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## **Cross-Border Tourism in Cascadia - Perspectives from Tourism Stakeholders and Residents**

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# CROSS-BORDER TOURISM IN CASCADIA

## Perspectives from Tourism Stakeholders and Residents

Pierre-Alexandre Beylier, PhD

Border Policy Research Institute & University of Victoria  
Cross Border Research Fellow 2019

Special Research Report  
Fall 2020

Border Policy Research Institute  
Western Washington University  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research project examines cross-border travel through the lens of the tourism sector, and the effects of the border and cross-border travel on borderlands communities in the Cascadia region, prior to the COVID-19 outbreak. It uses a dual approach, drawing on interviews conducted with regional stakeholders in the tourism industry from September 2019 to December 2019 as well as a survey of regional residents regarding their border-crossing habits and attitudes. As a starting point, the project sought to explore two questions:

- 1) Does the tourism sector market the region as a cross-border region and more specifically does it capitalize on the “Two Nation Vacation” concept to do so?
- 2) Does the tourism sector function in a cross-border way both in terms of promotion – targeting people from the other side of the border – and in terms of cross-border cooperation?

After processing the data collected through both the stakeholder interviews and the resident survey, this report highlights three main findings. Firstly, the Canada–U.S. border is generally viewed as a multi-faceted challenge for stakeholders and residents, in terms of exchange rate, political climate and security measures. Second, the border is seldom presented in the marketing strategies of the different stakeholders, thus representing a missed opportunity. Segmentation of the people living on the other side of the border is not a common strategy despite their importance. Thirdly, the seeds of cooperation have been planted but competition dynamics still prevail over cooperation.

## AUTHOR

Pierre-Alexandre Beylier is an Associate Professor in North American Studies at Université Grenoble-Alpes. He wrote his PhD dissertation on the post-9/11 Canada–U.S. border and its continuity and change. He analyzed the measures that were put in place at the Canada–U.S. border after 9/11 to respond to the terrorist threat, as well as their impact on cross-border trade and travel and bilateral relations. The author of *Canada/Etats-Unis: les enjeux d'une frontière*, he now studies cross-border communities in terms of mobility, identity, and representations.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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More specifically, I would like to thank Laurie Trautman, Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly, Natalie Baloy Nicole Bates-Earmer, and Erin Dahlman-Oeth for their help and guidance. They were very welcoming and gave me a positive working environment to conduct this research. The different conversations and the contacts that everyone gave me further contributed to facilitating the project. A special thanks to Erin and Natalie (again) for her help in the writing process. Writing a report for policy-makers is not an easy task for an academic and their patience, advice, reading, and edits were really helpful.

Finally, I want to thank all the stakeholders that I interviewed for their availability. Not only was it very useful to interview them but the interviews were fascinating.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Cascadia is a dynamic and integrated cross-border region along the Canada–U.S. border, paralleled only by the Great Lakes region (PRI, 2008; Cappellano & Makkonen, 2020).

Cascadia’s geography, watershed, climate, and ecosystem not only transcend the border but has also attracted a lot of attention since the 1990s. A number of organizations have emerged to promote the management of the region in a unified way, including the Cascadia Department of Bioregion, Cascadia Now, the Cascadia Innovation Corridor, and the Cascadia Institute. Even if the visions that underlie them are different – from bioregionalism to economic development – they all push for a coordinated cross-border approach (Clarke, 2000). At the same time, the Canada–U.S. border has been experiencing a “re-bordering” phenomenon since the 9/11 attacks (and now the COVID-19 pandemic), thus hampering cross-border links and threatening cross-border integration (Beylier, 2016). This study analyzes cross-border tourism in the context of these tensions between Cascadian coordination and disconnection.

Over the last few decades, the globalization of the economy and the development of international travel, as well as the lowering of transportation costs, have induced a phenomenon called “globalized tourism.” Tourism brings countries and people closer together across international borders, and is increasingly challenging how borders have been experienced and represented historically.

Tourism is defined as a series of “activities that people deploy during their travels and their stays in places located outside their usual environment for a period that does not exceed one year” (Coëffe, 2017, p. 20). People engage in tourism for a wide range of reasons, including leisure, visiting relatives, sports, medical treatment, or religion (UN World Tourism Organization in Coëffe, 2017, p. 20; Simon, 2019, p. 8). The academic study of tourism has developed significantly since the 1960s, which saw the rise of mass tourism in Western Europe and North America. The scope and methodologies have changed over time, with an increasing focus on systemic studies (Baud et al., 2013). Tourism scholar Knafou defines tourism as “a system of actors, practices, and spaces which participate in the recreation of individuals through the act of moving and living temporarily out of daily places” (Knafou in Baud et al., 2013).

This report focuses on tourism in Cascadia, and specifically on the communities near the land and marine border between the State of Washington in the United States and the Province of British Columbia in Canada. The Pacific Northwest Economic Region (PNWER) defines the Pacific Northwest as the states of Alaska, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana in the United States and the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and the Yukon and Northwest Territories in Canada. The areas west of the Cascade Mountains in Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia comprise the Pacific Northwest subregion called Cascadia

(see Figure 1; Cappellano & Makkonen, 2020, p. 4; Cold-Ravnkilde et al., 2004, p. 60; Sparke, 2000). Around the Salish Sea region within Cascadia, there are five land border crossings, collectively called the Cascade Gateway (see Figures 2-4). The Cascade Gateway in Washington State is the third busiest passenger crossing along the Canada–U.S. border (see Figure 3; IMTC, 2019, p. 34).



FIGURE 1: CASCADIA



FIGURE 2: REFERENCE MAP FOR THE SALISH SEA BIOREGION (FLOWER 2020)



FIGURE 3: CASCADE GATEWAY PORTS OF ENTRY (IMTC)



Tourism plays a crucial part in this region's economy. In 2019, it totaled \$71.4 billion in visitor spending with 1.7 million visitors.<sup>1</sup> Washington State and British Columbia are the top two states/provinces in the region that rely on tourism, with 165,000 and 161,500 jobs respectively sustained by this sector and with \$21.9 billion and \$12.3 billion in visitor expenditures (PNWER). PNWER<sup>2</sup> has made tourism a priority by adding a Tourism Working Group whose main goal is "to develop a more interconnected tourism region and facilitate collaboration among industry partners in the Pacific Northwest and Western Canada" (PNWER). Dave Cowen, CEO of the Butchart Gardens, and Michelle Stennett, State Senator from Idaho chair the committee, and illustrate PNWER's focus on private-public partnerships and commitment to a bilateral governance model (*Ibid*).<sup>3</sup> In the 1990s, one of PNWER Tourism Working Group's main achievements was the popularization of the "Two Nation Vacation" concept to develop links between the different states/provinces of the broader Pacific Northwest by fostering cross-border tourism and prompting international tourists to visit both countries.<sup>4</sup> By creating an experience based on visiting two countries, this initiative contributed to a "touristification" of the region as a whole (Baud *et al.*, 2013, p. 503). It was a way of trying to ease the barrier effect of the border and use it instead as a facilitator of tourism.<sup>5</sup>

The 9/11 terrorist attacks and ensuing securitization of the Canada–U.S. border led to a "thickening of the border," which, in turn, hampered cross-border travel and tourism. Within the framework of the Smart Border Declaration (2001) and the Beyond the Border Action Plan (2011), several initiatives have been put in place in order to mitigate this phenomenon and to streamline the crossing of the border, such as the Nexus Trusted Traveler program and the Enhanced Driver's License developed jointly by British Columbia and Washington State (Dingman & Edgel, 2015).

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<sup>1</sup> The Pacific Northwest comes second in visitor spending in North America, after the Great Lakes Region which welcomes 56% of North American tourists (1.2 billion), which generated \$253 billion in revenue (Council of the Great Lakes Region, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> PNWER is a cross-border organization that promotes "increas[ing] the economic well-being and quality of life for all citizens of the region, while maintaining and enhancing our natural environment" (PNWER Dashboard, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> When the author conducted his field trip, the American co-chair was Gail Tarleton, State Senator of Washington. PNWER also has a Border Working Group whose goal is to make the border more flexible for cross-border trade and cross-border travel, and a Transportation Working Group. Both Working Groups work jointly to promote certain initiatives.

<sup>4</sup> In 1996, the Cascadia Center of the Discovery Institute organized a conference about tourism in order to encourage the co-promotion of the region's attractions, namely through the Two Nation Vacation concept (Portland State University, 2006, p. 19).

<sup>5</sup> Since the 1930s, other projects aimed to foster links between the two countries and transcend the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel. Most of these were transportation projects (e.g. Cascade Amtrak [1972], the Rocky Mountaineer's "Coastal Passage" [2013], the Clipper Ferry [1986], the Sidney/Anacortes Ferry [1922]), but the creation of the Peace Arch Park (1939) in Blaine was the first. However, with the Two Nation Vacation, it was the first time that cross-border tourism had been embraced as an official strategy.

This research project examines cross-border travel through the lens of the tourism sector, and the effects of the border and cross-border travel on borderland communities. As such, this report addresses broad categories of tourists in Cascadia, including international tourists (visitors from countries other than the U.S. and Canada traveling to the region), domestic tourists (residents from other parts of the two countries to the region), and regional resident and cross-border tourists (residents traveling in the region). Another distinction is “tourist” and “excursionist”: excursionists travel for less than 24 hours whereas tourists spend at least one night at their destination ( Coëffe, 2017, p. 22; Macias, 2007, p. 91). Overnight stays can generate more revenue, including tax revenue from lodging taxes. The most prominent regional actors in the tourism sector are Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs), which promote regions at the state/provincial or country scale and rely heavily on lodging taxes. Interviews with DMO representatives focused primarily on tourists, though excursionists are also an important part of the broad umbrella of tourism in the cross-border Cascadia region.

This report analyzes how different stakeholders participate in and encourage cross-border tourism as a structuring phenomenon in the region. The analysis draws on interviews with tourism stakeholders in the region and a survey of the regional residents regarding their border-crossing habits and attitudes. This research began with two driving questions:

- Does the tourism sector market the region as a cross-border region and more specifically, does it capitalize on the “Two Nation Vacation” concept to do so?
- Does the tourism sector function in a cross-border way both in terms of promotion – targeting people from the other side of the border – and in terms of cross-border cooperation?

Ultimately this report assesses cross-border links to evaluate whether the tourism sector acts cooperatively, and offers recommendations for a more coordinated approach.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODS

Researchers have highlighted the gap between policymakers and border residents, which sometimes leads to measures being implemented without consultation of local communities nor consideration of their impact on local residents (Ganster & Collins, 2017; Laine, 2018). This project used a mixed-methods approach to bring together stakeholders' views of the border with local residents' perceptions and habits regarding cross-border tourism to better understand how different actors and systems shape cross-border tourism.<sup>6</sup>

The border region is structured by transportation systems, including the Canadian Highway 99 and U.S. Interstate 5, connecting Vancouver to Seattle and further south, and a mix of public and private ferry systems, including BC Ferries, Washington State Ferries, and the Black Ball Ferry Line or Coho Ferry. This project therefore focused on the following clusters of border region communities:

### **Cascade Gateway Land Crossings**

- Abbotsford, BC
- Surrey, BC
- White Rock, BC
- Bellingham, WA
- Birch Bay, WA
- Blaine, WA
- Burlington, WA

### **Maritime / Ferry Crossings**

- Victoria, BC
- Anacortes, WA
- Friday Harbor, WA
- Port Angeles, WA

### **Point Roberts Exclave Crossing**

- Tsawwassen, BC
- Point Roberts, WA

Residents living in a 50-mile radius around the border were also invited to complete the survey.

### 2.1 INTERVIEWS

Between September 2019 and December 2019, 54 semi-structured interviews were carried out both in Canada and the United States with stakeholders involved in four categories of the regional tourism sector:

- 1) Local and regional Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) representatives.
- 2) Chambers of Commerce representatives who support tourism-related businesses.
- 3) Members of some City Councils to gain a better understanding of the overall role of tourism in their cities' economies.

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<sup>6</sup> The Institutional Review Board at Western Washington University reviewed and approved this project. All interviewees consented to being recorded and having their names shared for this research project.

