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THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON INTERNATIONAL TOURISM

A CROSS-GENERATIONAL ANALYSIS OF ROMANIAN TOURISTS



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CHAPTER 1.

TRAVEL AND TOURISM INDUSTRY: CONCEPTUAL CONSIDERATIONS AND STATISTICS

ACCORDING TO UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organization), “an ever-increasing number of destinations worldwide have opened up to, and invested in tourism, turning it into a key driver of socio-economic progress through the creation of jobs and enterprises, export revenues, and infrastructure development” (2016, p. 2) and, as per the latest Tourism Barometer published (UNWTO, 2020a), international tourist arrivals (overnight visitors) worldwide grew 4% in 2019 to reach 1.5 billion, based on data reported by destinations around the world. Year 2019 was a year of growth, although a slower growth compared to the remarkable rates of 2017 (+7%) and 2018 (+6%). In 2018, the international tourist arrivals even reached the 1.4 billion mark two years ahead of UNWTO forecast (UNWTO, 2019). Nevertheless 2019 demand was slower mainly in advanced economies and particularly in Europe, while the Middle East has emerged as the fastest growing of the five regions (the Americas, Europe, Africa, Middle East, Asia & the Pacific) for interna-

tional tourism arrivals in 2019, growing at almost double the global average (+8%)¹.

Up until WHO (World Health Organization) declared the outbreak a pandemic, on March 11, 2020, tourism represented 10.3% of global GDP and 7% of the world's exports, growing faster than the world trade sector in the past four years prior to pandemics, ranking third after fuels and chemicals (UNWTO, 2019). Therefore, it is essential to look at the dynamics of travel and tourism industry, at the factors influencing supply and demand of tourism, in order to better understand the market, prior to creating the appropriate supply of travel and tourism products, prior to launching policies and forecasting.

In order to have a better understanding of tourism industry as a whole, one should first and foremost clarify its main characteristics and particularities, the sectors involved in this activity and the interdependencies between them, the historical development of tourism, as well as the existing types and forms of tourism worldwide. Nevertheless, the impact of COVID-19 on international tourism should be looked at in depth and always be taken into consideration when looking ahead in the short to medium term future, until the pandemic is overcome.

1.1. Travel and tourism industry: an overview. Main definitions, implications, and historical development

The acknowledgment of tourism as a stand-alone human activity that embraces all aspects of the society and that generates multiple effects in almost every sector of the economy had taken place rather slowly throughout the 19th and

¹ TOHOLOGY: Tourism & Hospitality, Global travel numbers 2020: UNWTO recorded 1.5 billion international tourist arrivals in 2019, available at <https://www.tohology.com/en/hospitality/industry/international-tourist-arrivals-unwto/> (accessed January 20, 2020).

20th centuries. According to Cunha (2014), the first outlined concept was that of “tourist”. In 1937, in order to help establish comparisons for international statistics purposes, the League of Nations made up the first official definition of “tourist”.

Tourists, visitors and excursionists: definitions, differences and similarities

Back in 1937, “tourist” was considered anyone travelling for at least 24 hours in a different country than his/her country of residence. Twenty-six years later, in 1953, the Statistical Commission of the UN (replacing the League of Nations) also introduced the term “visitor”, defining it as a non-resident intending to remain for a period of maximum one year without exercising an occupation remunerated. In 1963, at the United Nations Conference on tourism and international travel held in Rome, there had been made a clear distinction between the types of visitors that might exist, namely “tourist” and “excursionist” (day visitor) (UNWTO, 2007). In 1971, a series of Directives regarding the tourism statistics were published and ever since, the definitions recommended kept the meaning they were given back in 1963:

- Tourist – visitor who stays for over 24 hours or who spends at least one night at an accommodation establishment in the country visited and whose travel purposes may be grouped into: a. leisure (recreation, holidays, health, study, religion, and sports) and b. business, family, mission, meeting.
- Excursionist or day visitor – visitor who remains under 24 hours in the visited country or who does not spend the night at an accommodation country.

As per Cunha (2014), the UNWTO, the agency that replaced the International Union of Official Travel Organizations, also integrated the collocation “national

visitors” in the general definition of tourism. In 1993, the United Nations Statistical Commission adopted the definition that is still being used, with the term “visitor” being the core of the entire tourism statistical system. “Visitor” describes “any person traveling to a place other than that of his/her usual environment for less than 12 months and whose main purpose of the trip is other than the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited” (UNWTO, 1994, p. 7). Visitors are divided into “tourists” and “same-day visitors” and have the following thorough meanings:

- Tourists (overnight visitors): visitors who stay at least one night in a collective or private accommodation in the country visited;
- Same-day visitors: visitors who do not spend the night in a collective or private accommodation in the country visited (UNWTO, 1994, p. 9).

