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# Introduction

Tourism is a profitable industry in the contemporary era and a major source of foreign exchange income in countries such as the U.S., Spain, France, Germany, China, Japan, Greece, Italy, Egypt and Turkey.

Tourism economy like industrial economy has so far passed behind the three stages of naive, traditional and modern and is about to enter the stage of post-modernism.

Once tourism used to have a naïve nature and explorers such as Christopher Columbus used to make journeys in a bid to discover new lands. At the meantime, there have been brave personalities who have conquered those discovered lands by the means of their knowledge.

However, modern tourism coincides with the application of mechanisms and techniques which are aimed to develop the industry with an aim to attract more tourists. To this end, modern means of transportation, collective visas, charter planes, starred hotels and tourist guides were employed in the 20 th century and for this reason that period was named the era of tourism industry.

# The World Tourism Organization

The World Tourism Organization (WTO/OMT), a specialized agency of the United Nations, is the leading international organization in the field of tourism. It serves as a global forum for tourism policy issues and practical source of tourism know-how.

With its headquarters in Madrid, Spain, the WTO plays a central and decisive role in promoting the development of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism, with the aim of contributing to economic development, international understanding, peace, prosperity and universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms. In pursuing this aim, the Organization pays particular attention to the interests of developing countries in the field of tourism.

The WTO plays a catalytic role in promoting technology transfers and international cooperation, in stimulating and developing public-private sector partnerships and in encouraging the implementation of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, with a view to ensuring that member countries, tourist destinations and businesses maximize the positive economic, social and cultural effects of tourism and fully reap its benefits, while minimizing its negative social and environmental impacts.

In 2004, the WTO's membership is comprised of 144 countries, seven territories and more than 300 Affiliate Members representing the private sector, educational institutions, tourism associations and local tourism authorities.

The World Tourism Organization had its beginnings as the International Congress of Official Tourist Traffic Associations set up in 1925 in The Hague. It was renamed the International Union of Official Travel Organisations (IUOTO) after World War II and moved to Geneva. IUOTO was a technical, non-governmental organization, whose membership at its peak included 109 National Tourist Organizations (NTOs) and 88 Associate Members, among them private and public groups.

As tourism grew and became an integral part of the fabric of modern life, its international dimension increased and national governments started to play an increasingly important role-their activities covering the whole spectrum from infrastructure to regulations. By the mid-1960s, it became clear that there was a need for more effective tools to keep developments under review and to provide tourism with intergovernmental machinery especially equipped to deal with the movement of persons, tourism policies and tourism's impacts.

In 1967, the members of IUOTO called for its transformation into an intergovernmental body empowered to deal on a worldwide basis with all matters concerning tourism and to cooperate with other competent organizations, particularly those of the United Nations' system, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), UNESCO, and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

A resolution to the same effect was passed in December 1969 by the UN General Assembly, which recognized the decisive and central role the transformed IUOTO should play in the field of world tourism in cooperation with the existing machinery within the UN. Following this resolution, the WTO's Statutes were ratified in 1974 by the States whose official tourist organizations were members of IUOTO.

Thus IUOTO became the World Tourism Organization (WTO) and its first General Assembly was held in Madrid in May 1975. The Secretariat was installed in Madrid early the following year at the invitation of the Spanish Government, which provides a building for the Headquarters.

In 1976, WTO became an executing agency of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and in 1977, a formal cooperation agreement was signed with the United Nations itself. In 2003, the WTO will be converted into a specialized agency of the United Nations and so even reaffirm its leading role in international tourism.

Since its early years, WTO's membership and influence in world tourism have continued to grow. By 2003, its membership included 141 countries, seven territories and some 350 Affiliate Members, representing the private sector, educational institutions, tourism associations and local tourism authorities.

# Tourism for prosperity and peace

At the start of the new millennium, tourism is firmly established as the number one industry in many countries and the fastest-growing economic sector in terms of foreign exchange earnings and job creation.

International tourism is the world's largest export earner and an important factor in the balance of payments of most nations.

Tourism has become one of the world's most important sources of employment. It stimulates enormous investment in infrastructure, most of which also helps to improve the living conditions of local people. It provides governments with substantial tax revenues. Most new tourism jobs and business are created in developing countries, helping to equalize economic opportunities and keep rural residents from moving to overcrowded cities.

Intercultural awareness and personal friendships fostered through tourism are a powerful force for improving international understanding and contributing to peace among all the nations of the world.

The WTO recognizes that tourism can have a negative cultural, environmental and social impact if it is not responsibly planned, managed and monitored. The WTO thus encourages governments to play a vital role in tourism, in partnership with the private sector, local authorities and non-governmental organizations.

In its belief that tourism can be effectively used to address the problems of poverty, WTO made a commitment to contribute to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals through a new initiative to develop sustainable tourism as a force for poverty elimination. The programme, known as ST-EP (Sustainable Tourism-Eliminating Poverty), focuses the longstanding work of both organizations on encouraging sustainable tourism with a view to alleviating poverty and was implemented in 2003.

# Tourism & Technology

The Internet and other computer technologies are revolutionizing the way tourism business is conducted and the way destinations are promoted. WTO's work in the area of new Information Technologies (IT) aims to provide leadership in the field of IT and tourism, as well as helping to bridge the digital divide between the have and have-nots among WTO's membership.

WTO carries out new research and studies of IT in connection with the promotion and development of tourism, such as the publications Marketing Tourism Destinations Online and E-Business for Tourism. It  
communicates the content of these studies throughout the world in a series of regional seminars.

WTO also operates a Strategic Advisory Board on IT and Tourism that brings together a small number of high-level experts from destinations, private businesses and researchers.

Tourism technology is especially suited to cooperation projects between the public and private sectors. The objective is to keep all Members up-to-date on the constantly changing technologies that will affect the tourism industry in the years to come.

# Conclusion

At the end of the twentieth century, tourism is the world's largest single industry. Tourism, however, is not only an economic and social phenomenon, but can be 'read' in semiotic terms centered around dreams of alternatives to everyday life. The images, which today dominate advertisements for tourist products, had to be constructed and sustained, invented and remolded over a long historical process. It seems that without this distinctive historical and cultural 'baggage' the remarkable social practice of taking holidays would not have evolved. Even if tourism saw its most spectacular development in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in terms of the numbers involved, it rests on a cultural foundation inaugurated in the early modern period. "The Making of Modern Tourism was a long-term process, deeply rooted in the cultural and intellectual, economic and social history of Britain. This interdisciplinary volume brings together scholars from fields as far apart as literary studies and economic history, who trace the history of tourism from the Renaissance to the present day, combing fresh findings from ongoing research with state-of-the-art surveys

# Literature

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