- 4) Regional tourism sector advocates: the two co-chairs of the PNWER Tourism Working Group, two members of the Secretariat for Intergovernmental Relations in BC, and two members of the BC Department of Tourism.

This mix of participants reflects the multiple scales and approaches to tourism in the region (see Appendix 1 for a list of participants). Each interview focused on a set of questions regarding the overall state of tourism, stakeholder strategies, cross-border tourism and coordination, the role of the border in marketing strategies, strategies for attracting residents from across the border, border challenges, and the “Two-Nation Vacation” concept (see Appendix 2 for interview questions). Each interview was recorded, transcribed, and analyzed by the author to identify patterns in responses.

## 2.2 SURVEY

An online survey was designed on Google Forms to assess respondents’ attitudes regarding the border and border-crossing habits (see Appendix 3 for survey questionnaire). The survey was distributed via widely-used community Facebook groups based in the communities at the focus of this study, such as *Bellingham Living*, *It’s Blaine That’s the Name*, *Anacortes Community Page*, *The Real Port Angeles*, *Families in North Delta*, *Events and Vendors in Vancouver Lower Mainland*, *What’s Up Abbotsford*, etc. Additionally, some interview participants forwarded the survey to their mailing lists.<sup>7</sup>

Overall, 1518 responses were gathered between September 2019 and March 2020. The author tried to balance responses between American and Canadian residents, and as a result 48% of respondents were Americans and 52% were Canadians. In terms of age and gender demographics, the author also tried to give each group the same response weight; however, it proved difficult to reach parity in the category of gender (see Figure 4 & 5).<sup>8</sup> The goal of the survey was not to aim for a random or representative sample, but rather to tap into a specific regional demographic to provide helpful insights into border crossing attitudes and habits. As far as tourism is concerned, the survey was meant to study the region’s residents specifically and not international travelers.

When referring to people who participated in the survey for this research, research participants are referred to as “survey respondents” or “respondents. When referring to tourism sector representatives who participated in interviews, research participants are referred to as “interviewees,” “stakeholders,” and/or identified by their name or organization.

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<sup>7</sup> The survey was also given face-to-face in some border towns under study but since the process was long and burdensome, it was abandoned quickly.

<sup>8</sup> The author used Microsoft Excel to generally analyze and present the data.

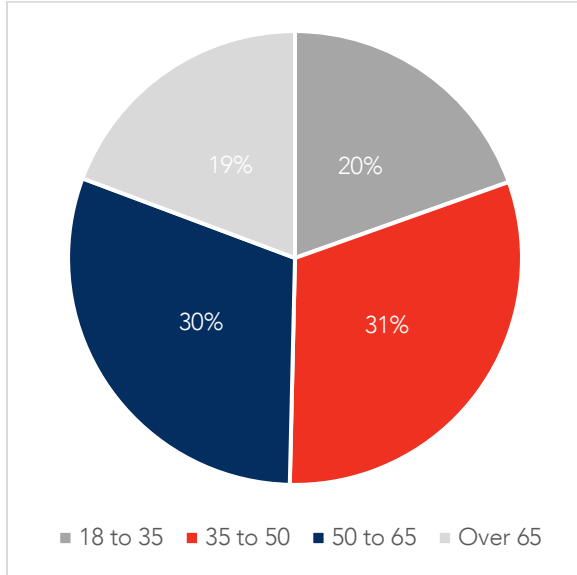


FIGURE 4: AGE OF RESPONDENTS

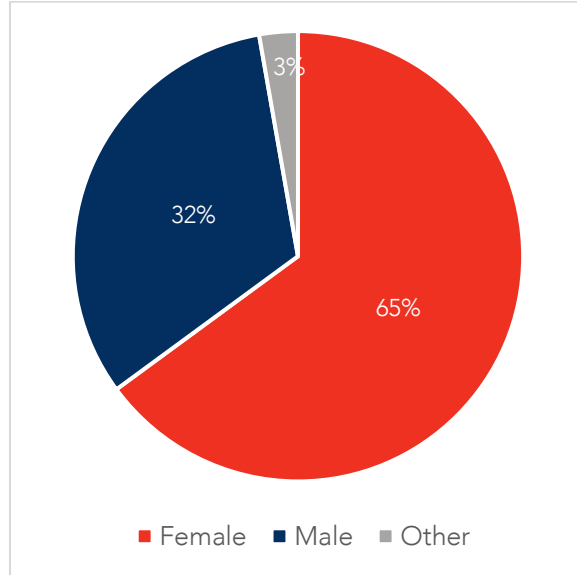


FIGURE 5: GENDER OF RESPONDENTS

Having two methodological tools helped to create a more comprehensive and diversified study of tourism. The goal of the interviews was to focus on tourism stakeholders to examine their engagement with international travelers, domestic travelers, and cross-border travelers, and the survey broadly assessed practices and attitudes of regional residents to document their experience of regional and cross-border tourism.

### 2.3 LIMITS OF THE RESEARCH

Despite the availability of most stakeholders, some major players could not be interviewed (especially in Victoria and Surrey) due to conflicting schedules or, in one case, a retirement. As a consequence, two thirds of the interviewees are from the U.S. and only one third from Canada, which brings some imbalance to the project and does not reflect the scale of population in the sector under study.

For the survey, the author chose to focus on a 50-mile radius around the border. This limit excluded the Seattle region from the study, in part to avoid skewing the results too much due to the size of Seattle's population as the largest city in the region as well as its relative distance from the border compared to other communities under study. This project thus offers a semi-local study of Cascadia to analyze the border effect at a smaller scale.

In addition, the survey sample is not random or representative of the demographics of the broader region, nor the specific demographic of border-crossing individuals. Survey findings

also differ from the findings of a larger border study by the International Mobility and Trade Corridor (IMTC) that focused on people crossing at the border. The Passenger Vehicle Intercept Survey was jointly conducted by the Border Policy Research Institute (BPRI) and IMTC at the Canada–U.S. border at the four major ports-of-entry in the Cascade Gateway in Summer 2018 and Winter 2019 (IMTC, 2020). Over 15,000 vehicles were surveyed, and passengers were asked about their origin and destinations, trip purposes, length of stay across the border, and more. The sample was not perfectly random, though it was close to representative of the general border-crossing demographic in respect to direction of travel, country of residence, day of the week, and port-of-entry.<sup>9</sup> In contrast to the Passenger Vehicle Intercept Survey, this project’s survey results are not representative of the typical border environment and are more skewed towards Americans and people with more tourist engagement, due to the study’s chosen sampling methods.

Finally, attitudes and behaviors of international tourists were not collected or analyzed for this study, though some interviewees did address strategies for attracting international visitors to the region.

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<sup>9</sup> The variable “country of residence” was more skewed than the others. In the survey, Canadian travelers outnumbered Americans 2.5 to 1. In the normal cross-border environment, Canadians typically outnumber Americans 3 to 1 (see Statistics Canada, Table 24-10-0041-01).

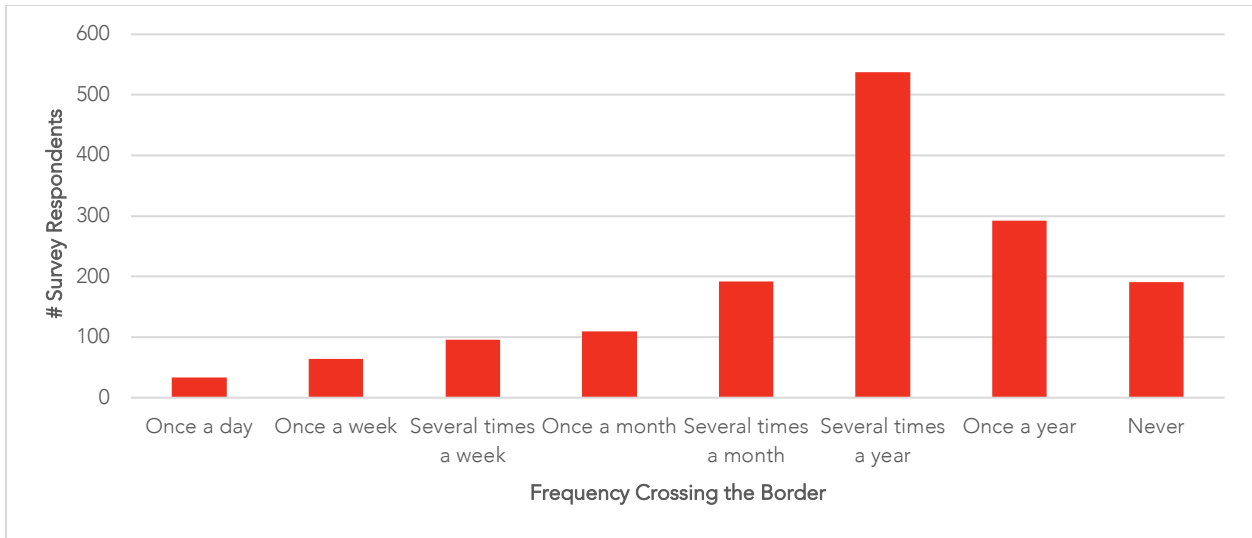
### 3. RESULTS

Given the fact that tourism has been identified by PNWER as a major priority for the Pacific Northwest, especially in terms of cross-border tourism through the “Two Nation Vacation” concept that it designed, the project sought to explore two questions:

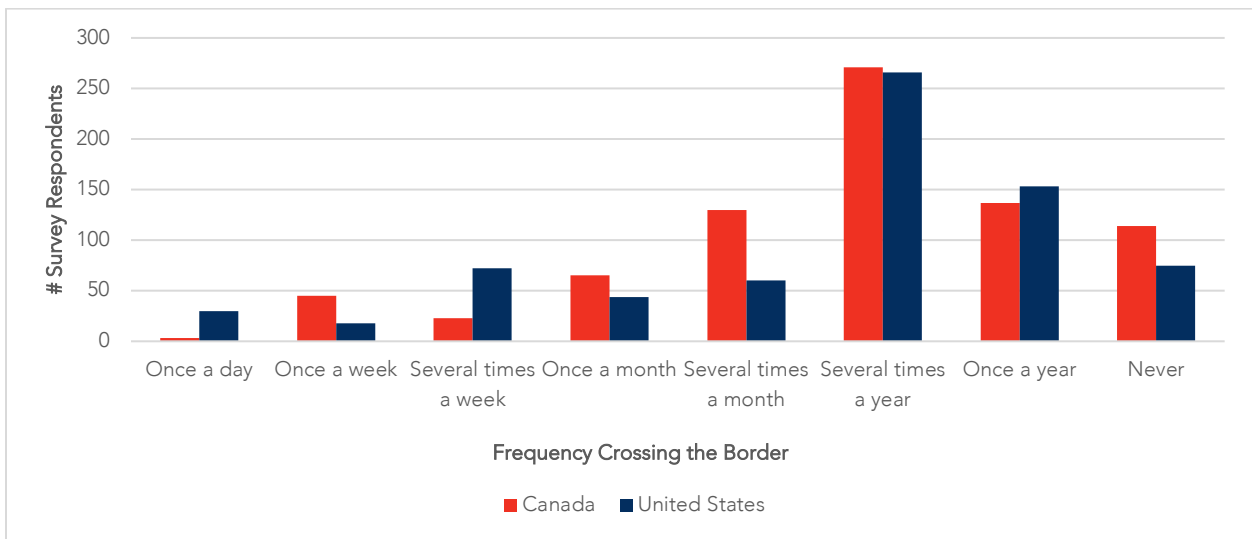
- Does the tourism sector market the region as a cross-border region and more specifically does it capitalize on the “Two Nation Vacation” concept to do so?
- Does the tourism sector function in a cross-border way both in terms of promotion – targeting people from the other side of the border – and in terms of cross-border cooperation?

After conducting and analyzing the interviews (n = 54) and survey responses (n= 1518), three main themes were apparent. First, the Canada–U.S. border is generally viewed as a multi-faceted challenge for stakeholders and residents. Second, the border is seldom present in the marketing strategies of the different stakeholders, thus representing a missed opportunity. Third, the seeds of cooperation have been planted to launch joint cross-border projects but competition still prevails over cooperation.

