on the bandwagon - mayors are eager to join Florida's speaking tour, Memphis hired the author and affiliated consultants to conduct a major study defining the city's path to becoming a 'talent magnet', and conferences feature the author as keynote speaker. However a brief web survey of Creative Class spin-offs suggests that most of the discussion to date has centred on branding and positioning cities using the lingo of this book - important, but not the full story. The deeper issues are to do with planning, developing and sustaining unique retail and leisure quarters, with raising standards of urban design and landscape of public realm, and with supporting arts and culture.



Hardback, 288 pages, Perseus Books Group, 2002  
(ISBN: 0 465 02476 9)



### The Competitive Destination. A Sustainable Tourism Perspective.



*J.Ritchie and G. Crouch, 2003, Cabi Publishing*

In an increasingly competitive marketplace it can be difficult to focus on the key determinants of success, to know what it looks like when it has been reached and how to continue to deliver it in a consistent and sustainable way. Ritchie and Crouch have approached these issues in exactly the right way; viewing the whole destination as the product in order to present their perspective in an holistic manner.

The authors recognise that the key to success is an appropriately positioned Destination Management Organisation (DMO) which can successfully balance the goals of a myriad of stakeholders. Their approach to organisational structure is probably best captured by considering the principle that the 'M' of DMO needs to deliver total management rather than simply marketing. It is the DMO that can balance the opposing forces of competition and cooperation and it is reasonably convincing that this will provide a richly prized advantage.

As far as visitors are concerned, it is reassuring that the authors maintain the tried and tested centrality of quality-of-experience. This in itself is nothing new but what really launches their work into a new paradigm is that they consider the product use experience. Does the product fit with the visitors' lifestyle and does it produce a desirable experience? The nineteen forms of leisure visitor experience the authors define would serve well as the hooks on which to hang a comprehensive marketing strategy. Following on from this, the authors' definition of a destination brand reminds the reader of the power of identification and differentiation, but it also captures the strength of emotional attachment evoked by a successful brand, making the destination memorable.

The subject matter addresses another possible dichotomy of the often incongruous relationship between the competitive and the sustainable. This issue is dealt with by a healthy dose of pragmatism valuing resource stewardship and treating sustainability in its broadest sense.

'The Competitive Destination' is innovative in terms of style. It attempts, with a degree of success, to unite theory and practice through what is described as the "academic-practitioner" interface. I question whether Michael Porter would approve as it could, in theory, dilute competitive advantage. Or does it create an entirely new competitive advantage? Either way, one thing is certain, the book grounds the academic in reality and provides a well-structured framework for the practitioner. Thus, as the authors strive to provide a parsimonious model they usefully define what we should expect; a model that seeks to balance the need to maximise explanation with minimal complexity. This approach is aided by the superb use of diagrams, the highlight having to be the onionskin taxonomy illustration.

In conclusion, a good read for anyone that is serious about making a destination competitive. The only concern is that if too many destinations effectively adopt this paradigm then successful competitive advantage may be even harder to find. Definitely worth buying and digesting although probably best not shared with the "destination next door".

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