Therefore, approaching the simplest meaning, tourism can be defined as the activity undertaken by visitors, it is what they do, “the activity of persons travelling”, “is the set of licit activities developed by visitors by reason of their displacements, including the attractions and the means that originated them, the facilities created to satisfy their needs and the phenomena and relationships resulting from all of the above” (Cunha, 2014, p. 111). Displacements are seen as both the movements of visitors and the activities carried out before and during the travel period, such as stay, transports and accessibilities. By attractions and means, natural and artificial elements, tangible, and intangible, that give value added and rise to travel are considered. When we think about “creating facilities”, we actually refer to infrastructure, hospitality and welcoming.

Main products offered by the tourism industry and its historical development

The travel and tourism industry's main function is to serve travelers and their needs. Yet, its success depends on various other sub-sectors and on the positive inter-relationships between the tourism services providers (Camilleri, 2017). Basically, the main sectors the travel and tourism industry is made of are: a) Transportation b) Accommodation c) Food and beverage d) Ancillary services e) Sales and distribution. As such, the main products offered by the tourism industry are: accommodation services for visitors, food and beverage services, air passenger transport services, railway passenger transport services, road passenger transport services, water passenger transport services, transport equipment rental services, travel agencies and other reservation system services, cultural services, sports and recreational services, country-specific tourism characteristic goods (the so-called "souvenirs"), as well as country-specific tourism characteristic services. Tourism specific products are actually those that satisfy at least one of the following criteria:

- a) Tourism expenditure on the product, either a service or goods should represent a considerable share of the total tourism expenditure (share-of-demand condition)
- b) Tourism expenditure on the product, either a service or goods should represent a significant part of the total supply of that product in the whole economy (share-of-supply condition). It is important to highlight that, in the absence of visitors, the supply of a tourism specific product would cease to exist.

Hence, tourism is, in essence, a technical concept measured by the available statistics of visitor movements and expenditure (demand) and estimates of the number of a wide range of visitor facilities (supply) (Middleton, 2015).

According to the Education Bureau of the Government of Hong Kong (2013), the history of tourism can be divided into six stages, starting really early, with the Roman Empire Period – 1st stage in the history of tourism (27 BC – 476 AD), when travel was made for military, trade, political reasons, as well as for transmitting messages from the central governments to other territories. Artisans and architects were also travelling to design and build palaces and tombs. Furthermore, participants and spectators at the Olympic Games in ancient Greece required accommodation and food services for that period, while wealthy Romans used to travel to seaside resorts in Egypt and Greece for sightseeing. Later on, during the Middle Age Period – 2nd stage in the history of tourism (500 AD to 1400 AD), travel for religious purposes greatly increased. Pilgrims were traveling to the “holy land”, either we think of Muslims going to Mecca or Christians to Jerusalem or Rome.

In the 16th century – 3rd stage in the history of tourism, a new type of tourists arose, those who were traveling to broaden their knowledge and experience, mainly because of the growth in England’s trade and commerce. The 4th stage in the history of tourism is considered to be the 17th century, when the British aristocrat teenagers were traveling for the so-called “Grand Tour”, a period of 2–3 years throughout Europe (mainly to Italy, Germany, and France) to improve their knowledge, a sort of training for a future administrative and political career, as the European states were engaging in new forms of diplomacy. During the Industrial Revolution Period in Europe – 5th stage in the history of tourism (1750 AD – 1850 AD), the base for mass tourism was set. Many people were turned from basic agriculture activities into factories and urban lifestyle, so there was a rapid growth of education and wealth level among the middle-class individuals, but also an increase in leisure time and demand for holidays. Besides, travel for health purposes

was very fashionable, as rich Europeans began to visit famous spa towns in Europe (e.g., Baden-Baden in Germany) and seaside resorts in England (e.g., Brighton or Margate).