The survey found that approximately a third (32%) of regional respondents cross the border more than once per month, while 13% do not cross the border at all (Figure 6). Even if the border is crossed quite frequently by a section of the population, one can note great diversity among this category, which has to be reconciled with the reasons they are crossing. When breaking the results down according to country of residence, the numbers are more or less the same (Figure 7).



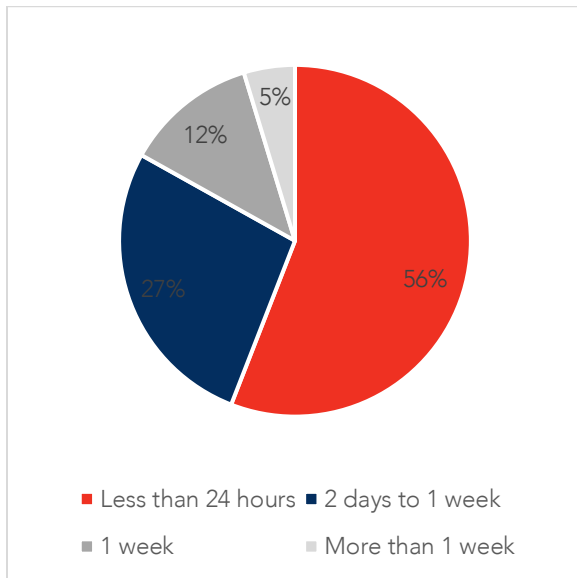
**FIGURE 6: HOW OFTEN DO YOU CROSS THE BORDER (TOTAL RESPONDENTS)**



**FIGURE 7: HOW OFTEN DO YOU CROSS THE BORDER (RESPONDENTS BY COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE)**



In terms of length of stay, the majority of respondents (54%) cross the border for less than 24 hours, while 24% cross for two days and 12% for one week (Figure 8).<sup>10</sup>



**FIGURE 8:** DURATION OF STAY

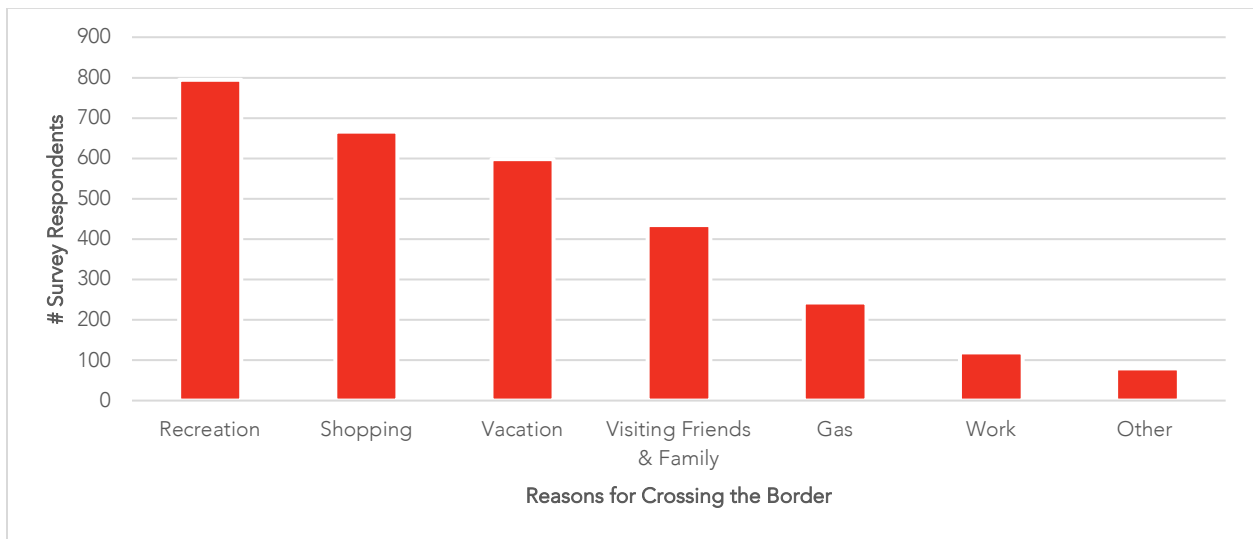
In the most recent Passenger Vehicle Intercept Survey (IMTC, 2020), the most frequently-cited trip purposes for people crossing the border at the Cascade Gateway crossings were shopping (20%), recreation (19%), and vacation (18%).<sup>11</sup> Divided further by country of residence, Canadians typically crossed for shopping (29%), purchasing gas (25%), and mail (17%), while Americans crossed for vacation (32%), family visits (19%), and recreation (19%). Additionally, Canadians outnumber Americans in crossing the border 3 to 1 in the Cascade Gateway. Differences with the current survey may be explained in part by the fact that the IMTC survey was conducted solely at the ports-of-entry, and does not include trips taken via air, sea, or rail (IMTC, 2019).

In survey responses for this project, however, Canadians and American respondents reported different trip frequencies and purposes, which could be due to the sampling methods chosen for this project (i.e. Facebook groups and mailing lists). The most popular motivation in the sample is recreation (27%), followed by shopping (23%), vacation (20%), and visiting friends

<sup>10</sup> If one compares these results with the IMTC Passenger Interception Survey, one can note that the top three categories are the same. Only the proportions change 39% say they cross twice a month, 21% two to six times a year and 14% once a month.

<sup>11</sup> Respondents could only choose one primary trip purpose.

and family (15%).<sup>12</sup> Gas and picking up mail, two reasons mentioned frequently during the stakeholder interviews, were only chosen by 8% and 0.8% of participants (Figure 9).<sup>13</sup>



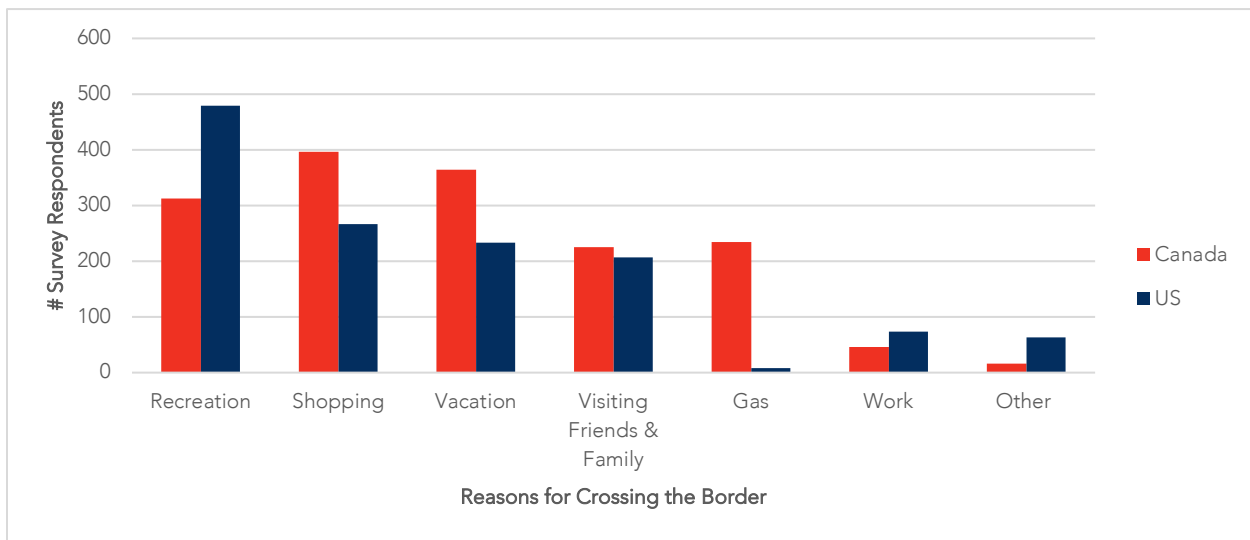
**FIGURE 9: REASONS FOR CROSSING THE BORDER (TOTAL RESPONDENTS)**

When breaking down these numbers according to country of residence, Americans crossed the border mostly for recreation (36%) and shopping (20%) while the Canadians cross for shopping (24%), vacation (23%), and recreation purposes (19%) (Figure 10). Though cross-border shopping plays a leading role in crossing practices, especially for Canadian border crossers, it is clear that tourism – whether vacation or recreation – is also a significant factor.

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<sup>12</sup> Since the respondents could give several responses to this question, the percentages correspond to the overall number of responses given to this question and not the percentage of respondents.

<sup>13</sup> The overall top categories are similar to those of the IMTC Passenger Intercept Survey conducted in the summer 2018, which identified the following trip purposes: vacation (20%), recreation (18%), shopping (18%), family visit (13%), and gas (13%).



**FIGURE 10: REASONS FOR CROSSING THE BORDER (RESPONDENTS BY COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE)**

For stakeholders on each side of the border, the proportion of U.S. and Canadian visitors varied widely. For example, a representative from the BC city of Abbotsford estimates that only 8% of visitors to the city are Americans, while a representative from White Rock estimates that 10% of participants in city-hosted events and up to 20-25% of visitors to the city are Americans. Meanwhile, the Birch Bay Visitor Center in WA estimates that approximately 25% of visitors are Canadians. At marine crossings, U.S.-based operators of the Clipper Ferry and representatives of the Port of Anacortes estimate approximately 30% of marine crossers are Canadian, while the Coho reports that only 15% of users are Canadian. The Bellingham International Airport in WA represents the greatest proportion of cross-border users, with up to 60-65% of users coming from the Canadian market.

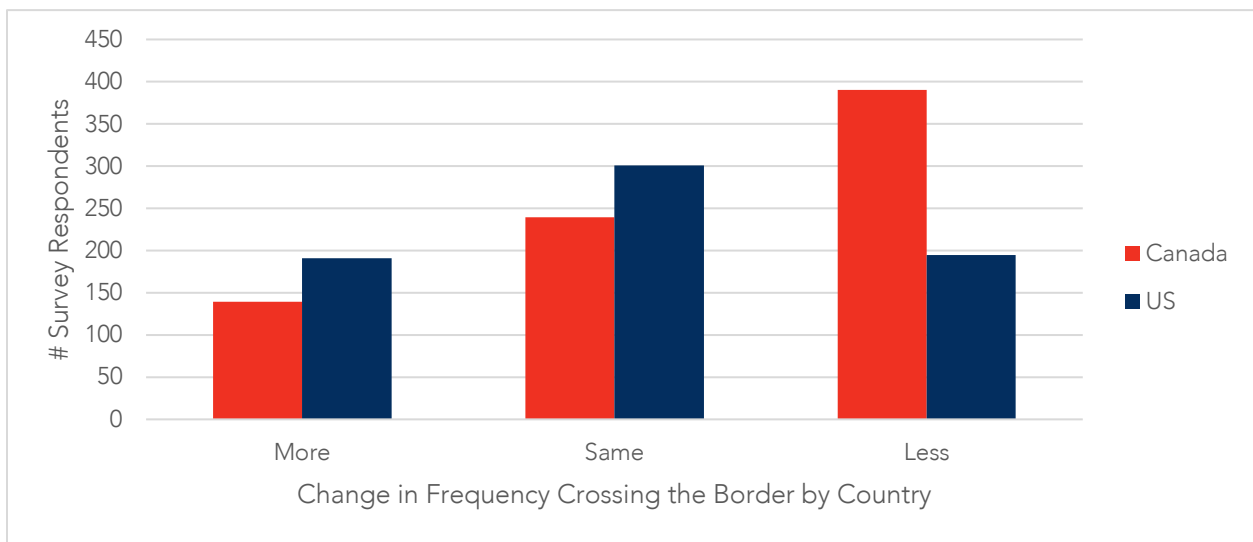
### 3.1 THE CANADA-U.S. BORDER: A MULTI-FACETED CHALLENGE

The first finding from both the interviews and survey was that the border represents a multi-faceted challenge for cross-border tourism, which is further supported by interviewees and respondents who indicate an overall reduction in border crossing in recent years, particularly for Canadian survey respondents.

The survey asked, "Have you been crossing the border more or less frequently in the last few years?" Respondents indicated that 40% have been crossing less frequently, 23% cross more, and 37% about the same, and offered a range of reasons why (Figures 11 & 12). Canadians reported reduced crossing at a higher rate than their American counterparts, and Americans were most likely to report that their border crossing behaviors have not changed significantly in

recent years. Overall, 71% of American respondents report similar or increased border crossing, compared to 49% of Canadian respondents. For respondents who reported crossing the border less frequently in recent years, Canadian respondents emphasized the political climate and value of the dollar, while American residents cited border wait times and the border guards' behaviors.

A significant number of stakeholders emphasized border challenges during interviews, sometimes even without prompting and offering a range of explanations (Figure 13). Below, I analyze the main challenges they noted, as well as further addressing survey respondents' border attitudes and behaviors.<sup>14</sup>



**FIGURE 11: RELATIVE FREQUENCY OF BORDER CROSSING IN RECENT YEARS (RESPONDENTS BY COUNTRY)**

<sup>14</sup> Most of these challenges – especially issues related to policy – are more prominent at the land border than at the maritime border. There are fewer border-crossers at maritime borders like Victoria and Friday Harbor due to extra difficulty with ferry travel and border access.

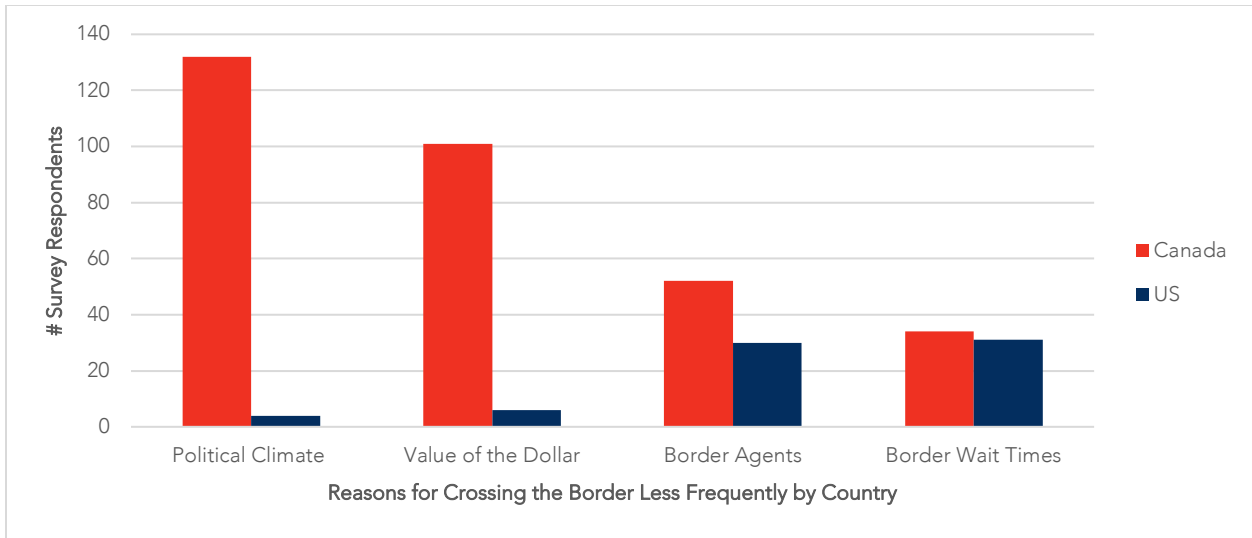


FIGURE 12: REASONS FOR LESS FREQUENT CROSSINGS (RESPONDENTS BY COUNTRY)

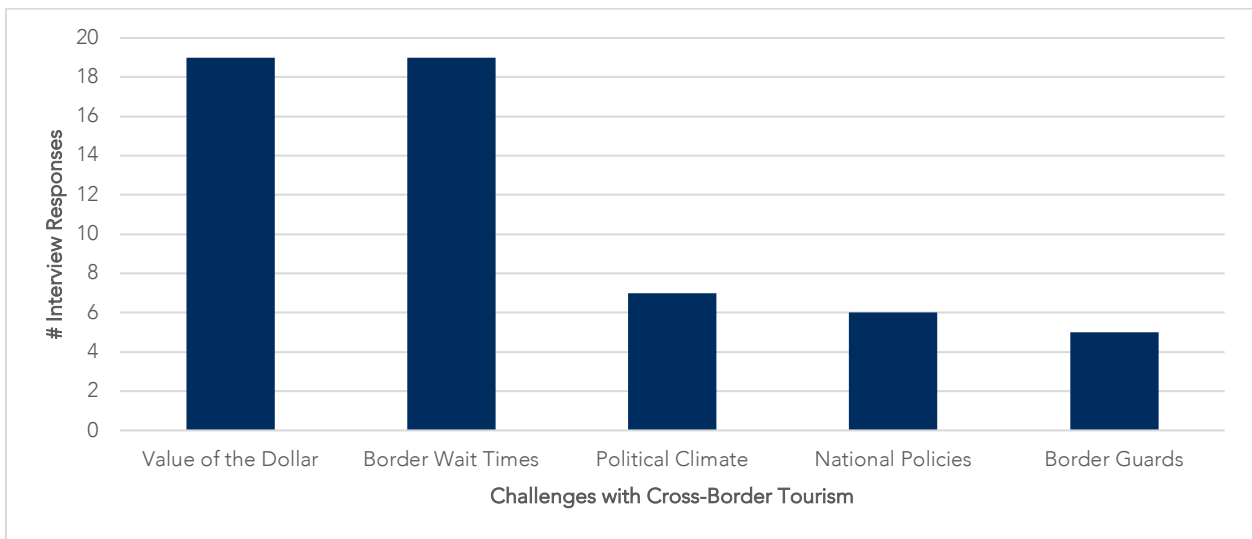


FIGURE 13: STAKEHOLDER RESPONSES – BORDER CHALLENGES

**Currency Exchange Rates.** In interviews with tourism sector representatives for this study, the primary challenge they mentioned related to the currency exchange rate, specifically the “weakness” of the Canadian dollar and currency rate fluctuations (addressed by 15 out of 29 (52%) American interviewees). Some presented the value of the Canadian dollar as *the* factor shaping cross-border travel —“Almost everything is completely dependent on the Canadian dollar” (interview: U.S. Customs and Border Protection [CBP]) — while others underscored the

exchange rate as “challenging” (interview: Visit Seattle)<sup>15</sup> or as “a challenge” (interview: Bellingham International Airport [BLI]). One interviewee pointed out that, “the exchange rate is not as favorable as it’s been in say, five years” (IMTC). Indeed, in October 2019, one Canadian dollar was worth 0.75 in U.S. dollars, down from the high of 0.93 in July 2014 (XE Currency, 2020).<sup>16</sup> Previous research supports stakeholder observations, showing that cross-border travel from Canada to the United States typically declines when the exchange rate goes down (BPRI, 2016a). Even Canadian interviewees (25%) recognized the challenge – or, in their case, the opportunity – that this differential constitutes, presenting it as a “30% boost to Americans when they come up to Canada” (interview: City of White Rock).

In contrast to interview responses and recent research (BPRI, 2013; BPRI, 2018), only 18% of survey respondents selected the value of the Canadian dollar as a reason for less frequent crossing in recent years, despite BPRI’s finding that there is a correlation between weaker positions of the Canadian dollar and reduced Canadian cross-border travel (BPRI, 2019, p. 2). Survey responses indicate that self-reported perceptions of the border, as a “political line” and as a “hassle” or “obstacle,” are experienced as more significant factors. In the last couple of years, it is clear that cross-border travel was at a crossroads of many forces, even before COVID-19 further complicated the picture.

**Border Experiences and Impressions: Wait Times and Guards.** The next major challenge mentioned by interviewees is border wait times, which have been significantly affected by post-9/11 security measures at U.S. international boundaries. Some interviewees (42%) mentioned border waits and line-ups create a hassle, particularly owing to their unpredictability. Indeed, wait times tend to be longer at certain times of day and can skyrocket to several hours, especially in the mornings, evenings, and on weekends. At other times, one can cross the border in less than ten minutes. This lack of consistency presents a major challenge to cross-border tourism. As the Mayor of Surrey noted, “Sometimes they get tough on both sides and then other times they relax and it flows very smoothly... it’s not sort of consistent all the time.”

Exacerbating this issue is how border wait time variability affects people’s impressions of the border, which can compound the idea of the border as a deterrent. In other words, in addition to the actual wait times, a major challenge is the *perception* of the border that has developed in the wake of 9/11. This perception shapes people’s crossing habits, prompting many to avoid crossing the border. As two interviewees put it:

[P]eople have negative perceptions of the border. [As] someone who goes across the border a lot... I have negative perceptions. You can be easily

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<sup>15</sup> Visit Seattle downplayed the importance of this issue, noting that Canadians continue to visit Seattle even when the currency exchange rate isn’t favorable.

<sup>16</sup> Between 2011 and 2013, the Canadian dollar was at par with the American dollar.

waiting in the lineup for an hour and a half, two hours... You can have rude border guards that make the experience very poor. ... For those that use it, there's a psychological barrier to be aware of, especially during peak times, obviously. (Abbotsford Tourism)

I think there's been a bit of an effect – not necessarily essential lineup at the border or whatever – but just the perception itself. (Discover BC)

Words such as “obstacle,” “hassle,” and “deterrent” were used by survey participants and interviewees alike to describe the border.<sup>17</sup> Border wait times were mentioned by 11% of survey respondents, and border officer behavior was cited by 14%, indicating that federal systems that have “thickened” the border have affected regional residents’ border behaviors and attitudes.

At the same time, a number of interviewees also noted that border wait times had improved in the last few months – or even few years, for some – prior to the COVID-19 outbreak. Thanks to initiatives such as the Wait Time System (BPRI, 2013) or Trusted Traveler programs (Dingman & Edgel, 2015), the border had indeed regained some kind of predictability.<sup>18</sup> Among interviewees, 19 (42%) mentioned the role of the NEXUS Trusted Traveler program in overcoming the negative effects of beefed-up border controls. NEXUS is especially important in the Cascadia region, where there are over 600,000 NEXUS members – more than the Detroit/Windsor and Niagara/Buffalo regions combined (BPRI et al., 2019, p. 4).

In the survey of this project, one third of respondents were NEXUS members and generally, interviewees also presented technology as a way to make the border “thinner” and more flexible, whether through RFID or through projects linked with facial recognition.<sup>19</sup> An official from the Department of Transportation noted:

[Technology] has been a huge benefit that will probably eliminate at some point any kind of wait at the border for passenger and freight as well as increasing their ability or their knowledge and sense of security, which is what their whole goal is here: more secure and no wait, that's what we want, which for tourism would be perfect.

A number of interviewees also acknowledged that variable border wait times have led to people being more strategic when crossing the border; for example, avoiding long holidays, avoiding certain times of day, planning their trip in advance, etc. Since the border is perceived

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<sup>17</sup> Among interviewees, ten people used the word “challenge” to describe to the border or the challenges it represents, six people used the term “barrier,” two used the term “obstacle,” and two used the term “hindrance.”

<sup>18</sup> The project was carried out before the COVID-19 outbreak.

<sup>19</sup> Pre-clearance could have a similar positive effect in undermining congestion at both the land border and maritime border (BPRI, 2016b; also cited in multiple interviews).

by regional residents and some actors as an obstacle, some of the interviewees noted their role in advocating for more fluidity at the border. Local Chambers of Commerce and other groups such as PNWER and IMTC, work on making the border more accessible, efficient, and consistent. The IMTC representative explained: “[we are looking at] ways to make it less of a deterrent for people to travel for whatever purpose, including tourism.”

Other border-related experiences were also emphasized as challenging by some interviewees. Several mentioned the “bad treatment” that some people received at the border, including intrusive questions or rude behaviors. Even if these cases are anecdotal, they can likewise affect people’s experiences and impressions of the border. Some interview participants noted a lack in “consistency in how people are treated crossing the border” (Bellingham Chamber of Commerce). Others underscored a more specific issue that had to do with visas, where international tourists are not always aware that they need two visas if they want to visit the United States and Canada.