The social and technological changes that took place during the 19th and 20th centuries have had a great impact on tourism and they are considered the 6th stage in the history of tourism. The railways were invented in the 19th century and the passenger aircraft in the 20th century, making possible for everyone interested to travel safer, cheaper, and faster. Furthermore, in the '80s, the baby-boomers (demographic group of people born during the post-WWII, approximately in the period 1946–1964) were at the age to travel and had the necessary money to spend, so the business and leisure travel expanded rapidly. They were looking for adventure trips, ecotourism, and luxurious travel, so new types of tourism appeared. Further on, the fall of Berlin Wall in 1989 led to a significant expansion in tourist destinations – countries such as Russia or Czech Republic became popular destinations for both vacation and business travelers. In the '90s, the “ticketless traveling” was introduced, reducing the cost of tickets, cutting the amount of paperwork, and making it easier for the airlines to deal directly with the consumers, to build relationships. The advance in technology also allowed travelers to buy hotel accommodation or transfer tickets online or via interactive kiosks in airports, and, today, “in dramatic contrast to the past, the industry knows almost no borders and it concerns virtually everybody in one way or another” (Zuelow, 2016, p. 13).

Another approach (Lickorish & Jenkins, 2011) to the history of tourism mentions only four stages of development, namely “prehistory tourism” – 1st stage of tourism development, from medieval times to the early 17th century, “railway age” – 2nd stage of tourism development, when steam trains and ships completely transformed travel opportunities and mass

travel was invented. With these, resorts, agents, and tour operators, as well as marketing methods that are still used nowadays, such as organized tours, travel packages, brochures or posters were successfully introduced. The 3rd stage of tourism development, “the interwar period” is also the age of the motor car, of camping and caravanning, of tours by motor coach and overnights in youth hostels. From 1945 on, the 4th stage of tourism development has begun, being called “tourism take-off”, as it has been a period of revolution in technology, an era of massive industrial development, of escalation of disposable income and accelerated increase in wealth creation.

Changes in lifestyle and a continuous increase in GDP of 3% or even more per year for the twenty-five countries members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development back then from 1950 to 1991² led to a travel growth of at least 6% per year (Lickorish & Jenkins, 2011). Apparently, the richer people were always on the move and the appeal of foreign destinations overtook domestic tourism, long-distance travel becoming a popular attraction. A business travel network connecting the main cities in Europe and North America was created and, until 1990, when the Gulf crisis arose, tourism experienced incredible development. Changes in government and industry organization that were taking place from the 1993 (e.g., the introduction of the European Community Single Market) offered great opportunities for tourism over the longer term. Multinational companies that firstly appeared in aviation were then extending to hotel chains and travel trade. For some years, governments substantially

² The twenty-five members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in 1991 were: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherland, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom and United States

supported tourism growth, but in more recent years, especially in Europe, the efforts made by the states in the tourism industry have been lacking (Lickorish & Jenkins, 2011).

1.2. The various types and forms of tourism

Tourism can take various forms, depending on multiple criteria, but there are three main types of tourism according to the origin and destination of visitors (Turcu & Weisz, 2008, p. 6):

- Domestic tourism – visits made to a country by visitors who are residents of that country
- Inbound international tourism – visits made to a country by non-residents
- Outbound international tourism – visits made by residents of a country to a different country.

Derived from the three types of tourism previously mentioned, the following groupings different typologies for tourism have been developed, as defined by Eurostat (2014):

- National tourism, which includes domestic and outbound tourism
- Internal tourism which includes domestic and inbound tourism
- International tourism, which includes inbound and outbound tourism.

Going further, as Nistoreanu (2005) outlines, given the complexity and the multiple approaches to tourism activities, there are multiple forms of tourism:

a. **Based on the reason for travel:**

- Leisure and holiday tourism, the most important type of tourism, includes the following forms based on the activities that are undertaken:
 - i. Cultural tourism, also called heritage tourism
 - tourists want to know more about that land

and culture, the way of life of the residents, their customs and traditions, cuisine, religion, fairs and festivals, as well as art and architecture;

- ii. Religious tourism, also called pilgrimage or spiritual tourism – tourists travel for pilgrimage;
 - iii. Health tourism, also called medical tourism – tourists travel to improve their health, in search of medical care;
 - iv. Sports tourism – tourists travel to view or participate in a sporting event
 - v. Adventure tourism – tourists travel to participate in activities such as rafting, hiking, or mountain climbing;
- Visits to relatives and friends;
 - Business tourism – tourists travel for various reasons pertaining to their work. This form of tourism is often called MICE tourism (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions);
 - Special Interest tourism, also called alternative tourism and it is seen as the key to sustainable development – the tourists prefer to interact with locals, to use or share the services the local people provide, establish a personal connection with the local community. There are various forms of special interest tourism, such as:
 - i. Ecotourism
 - ii. Agro-rural tourism
 - iii. Food tourism
 - iv. Wildlife tourism
 - Education tourism – tourists travel to learn about other cultures outside the classroom environment;
- b. **Based on the degree of mobility of the tourist:**
- Long stay tourism
 - Itinerant tourism
 - Transit tourism