**Political Climate and National Policies.** Finally, the last major challenge pertains to the “political border.” A number of interviewees (15%) emphasized that the “political climate in the U.S.” has been acting as a deterrent for cross-border tourism since 2016. Interestingly enough, few interviewees (n=2) directly mentioned Donald Trump. Instead, several participants used euphemisms such as “the current political leader of the United States,” “the current political context,” or “the current administration” or even more general expressions such as the “political rhetoric” or “political reasons.” Generally, tourism is dependent on “global politics” and some international events such as Brexit or tense diplomatic relations with China can similarly affect tourism, especially international tourism. This is a phenomenon well-documented in Border Studies (Ganster & Collins, 2017; Laine, 2018): some national decisions are made without consulting local communities or impacts on local cross-border experiences. This discrepancy has been very much an issue in Cascadia in the years following 9/11, noted in interviews and in survey responses.

Out of the 596 (40%) survey respondents who stated that they had been crossing the border less frequently in the last few years, the most commonly cited reason was “personal issues” such as a changing family situation or lack of time. The next most common reason had to do with the border as a political line. Indeed, 23% of respondents denounced the “political climate” in the U.S. as a major deterrent. Most simply wrote “Trump” as the reason for not crossing. Others emphasized the Trump Administration’s policies, the absence of gun control, or their sentiment of feeling unsafe in the U.S.. Anecdotally, one American gave the same reason, explaining that they were “ashamed to travel because of our president.” Interestingly, some Americans used the same arguments to justify their crossing into Canada less frequently,



laying the blame on Canada's "liberal politics" and some on their negative view of Canadians or more specifically of Vancouver.

In addition to the reasons noted above, survey respondents also communicated a range of other factors for not crossing the border, including a lack of documentation, travel expense and complications (such as ferry transport), lack of interest, or no reason at all. The lack of desire and interest is a particularly relevant reason for tourism operators in the region to consider, and is further addressed below.

While recognizing the challenge that the border can represent, some interviewees downplayed its role as far as tourism is concerned, especially regarding security requirements:

I think there are other things that impact travel potentially more than the border unless the border's being shut down, or there's construction and the people in Washington are highly aware that there's ongoing long border waits. People who are motivated to cross the border, figure out what time it takes to cross the border. It's the same in both directions, right? You want to go to Seattle... there were changes when the U.S. introduced the passport requirement, or when security got tighter, and then you see sort of step down and people adjust or get passports or whatever. But I don't think this is sort of an ongoing challenge with Americans (Destination BC).

The border may constitute less of a challenge than some stakeholders may think, and the tourism sector can try to either reverse residents' negative perceptions of the border and/or build on motivations to promote cross-border travel, two key approaches in tourism experience marketing (Frochot & Legohérel, 2012, p. 98). Although the border presents a multi-faceted challenge, it is, as any border, ambivalent by nature – being at the same time a dividing line and a meeting place.<sup>20</sup> As such, a number of interviewees (15%) also recognize that it represents an opportunity. Four (9%) stated that the border is both a challenge and an opportunity. They acknowledged that the border is an asset, especially in terms of access to a market. And yet, this opportunity is not exploited as often as it could be.

**Recommendation:** Given the border-related challenges – real and perceived – that influence regional residents' decisions to travel or not to the other country for tourism purposes, the tourism sector should consider launching a marketing strategy to address negative impressions of the border and counteract how variables like the exchange rate and border security affect cross-border experiences.

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<sup>20</sup> Peace Arch Park is specifically designed to encourage gathering among neighbors. The park has been a pivotal meeting place during the COVID-19 border restrictions.

**Recommendation:** Since new technologies help streamline cross-border travel, the IMTC and Chambers of Commerce should continue lobbying governments to promote enrollment in the NEXUS program and to push for the development of new technologies and programs such as pre-clearance. This would increase the predictability of the border.

## 3.2 CROSS-BORDER TRAVEL: MARKETS, IDENTITIES, & THE BORDER

Interviews with tourism stakeholders revealed a wide range of approaches and experiences with efforts to specifically target cross-border travelers or to promote a shared regional identity that spans the border.

### 3.2.1 AGAINST MARKET SEGMENTATION

Most interviewees reported that they do advertise their city, region, service, and experiences to residents from the other country through online ads, radio commercials, trade shows, and ads in magazines. However, many reported that do not tailor these advertisements to markets on one side of the border or the other; 44% of interviewees indicated that they do not have a specific marketing strategy to attract residents from the other side of the border. There are several reasons why:

**Some tourism stakeholders need to minimize reliance on the cross-border market.** For some, the lack of segmentation is a deliberate strategy. The City of Blaine, for example, has tried to reduce its dependence on Canadians not just in tourism but in economic strategies more generally. A Blaine interviewee reported, “We are a border community that welcomes Canadian guests and tourists, but... our plan is not to have a local economy that is dependent on the Canadian economy... [to] create more stability within our local economy rather than being dependent on cross-border traffic.”<sup>21</sup>

Additionally, the challenges presented by the border (see above) have led some stakeholders to focus on different markets: “The border is a pushback, with the border wait times” so “we don’t spend too much on Canadians – they’re not our main focus,” a representative from Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism (BWCT) explained; though Canada was described as a “key market” and Metro Vancouver a “target demographic” in the *Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism 2014 Destination Marketing and Media Plan*. Five years later, it seems that the County’s strategy has shifted away from Canadians. Likewise, the Burlington Chamber of Commerce representative also reported that they used to have a specific strategy to appeal to Canadian visitors, but are no longer activating that strategy.

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<sup>21</sup> The COVID-19 border restrictions have provided additional rationale for this approach.

**A market segmentation approach has not yet been implemented but might be in the future.**

Three respondents – the Washington Tourism Alliance, Visit Seattle and the Surrey Board of Trade – stated that they acknowledge the advantages in specifically attracting cross-border visitors and may implement plans in the future.<sup>22</sup> The Surrey Board of Trade representative, for example, noted “I think more needs to be done to promote our assets to Americans... We need to have a defined marketing approach to attract Americans to Surrey and to BC in general.” Visit Seattle indicated hopes to work with entities like Air Canada or Expedia to create new service and promotion specials. The Anacortes Chamber of Commerce representative stated that they were planning on dedicating more money to cross-border marketing in a plan currently under review. Finally, one Canadian interviewee noted that they do not have a broad campaign targeted to Washington State residents, though they do sometimes specifically address the Washington State market for particular products and experiences, and they plan to target that market for new experiences currently under development.

**Cross-border residents are sometimes considered part of the domestic market.** For many operators, cross-border residents are often treated as part of the domestic market in their marketing strategies. The Visit Seattle representative explains that they have “almost treated British Columbia as a domestic market... In British Columbia, it would be very similar to how we would promote ourselves in Portland or Denver or Salt Lake City or San Francisco.” The Anacortes Chamber of Commerce representative stated, “We market Anacortes as a small-town getaway regardless of where we’re marketing to.” As a Tourism Victoria representative explained, people in Seattle, Vancouver, and Victoria “might have more in common culturally than [with people] in Ontario and Quebec or other places in Canada.” Dave Cowen of PNWER stated that “the average U.S. citizen and average Canadian citizen are fairly similar.”

This lumping of cross-border residents into a general domestic market strategy opens many questions related to shared regional identities vs. distinctive national identities, including how identity considerations might shape tourism strategies as well as regional residents’ cross-border attitudes and practices, which are examined in more detail below.

### **3.2.2 TOWARD CROSS-BORDER MARKET SEGMENTATION**

Some interviewees shared current and past successful efforts toward segmenting their markets to specifically target cross-border travelers. In Canada, in the BC city of White Rock, the Director of Recreation and Culture states that he uses some “hooks” in his marketing to specifically appeal to Americans, such as the value of the American dollar (“30% boost”) and

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<sup>22</sup>The effects of COVID-19 border restrictions may further postpone these plans.

the “different culture” that Canada represents. He notes that this is part of their broader regional approach:

We promote the close proximity to the border in our tourism strategy and as well as the close proximity of Seattle and Vancouver to White Rock... That’s a really important factor as well as close proximity to airports, in Bellingham, in Abbotsford, as well as Vancouver... It really gives us the opportunity to promote to communities such as Bellingham, such as Blaine.

When asked how their marketing to Washington State residents compares to marketing to visitors from Ontario, California, or within British Columbia, the Destination BC representative explained that they activate a multi-scalar marketing approach:

What we typically like to do... It’s like Goldilocks and the Three Bears. You can’t use the same messaging for folks in Washington because they’re not quite as familiar. But because they’re driving, the messaging is going to be a bit different than what we would use for California. But there’s levels of messaging as well. Like at the very highest level, it’s, you know, “British Columbia will transform you.” That works in Washington, that works in California. We don’t use that in British Columbia, although we probably could.

But then when you start to get down to the more detailed level, then it becomes a little bit different for folks in Washington, because the way they travel and their level of familiarity is a bit higher than in California... So, I remember one year we had a British Columbia campaign, and we had a campaign for Washington and Alberta, which was the same campaign in both of those markets. And then, we had a third campaign in California. Okay, all slightly different messaging, based on what the consumer mindset was.

Like for Alberta and Washington, the messaging was ‘Crossover into the Wild’ because it acknowledged that they had to cross a boundary of some kind. And in British Columbia, it was more like just “Explore British Columbia.”<sup>23</sup>

The similar treatment for visitors from Alberta and Washington signals both an impression of a shared Pacific Northwest identity and an effort to highlight BC’s distinctive characteristics (see next section for more analysis of regional identities).

There have also been some specific promotional initiatives to target a cross-border market on the U.S. side. For example, some interviewees mentioned the “At-Par Sales Days” at the Bellis Fair shopping mall in Bellingham. One third of the stores in the mall agreed that the price in American dollars could be paid in Canadian dollars. At the time, the Canadian dollar was 75%

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<sup>23</sup> The interviewee couldn’t recall the specific California messaging.

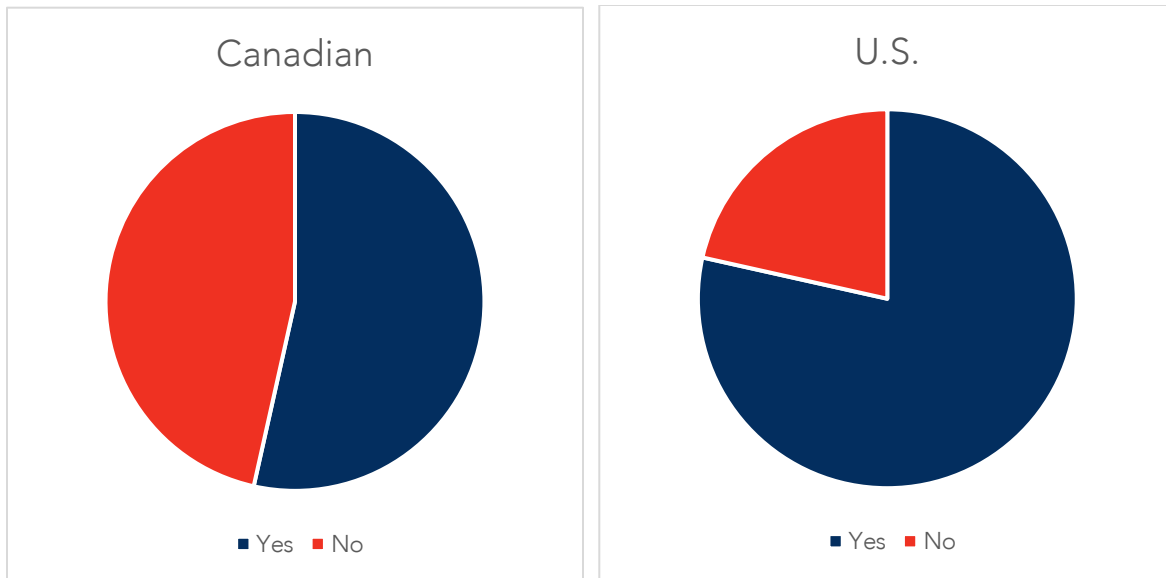
on the U.S. dollar, so it represented a 25% discount for Canadian shoppers compared to usual cross-border shopping prices. The event was a huge success: 450,000 visitors came to the mall in one day compared to usual shoppers; by comparison, the Bellingham metropolitan area only has 220,000 people (Bellingham Chamber of Commerce). Though Visit Seattle does not have a specific marketing campaign for Canadian travelers, the representative did note the benefit of capitalizing on Canadian shopping in the U.S.:

We often hear anecdotally [that Canadians] want to come down for American things. They want to shop brands that maybe they don't see up in Canada. They want to experience things like the Space Needle, kind of do that kind of thing... A lot of Vancouver and British Columbia visitations are kind of those weekend getaways. So, it might be like... "I'm gonna go like on a retail kind of getaway. I'm going to go on a shopping spree this weekend in Seattle."

Another U.S. initiative for attracting cross-border markets is the "Park 'N Fly" campaign launched by Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism to draw Canadians to the Bellingham International Airport by marketing proximity to both the border and the airport, and the convenience of the local hotel parking lots.

### **3.2.3 SAME OR DIFFERENT? SHARED IDENTITIES VS. DISTINCTIVE EXPERIENCES**

Survey findings reveal a stark contrast between Americans and Canadians in response to the question of whether or not they feel a sense of shared identity with residents in the opposite country (see Magnus et al., 2019, p. 5). While 65% of respondents in total answered yes, broken down by country only 53% of Canadian respondents said yes compared to 78% of American respondents (Figure 13).



**FIGURE 14:** SENSE OF SHARED IDENTITY WITH PEOPLE ACROSS THE BORDER (PERCENTAGE BY COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE)

When asked if they feel a sense of regional *Cascadian* identity, 65 % of total respondents answered yes, broken down to 53% of Canadian respondents and 78% of American respondents (Figure 14). At the same time, only 10% of total respondents argued that they feel more attached to Cascadia (5% Canadians / 16% Americans), versus 46% who named their country of residence as their primary identity (51% Canadians / 38% Americans).<sup>24</sup>

Likewise, an overwhelming majority of American interviewees did not grant significant credence to developing a specific marketing strategy to segment Canadians, perhaps underestimating the importance many Canadians place on their distinctive national identity. Canadians, like the border itself, are sometimes taken for granted by Americans and therefore ignored in their strategies. Specifically targeting Canadians by explicitly recognizing their strong sense of identity and drawing together their reasons for crossing the border (see section 3.1) might be important components of a successful market segmentation approach.

At the same time, Canadian operators might try to simultaneously build off of the comfort and familiarity U.S. visitors may feel in Canada due to a sense of shared identity, while also emphasizing distinctive offerings and cultural differences.

Some interviewees did acknowledge that crossing the border might induce a sense of an exotic experience. The Coho Ferries representative explains, "I think some of the allure of travel for either Canadians or Americans is that once you get to the other side of the border,

<sup>24</sup> Also see research investigating "unified identity" in Cascadia: Cold-Ravnkilde et al., 2004; Magnus et al., 2019; Portland State University, 2006.

it's different... culturally, it's different a little bit." Dave Cowen of PNWER stated, "People love being able to drive or fly to a place that's an hour away and [that] gives them a whole different experience in a new culture, a different climate, a different culture, way of life." Indeed, marketing is about advertising the uniqueness of the product you promote – or in this case, the place you are trying to attract people. For example, the Clipper Vacation advertises Victoria to American customers by emphasizing the city's "quaintness" and unique experiences.

### 3.2.4 THE BORDER: DESTINATION & GATEWAY

Tourism is about "creating experiences" and "geographical images" to attract people, to prompt them to travel (Coëffé, 2017, p. 28). The border and what is awaiting travelers on the other side could be advertised as an experience and even as a "tourism product" (Simon, 2019, p. 234). However, interview findings indicate that the border itself is seldom marketed as a destination itself or as a gateway to new cultural experiences, nor do many marketing strategies directly try to address or undermine the barriers the border represents for many regional travelers. In part this might be explained by efforts to diversify and avoid over-reliance on cross-border travelers, as in the case of Blaine (see section 3.2.1). At the same time, there may be value in emphasizing the unique qualities of border towns to specific market segments, or in directly confronting border barriers to alleviate perceptions of crossing as a hassle.<sup>25</sup>

In particular, Peace Arch Park represents an often-overlooked opportunity to promote a distinctive destination: a picturesque international park sitting right at the border that allows visitors to cross the border without documentation, so long as they remain in the park. Four Blaine interviewees did not bring up the park either as an attraction or as a talking point in the city's strategy until a specific question was asked. The Chamber of Commerce representative for instance presented it as "our #1 tourist attraction," although they did not talk about it spontaneously. The City of Blaine representative only mentioned the difficult accessibility to the park because of the I-5 and the roundabouts.<sup>26</sup>

Perceived problems at the border are rarely addressed in marketing strategies to lessen their effects. Quite to the contrary, advantages induced by the border are the primary focus (for example, advertising the 30% boost of the American dollar in White Rock). One exception is the Clipper Vacation Ferry, which specifically markets its own border security process as a comparative advantage over conventional marine and land crossing experiences: "

[W]e have our own border control, just for our customers. And I think that that is unique because as a selling point for us... you know, "Travel with the

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<sup>25</sup> Future research could compare approaches in White Rock and Blaine to yield further insights into differences and opportunities for cross-border marketing.

<sup>26</sup> Increased attention to the park during COVID-19 border restrictions may provide opportunities for future research and analysis.

Clipper, and it's going to be a very safe experience and efficient." And that's I think, really important that people want to know that they're safe going through border control, but that they're not going to sit for hours, you know, right, which happens, ... cutting into their vacation time. So, I would say that that is something that we promote... "Ship to Shore via seamless border crossings within our terminal." ... This is our biggest marketing piece we send out.

Marketing the border as a gateway, and addressing perceptions of it as an obstacle, could open new possibilities for marketing campaigns to increase cross-border travel. The term "gateway" is used to describe the land crossings (IMTC: "Cascade Gateway"), but it was mentioned only four times in interviews, and without significant emphasis regarding its distinctiveness (e.g. the Washington Tourism Alliance representative stated that "the border is important to Washington tourism as any gateway"). The "touristification" (Baud *et al.*, 2013, p. 503) of both the border and the country on the other side could create an experience that might, in turn, alter negative representations that some local residents may have. As one interviewee put it, the Canada–U.S. border in the region seems to be more of a "utility," a functional access point lacking in sufficient cultural draw to be used as a marketing point. The border is often taken for granted and is therefore not prioritized or made interesting.<sup>27</sup>

PNWER recognizes that cross-border tourism does not happen by itself and that an active strategy should be developed. That is exactly what the working group on tourism has been doing in the last few years: convincing governments to take a proactive approach to tourism. PNWER could play a role in advancing creative potential possibilities for marketing the border itself – as a cultural gateway, or at least to minimize its perception as an obstacle<sup>28</sup>. In general, the border can represent both a "scar" and a "resource," to paraphrase Amilhat-Szary (2015, p. 85), and regional stakeholders can play an active role in shaping the Canada–U.S. Cascade Gateway as a resource in the tourism sector.<sup>29</sup>

**Recommendation:** Segmenting cross-border visitors more specifically by taking into account their cultural specificity could help develop a more creative and sustainable approach to cross-border tourism.

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<sup>27</sup> The Gateway Semiahmoo initiative is a notable exception.

<sup>28</sup> It is important however to note that the border experience is not the same for everyone (Amilhat-Szary, 2015; Helleiner, 2012) and that some problems such as racial profiling would remain unaddressed.

<sup>29</sup> Because a border inserts a division between two countries and imposes controls on goods and people, it traditionally acts as an obstacle. Yet, because of the differentials it also entails, a border can represent a benefit especially for local residents – in terms of price differential – as well as for companies and organized crime.



**Recommendation:** Given the fact that a number of Canadians and Americans are crossing for shopping purposes, they could be targeted for something besides shopping to compound their economic impacts.

**Recommendation:** Marketing the border and border towns as cultural experiences in and of themselves could help foster cross-border travel. This “touristification” of the border or of the other country could help create a draw and shape a more positive perception of the border itself and the region. Possibilities include greater promotion of Peace Arch Park and local border towns using the border as part of their brand.

### 3.3 CORRIDOR LOGICS: COOPERATION & COMPETITION

#### 3.3.1 CORRIDOR LOGIC

One of the reasons the border does not play much of a role in the marketing strategy of the different stakeholders relates to the geographic configuration of the region, in which the border plays a specific but limited role. This configuration can be called the “Corridor Logic.” The region follows a north-south organization around the I-5 highway on the American side, and Highway 99 on the Canadian side, with transportation systems forced down the coastal plain between the Salish Sea to the west and Cascade Mountains to the east of the highway. Flows are thus polarized by Vancouver and Seattle, and, to a lesser extent, by Victoria on Vancouver Island, creating a “two-headed metropolitan system” (Carroué & Collet, 2012, p. 190).

A number of interviewees (17%) described travelers on the corridor as “on their way to [somewhere]” and they indicated that their strategy was to capture these flows: “to make people to stop.” Medium-sized cities such as Blaine, Anacortes, Burlington, and White Rock focus their strategy on “getting people to stop” because they are caught in between the large attractive cities of Vancouver and Seattle.

Hundreds of thousands of Canadians cross that border and they’re not only stopping here, they’re on their way to Seattle or they’re going to Arizona or... but on their way. We want to find ways to get them to stop, even if they only stop for five minutes, at least that gets them into town (...) It’s an opportunity for us that we want to take advantage of. (Blaine Chamber of Commerce)

But in many cases, people coming from Cascadia are often coming either to downtown Vancouver, or they continue up to Whistler. (White Rock Business Improvement Association)

So, I think that's the challenge... more about the awareness, and you know, just realizing that Surrey isn't just that flow through on the 99 Highway that there are things to do here that are quite interesting as well. (City of Surrey)

I think there's still that stigma of us just being the ferry stop. And so, I think we still have a lot of work to do of getting people to recognize Anacortes as a destination city, a place to stop along. (Anacortes Chamber of Commerce)

To "make people stop," they are building their brand to become a "destination." They are trying to shift people's perceptions away from associating Blaine with the border crossing, Anacortes with the ferry terminal, Burlington with a crossroads between I-5 and Highway 20 and so on. As one respondent put it: "It's pretty hard to compel people to stop here (...). Our concern is that we've got to get something that sets us aside and makes us kind of worthy of a stop in the road and other than just a place to eat or have a place to sleep for the night" (Burlington Chamber of Commerce).

In order to counter this corridor logic and help medium-sized cities find a place in the tourism sector, both PNWER and the BC Ministry of Tourism are trying to develop a "dispersion strategy":

[W]e really want good connected transportation that goes across the border, because we need dispersion strategies, right. They all can't just land in the big urban cities." (PNWER)

[P]art of our strategy is about trying to get [more people dispersed across the province. So, transportation between, say, Victoria and Seattle is one thing, but then, it's how do people get further? How do they get to explore all of British Columbia? (Ministry of Tourism)

However, since most cities along the corridor are trying to attract people by putting forward specific features that could make them unique and differentiate them, this can contribute to a competitive environment. It is a well-known phenomenon in the border studies literature that the relations between border towns oscillate between competition and cooperation (Ehlers, 2001). Competition generally dominates in the tourism sector more generally since "many destinations are competing for the same tourists," often preventing cooperation from emerging (Cevat & Dallen, 2005, p. 6).

There is evidence of both competition and cooperation in the Cascade Gateway region, as underscored by the Washington Tourism Alliance: "While we are competing, we're also working together to bring people to the area." However, even if unofficial or unconscious, competition dominates between cities on both sides the border and also between cities within the same country. This is the reason why the main trend in terms of cooperation is a kind of

regional rapprochement through the formation of regional destination marketing organizations. Whatcom County already has Bellingham/Whatcom County Tourism, and Skagit County just voted in October 2019 to create a similar organization, Skagit Tourism, which will allow different cities to levy a lodging tax to then advertise the entire region.

At the time of this study, working relations were mostly local and gradually moving towards some efforts toward regional cooperation, though not to the point of developing cross-border coordination.

**Recommendation:** Marketing the border as a talking point either in terms of location for border towns or in terms of “cultural experience” could help medium-sized cities collectively rebrand themselves and attract the flows of people “buzzing by” on I-5 or Highway 99.

**Recommendation:** Putting forward the image of a “rural Cascadia” could differentiate corridor Washington State communities from urban destination such as Seattle, Vancouver, and Victoria and further help them create a draw.

### 3.3.2 “TWO-NATION VACATION”

Since Cascadia is a dynamic cross-border region, with PNWER putting forward tourism as a priority through its Working Group on Tourism, one of the hypotheses that initiated this project was the fact that there was bound to be a cross-border approach to tourism. The premise was that in the promotional discourse, there would be the construction of an imaginary region that would create some kind of cross-border unity in order to market this idea to international and domestic travelers. Preliminary research found that PNWER Working Group on Tourism had indeed put forward a concept – the “Two Nation Vacation” – which was used in the 1990s to present the region as an opportunity for international travelers to visit two countries during the same trip (University of Portland, 2006). As described by Gail Tarleton, one of the former co-chairs of PNWER Working Group on Tourism:

[T]he “Two Nation Vacation” was: “... if you’re starting in Northwest Canada, come down to Washington State; if you start in Washington State or Oregon, come up to Canada and stay four days. ... you can go to the ocean, you can go to the mountains, you can go to wineries, you can go downtown shopping, have fantastic hotel and food experience and have a four-day vacation between Canada and the United States.”

According to Dave Cowen, the other co-chair, “for Canada, 36% of all of our long-haul foreign visitors land at a U.S. port first,” making a coordinated strategy more appealing for Canadian tourism actors. Viewed from an international tourism perspective, there is the sense that Vancouver and Seattle are complementary and that the region as a whole shares some kind of

connectivity for visitors to the region. In other words, there is already a “latent” dynamic that represents an opportunity worth building on.

However, few interviewees stated that they use the Two Nation Vacation and most of them do not even know about it. Out of the 28 interviewees in charge of tourism promotion who were asked the question “do you use the ‘Two Nation Vacation’ concept to promote the region/city,” 67% answered that they did not use it and that they did not know what it was. Two interviewees were aware of the term but either did not use it as “a primary focus of what [they] do” (Tourism Victoria) or had tried it in the past but were no longer using it (Discover British Columbia).<sup>30</sup>

Only seven interviewees (13%) from five different organizations actually use the concept: Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism, Coho Ferries, The Clipper, Visit Seattle, and the BC Ministry of Tourism.<sup>31</sup> It is interesting to notice that two of them (Coho Ferries and The Clipper) are cross-border transportation companies for which it makes sense to use this concept, in that the whole essence of their activity is crossing the border.<sup>32</sup> Transportation companies were initially the primary focus of PNWER when the concept was developed. Dave Cowen reflects: “Doing bilateral marketing... We’ve done initiatives over the years in order to sell like hotel-ferry packages. There’s been quite a bit of work, particularly with the ferries that do cross the border. Airside not so successful because they fly into larger hubs.”

The added value of the Two Nation Vacation hinges on the experience that it promotes – namely to international travelers. As the Clipper Vacation representative put it, “I think on a broader level, we also go out to market with the idea of why the Pacific Northwest is such a great destination and the idea of ‘Two Nation Vacation’ experiencing two really cool Metropolitan destinations, then also being able to experience two different countries in one trip.”

In terms of strategy, the Two Nation Vacation approach emphasizes that the border dives you in another country, with different cultural appeal and experiences. For the Clipper Vacation operator, the “Two Nation Vacation” (four days-three nights) is their most popular package.

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<sup>30</sup> The Tourism Victoria representative further explained: “I am familiar with the term... I don’t know, but it might be more appropriate for like a Destination BC or Destination Canada. Or one of those organizations that market, you know, farther. We really do... We are more of a regional marketing organization. Vancouver and Seattle are really our primary focuses.”

<sup>31</sup> In the case of the BC Ministry of Tourism, they answered “yes” without actually participating in the promotion of tourism themselves.

<sup>32</sup> Interestingly, Washington State Ferries are not using the Two Nation Vacation concept.

Even if they are not using the Two Nation Vacation *per se*, the BC Ministry of Tourism is aware of the concept. In the interview for this study, their representative noted it as an opportunity to spur tourism in the Pacific Northwest:

[T]he opportunity that exists to give people an experience of two countries – you know, going to one country is exciting if you’re from a third country and you want to visit somewhere, but going to two other countries in the same trip... you just have to look at what the benefits of the Schengen region in Europe has done in terms of breaking down borders and allowing people to just travel. (...) So, the opportunity that exists for us, I think, and especially on the West Coast, and that kind of ease of – or the desire for the ease of – travel between two countries, I think is an opportunity.

Visit Seattle primarily uses the Two Nation Vacation concept to promote the region to international travelers from Europe, Asia, Australia, whose stays in North America are typically longer than domestic travelers.<sup>33</sup> Thus, they have a lot of time and they want to visit different things. Visit Seattle uses the Two Nation Vacation concept to capitalize on the international reputations of Vancouver and Seattle and the fact that they are well-connected by air.

Other efforts in line with the Two Nation Vacation concept have been used to attract domestic visitors from outside the region. For example, a few years ago Discover BC launched an initiative called “North to Alaska” that was modeled on the Two Nation Vacation:

That was targeting Americans who like to go on long driving vacations and had that dream to see Alaska because a lot of Americans want to see all of America. So, that was a Two Nation Vacation because they were starting in the U.S., they were driving the entire way for the most part. They were coming up through BC or Alberta and then, into the Yukon and then back into the United States into Alaska. The words we use though were not Two Nation Vacation.

Besides these few examples, the Two Nation Vacation remains underused. The co-chairs of the PNWER Working Group on Tourism emphasized that the concept has to be activated by local stakeholders. PNWER’s role is only to inform local stakeholders about this concept: it is up to stakeholders to seize it and use it. Last year, Dave Cowen went to the Olympic Peninsula to give a presentation about it, but, as he put it: “It’s up to that individual town, right? They have to want to do it, they have to put the marketing together, they have to collaborate with whoever...” He recognized however that the concept “needs somebody to proselytize [it]... my role in the community is to put the ideas out there and try and stimulate thought.”

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<sup>33</sup> Typically, European and Australian travelers stay 22.3 days in North America (Visit Seattle).

This lack of top-down structure and directive reflects specificities of North American integration, and prioritizes local, grassroots, and bottom-up efforts. However, more top-down structure and political drive might actively stimulate or encourage the implementation of these kinds of initiatives at the local level. Additionally, the Two Nation Vacation concept is mostly aimed at international travelers, limiting potential opportunities to tailor the message for domestic and regional markets. As Dave Cowen explained, “We would like to get people who live in the PNWER region traveling more within the PNWER region. It’s also a more sustainable approach to tourism rather than [relying] on the long haul [travelers].”

Developing the Two Nation Vacation concept will require more cross border-cooperation among stakeholders. The final results section analyzes the possibilities and challenges for this greater coordination.

**Recommendation:** Activating the Two Nation Vacation may require more proactive commitment and leadership on the part of PNWER and regional DMOs, who can disseminate the concept across the Pacific Northwest among local stakeholders. One way forward would be to launch an education campaign to outline the benefits of the Two Nation Vacation, with concrete and successful examples and support for implementing pilot initiatives. Infusing a more top-down approach could help local stakeholders to be motivated and prepared to activate the concept and participate in more cross-border coordination.

**Recommendation:** Initiating the Two Nation Vacation will also require money. PNWER and regional DMOs could provide funding through a Two Nation Vacation education campaign.<sup>34</sup> Additional regional DMOS, such as the Washington State Tourism Bureau when it is back in service, could set the Two Nation Vacation as a strategic priority and provide sustainable funding for its dissemination.

**Recommendation:** Given the fact that cross-border transportation is the backbone of tourism in the region, different transportation companies and transportation infrastructure initiatives should play a prominent role. For example, Dave Cowen described the idea of a “NorPass”: “an integrated ferry pass that, for a set fee, is like EuroRail, so you can ride BC ferries Washington State Ferries, Black Ball, Clipper and just enable people to travel around.” The Amtrak that links Vancouver to Seattle and Portland is already a great vector of the Two Nation Vacation and it could activate the concept even more in its marketing. Similarly, the project of a high-speed train between Vancouver and Seattle could also catalyze the development of this

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<sup>34</sup> As Dave Cowen put it, “[s]timulating “Two Nation Vacation” is really a marketing initiative that needs some money”.

concept. An additional stop at Blaine, like the Cascadia Institute tries to promote, would no doubt strengthen its role in cross-border travel.

**Recommendation:** The cross-border marketing logic that shapes the Two Nation Vacation concept could be adapted in a way to market the region to regional or binational travelers and thus promote a more local kind of tourism, still based on the possibility of combining exploration of your own country with the experience of crossing over to another country and cultural experience. This could also be done by further developing the Cascadia brand.

### 3.3.3 CROSS-BORDER COORDINATION IN THE TOURISM SECTOR

The second hypothesis on which this project was based was that, given the presence of PNWER and the existence of the Two Nation Vacation concept, there would be some degree of cross-border cooperation between the different stakeholders, thus fostering integration in the region and in the tourism sector specifically (BPRI, 2018).

To the question “Do you work with other organizations across the border,” 45% of interviewees from fifteen organizations answered yes, while 42% answered no. Many interviewees who participate in cross-border relations noted that engagement is relatively informal – limited to discussions, occasional meetings, trade shows, or information sharing between visitor centers and travel media.<sup>35</sup> Chambers of Commerce are having the most regular contact, mostly to share information about events, whether through newsletters or through the exchange of fliers. Only the City of White Rock representative mentioned the “co-promotion” of events, while acknowledging that it could be better.

Some Chambers of Commerce and other institutions whose *raison d’être* is cross-border (such as the IMTC or the Surrey Board of Trade)<sup>36</sup> have shown greater cross-border connections. While tourism may not be their first priority, these cross-border partnerships developed as a response to the thickening of the border that emerged in the wake of 9/11. For instance, the Bellingham Chamber of Commerce emphasized the importance of cross-border partnerships in advocating for the development of the Enhanced Driver’s License as a way to make border crossing more fluid when the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative came into force; the initiative was a collaborative project between British Columbia and Washington State but local stakeholders lobbied both governments jointly.

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<sup>35</sup> A representative from the City of White Rock noted that “Visitor Information Centers are closing everywhere,” which has entailed a dramatic shift toward online information sharing, itineraries, and marketing efforts.

<sup>36</sup> “[W]e have a great rich history in terms of advocating for international policy at the border, from a transportation perspective, from a trade perspective – you know, in terms of reducing tariffs for industries for example – we work cross border even with the Bellingham Chamber of Commerce” (Surrey Board of Trade).

There are two sister-city arrangements in the region: 1) La Conner, WA, and White Rock, BC, and 2) Anacortes, WA and Sidney, BC. Linked by a cross-border ferry, Anacortes and Sidney organize joint celebrations that really emphasize cross-border connections, as an Anacortes representative explained:

[W]e have this sister city celebration where... we fill up ferries and bring them back and forth between the two cities and... a celebration there and the celebration here to kind of just bridge that. That happens once a year. We have the town choir that goes down and meets the ferry, when people are coming from Sidney and talk to them and then people from the Visitor Information Center go and meet them and give out information about the city.

In addition, the Mayors meet on occasions such as the 4<sup>th</sup> of July or Canada Day to celebrate their closeness. Apart from the Anacortes/Sidney celebration, the only other specifically cross-border event that came up in interviews was "Hands Across the Border," organized by Christina Alexander at Peace Arch Park. The event gathers children from both sides of the border in a celebration of peace and friendship. Although these are not tourism events *per se* but rather community and cultural events, stakeholders could build on their cross-border character to market the region as a border region, to make the border an attraction in itself, and to develop a cross-border experience.

Other interviewees showed interest in more significant coordination, such as bilateral policy and economic development initiatives. The representative from the Economic Development Alliance of Skagit County explained:

[Y]ou have the sister city sort of things where it's friendship and understanding. But my preference is that, in addition to that, there be commercial and business elements, where you have groups that have commonalities, and you arrange for exchanges, you arrange for import/export... you know, Canadian companies may feel a need to have a foothold in the United States and office or some, maybe a factory or something and we would like to be top of mind for that, but also just in doing business with us and us doing business with them.

Additionally, the City of White Rock, while in touch with municipalities and Chambers of Commerce on the U.S. side, would like to go beyond contact to develop concrete joint actions. The Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce representative acknowledged that the opportunity had never come up, calling it "a huge gap," but recognized the potential that such partnerships could have.

Even when the desire is there, however, often the momentum and capacity is not. Cross-border relations take time, political will, and sometimes personal relationships to initiate and sustain



partnerships. Stakeholders face a number of obstacles, the most important being the lack of time and resources. As the Burlington Chamber of Commerce representative noted, “It’s just a lot of times, with a lot of these smaller regions, we just don’t have the raw resources and manpower to make those connections. But I think it’s definitely something we’re open to.” A lack of long-term staff constitutes another obstacle to sustainable cross-border partnerships.

In addition, building these kinds of relations is difficult. The San Juan County Economic Development Council is actively trying to develop cross-border connections to partner with people in the Gulf Islands. Developing more formalized partnerships could help address a wide range of shared issues, such as the lack of significant cross-border transportation systems – one of the most significant obstacles to cross-border tourism between the San Juan Islands and the Gulf Island.<sup>37</sup> Even with this motivation, to this day “only minor connections” have been established through discussions, two-day meetings, and informal networking.

The Visit Seattle representative noted that the “region is collaborative by nature” to explain the absence of formalized structures. And yet, if cross-border partnership were more formalized, there might be more impetus and capacity for co-promotion or bilateral marketing. Just like the border is taken for granted by many stakeholders, it seems that the possibility of developing more formalized cross-border relations is not considered a priority – sometimes not even on the radar of some stakeholders. Even if the region shares some cultural and personal connection and shared sense of identity, this does not seem to translate to a functional system of cross-border coordination and partnership in the tourism sector.

**Recommendation:** Cross-border relations should be more formalized through a Memoranda of Understanding or sister cities’ agreements, such as the one that Anacortes and Sidney share. Because of their geographical proximity, Blaine and White Rock might be well-positioned to initiate the trend and sign an agreement to cooperate on cross-border tourism issues.

**Recommendation:** The region might benefit from an institutional framework, through the creation of a binational committee for partnered cities for instance, to support cities to meet on a regular basis to come up with shared strategic plans to develop common initiatives and bilateral marketing. Setting up a committee of cross-border tourism in order to explore the issues that could be addressed jointly or an initiative that could be developed in a bilateral way, would be a way to formalize cross-border cooperation and guarantee some kind of funding.

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<sup>37</sup> As a San Juan Islands representative explained, “It’s highly complicated to get... to the Gulf Islands from the San Juan Islands. I mean, it takes all day literally... It [can] take more than all day because you [might] have to stay overnight to get back coming this way. So that’s certainly a hurdle.”

**Recommendation:** Since cooperation is much more developed in economic development or trade-related issues – with for instance the Surrey Board of Trade or the Bellingham Chamber of Commerce – these relations could be extended to embrace tourism issues. Given the integrated nature of cross-border flows and the significant economic role played by tourism in the region, adopting a more cooperative approach might have huge economic benefits in terms of revenue.

**Recommendation:** DMOs should partner up as well and come up with joint projects. Building on cross-border initiatives that already exist, such as North to Alaska, could offer new cross-border products and diversify regional tourism offerings. For instance, Discover Abbotsford and BWCT could model a cross-border itinerary on these projects to launch a cross-border version of the Cascade Loop.

**Recommendation:** The digitalization of tourism information, especially in Canada, represents a great opportunity for cities on both sides of the border to centralize information about tourism-related attractions and events, as well as develop applications that would give tourists information about the cross-border region. Possible apps such as “Pacific Northwest Tourism” “What to Do in Cascadia,” or “Travel the Salish Sea” could help promote the region in a cross-border way, while at the same time develop a regional identity through tourism. They could include a cross-border map of the region with the different attractions and events on both sides of the border.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

There is no denying the fact that the border plays a prominent role in the region as a major gateway that structures flows. And yet, it is quasi-absent from stakeholders' marketing strategies. There is little specific marketing to attract people from the other side of the border, let alone any specific segmenting. The border itself is not put forward as a draw, while many acknowledge the asset it can represent as a meeting point between two countries and cultures. The border is used mostly as a utility or as a gateway giving access to the other country and activities such as shopping and recreational activities, often without conveying its cultural meaning or triggering people's will to travel. There is little substantive cross-border strategy – except for the few stakeholders that use the “Two Nation Vacation” in their marketing – and stakeholders work more locally, often without formalizing collaborative cross-border links.

While often activated for political, social, or economic purposes, the tourism sector largely fails to activate the concept of Cascadia. Building on Cascadia as a brand, stakeholders could develop strategies based on territorial marketing (Simon, 2019, p. 257). For instance, there is great promise in developing concepts like “Rural Cascadia” in northwest Washington or “Urban Cascadia” along the I-5/99 corridor, or “Natural Cascadia” for the region as a whole. The Two Nation Vacation concept is just one example of the possibilities for promoting Cascadia as a cross-border region and activating an explicitly cross-border approach to tourism. Additionally, stakeholders identified some emerging niches, such as Native tourism, sports tourism, and agri-tourism – all present on both sides of the border and potentially sustained by cross-border travel. As Bruce Agnew put it, “this Pacific Northwest region is uniquely suited to marketing itself as an experiential market.”

Adopting a cross-border approach would also prompt stakeholders to foster and formalize cooperation, which is recognized by researchers as being mutually beneficial (Tosun et al., 2005, p. 7). A collaborative approach would mean not taking the border or cross-border tourism for granted but proactively reinforcing cross-border tourism.

From a policy-making perspective, programs such as NEXUS are recognized as a major facilitator of cross-border travel and should continue to be supported. Other projects such as pre-clearance could have a similar positive impact. Transportation infrastructure initiatives that encourage cross-border mobility between the U.S. and Canada (e.g. highspeed rail and seaplane service between Seattle and Vancouver, etc.) offer another avenue to increase cross-border tourism. These efforts are important given that “binational tourism opportunities [are] premised on the need for a viable and effective transportation corridor between the two countries” (Cold-Ravnkilde, Singh, & Lee 2004, p. 66). Regional DMOs, Chambers of Commerce, and other entities can continue to advocate for these initiatives.

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## APPENDIX 1: LIST OF INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

### CANADA

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#### Abbotsford

- Craig Nichols, Tourism Abbotsford
- Parm Sidhu, Abbotsford Airport Director
- Katerina Anastasiadis, Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce

#### Victoria

- Matthew Holme, Tourism Victoria
- Dave Cowen, CEO, Butchart Garden and Co-Chair, PNWER Working Group on Tourism
- Brenden Fletcher, Terminal Manager, Clipper Vacations, Victoria
- Andrew Little and Vincent Portal, British Columbia Ministry of Tourism
- Sukumar Perival and Nicole Longpré, Intergovernmental Relations Secretariat

#### Surrey

- Stephen Wu, City of Surrey
- Doug McCallum, Surrey Mayor
- Anita Hubermann, CEO, Surrey Board of Trade

#### White Rock

- Alex Nixon, White Rock Business Improvement Association
- Eric Stepura, Director of Recreation and Culture, City of White Rock

#### Other

- Richard Porges, Marketing Director, Discover British Columbia
- Gerry Bruno, Vice President Operations & Maintenance, Vancouver Airport Authority and Founder of "Beyond Pre-Clearance"
- Lisa Elder, Tsawwassen Business Improvement Association

### UNITED STATES

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#### Anacortes

- Stephanie Hamilton, Director, Anacortes Chamber of Commerce
- Christy Lyman, Head of Marketing, Anacortes Chamber of Commerce
- Dan Worra, Executive Director, Port of Anacortes
- Dan Measamer, City of Anacortes

#### Bellingham

- Guy Occhigrossio, CEO, Bellingham Regional Chamber of Commerce

- Sandy Ward, CEO, Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism
- Annette Bagley, Marketing, Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism
- Shannon Taysi, Tourism Commission, City of Bellingham
- Michael McFarlane, Whatcom County Parks and Recreation
- John Michener, Director, Port of Bellingham
- Marie Duckworth, Bellingham Airport Operations Manager
- Melissa Fanucci and Hugh Conroy, International Mobility and Trade Corridor Program, Whatcom Council of Governments

### **Blaine**

- Donna Raimsey and Carol Salomon, Blaine Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Center
- Stacey Pratschner, Community Development Director, City of Blaine Community Development Services
- Bonnie Onyon, Mayor, City of Blaine
- Michael Jones, City Manager, City of Blaine
- Danielle Gaughen, Event Coordinator, Birch Bay Chamber of Commerce
- Christina Alexander, Peace Arch Park Association
- Rickey Blank, State Park Manager, Peace Arch Park

### **Burlington**

- Steve Sexton, Mayor, City of Burlington
- Peter Browning, CEO, Burlington Chamber of Commerce
- JD Boucher, Head of Marketing, Burlington Chamber of Commerce

### **Friday Harbor and Port Angeles**

- Victoria Compton, San Juan County Economic Development Council
- Ryan Malane, CEO, Coho Ferry

### **Point Roberts**

- Tamra Pier, Owner, Saltwater Café, Point Roberts
- Alison Cadler, Manager, Reef Tavern and Head of the Voters' Association
- Arthur Reber, Former Chair, Point Roberts Advisory Council
- Jennifer Uqhart, Point Roberts Taxpayers' Association
- Christopher Clarkson, Point Roberts Fire Department Chief
- Theresa Coe, Director, Point Roberts Marina
- Bradley Denson, CBP Director, Point Roberts's Port-of-Entry

### **Seattle**

- Mike Moe, Washington Tourism Bureau
- Kyla Boast, Clipper Vacations
- Bruce Agnew, CEO, Cascadia Institute
- Gael Tarleton, Representative in the Washington State Legislature and previous Co-Chair, PNWER Working Group on Tourism



- John Boesche, Vice President, International Tourism, Visit Seattle
- Ray Deardoff, Washington State Department of Transportation

**Others**

- Tish Griffin, CPB Director, Sumas Port-of-Entry
- John Sternlich, CEO, Economic Development Alliance of Skagit County

## APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How you would assess the current state of tourism in the region (is it growing, changing, etc.)?
2. What is your strategy to promote tourism in your city/area?
3. Which elements do you put forward in the promotion of your city?
4. Does the presence of the border play a role in your strategy? If so, how?
5. Do you use the “two-nation vacation” concept in your strategy?
6. Do you market the region as a cross border region? If so, how?
7. Do you rely on American/Canadian visitors? If so, how do you attract them?
8. Has their presence increased or decreased in the last few years?
9. Do you market the region/area differently to American and Canadian visitors?
10. What are the main activities that mostly attract them here?
11. Do you work with other institutions across the border to reach out foreign visitors?
12. What are the challenges/obstacles that the tourism sector is facing as far as the border is concerned?

## APPENDIX 3: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Where do you live? (Country)
4. Where do you live? (City)
5. How far from the border do you live?
6. How long have you been living in the region?
7. How often do you cross the border?
8. If "never" why?
9. Where do you usually go when you cross the border?
10. Are you a member of a trusted traveler program?
11. If so, which one?
12. Why are you crossing the border?
13. How long do you usually stay?
14. Have you been crossing more or less frequently in the last few years?
15. If less why?
16. What does the border represent for you? Could you give me three words to describe it?
17. Do you think that the border is visible?
18. Would you say that you belong to a cross-border region?
19. If so, what makes you say that?
20. Do you think that you share a common identity with the people living across the border?
21. How does it manifest itself?
22. How would you evaluate the importance that the border plays in your life?
23. Which of the following do you feel more attached to?