
HISTORY OF TOURISM

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ABSTRACT

Tourism, the act and process of spending time away from home in pursuit of recreation, relaxation, and pleasure, while making use of the commercial provision of services. As such, tourism is a product of modern social arrangements, beginning in western Europe in the 17th century, although it has antecedents in Classical antiquity.

Keywords: Tourism, History, Heritage, Culture, Tourists.

Introduction

Tourism is distinguished from exploration in that tourists follow a “beaten path,” benefit from established systems of provision, and, as befits pleasure-seekers, are generally insulated from difficulty, danger, and embarrassment. Tourism, however, overlaps with other activities, interests, and processes, including, for example, pilgrimage. This gives rise to shared categories, such as “business tourism,” “sports tourism,” and “medical tourism” (international travel undertaken for the purpose of receiving medical care).

By the early 21st century, international tourism had become one of the world’s most important economic activities, and its impact was becoming increasingly apparent from the Arctic to Antarctica. The history of tourism is therefore of great interest and importance. That history begins long before the coinage of the word tourist at the end of the 18th century. In the Western tradition, organized travel with supporting infrastructure, sightseeing, and an emphasis on essential destinations and experiences can be found in ancient Greece and Rome, which can lay claim to the origins of both “heritage tourism” (aimed at the celebration and appreciation of historic sites of recognized cultural importance) and beach resorts. The Seven Wonders of the World became tourist sites for Greeks and Romans.

Pilgrimage offers similar antecedents, bringing Eastern civilizations into play. Its religious goals coexist with defined routes, commercial hospitality, and an admixture of curiosity, adventure, and enjoyment among the motives of the participants. Pilgrimage to the earliest Buddhist sites began more than 2,000 years ago, although it is hard to define a transition from the makeshift privations of small groups of monks to recognizably tourist practices. Pilgrimage to Mecca is of similar antiquity. The tourist status of the hajj is problematic given the number of casualties that—even in the 21st century—continued to be suffered on the journey through the desert. The thermal spa as a tourist destination—regardless of the pilgrimage associations with the site as a holy well or sacred spring—is not necessarily a European invention, despite deriving its English-language label from Spa, an early resort in what is now Belgium. The oldest Japanese ones (hot springs) were catering to bathers from at least the 6th century. Tourism has been a global phenomenon from its origins.

Modern tourism is an increasingly intensive, commercially organized, business-oriented set of activities whose roots can be found in the industrial and postindustrial West. The aristocratic grand tour of cultural sites in France, Germany, and especially Italy—including those associated with Classical Roman tourism—had its roots in the 16th century. It grew rapidly, however, expanding its geographical range

to embrace Alpine scenery during the second half of the 18th century, in the intervals between European wars. (If truth is historically the first casualty of war, tourism is the second, although it may subsequently incorporate pilgrimages to graves and battlefield sites and even, by the late 20th century, to concentration camps.) As part of the grand tour's expansion, its exclusivity was undermined as the expanding commercial, professional, and industrial middle ranks joined the landowning and political classes in aspiring to gain access to this rite of passage for their sons. By the early 19th century, European journeys for health, leisure, and culture became common practice among the middle classes, and paths to the acquisition of cultural capital (that array of knowledge, experience, and polish that was necessary to mix in polite society) were smoothed by guidebooks, primers, the development of art and souvenir markets, and carefully calibrated transport and accommodation systems.

Tourism became even bigger business internationally in the latter half of the 20th century as air travel was progressively deregulated and decoupled from "flag carriers" (national airlines). The airborne package tour to sunny coastal destinations became the basis of an enormous annual migration from northern Europe to the Mediterranean before extending to a growing variety of long-haul destinations, including Asian markets in the Pacific, and eventually bringing postcommunist Russians and eastern Europeans to the Mediterranean. Similar traffic flows expanded from the United States to Mexico and the Caribbean. In each case these developments built on older rail-, road-, and sea-travel patterns. The earliest package tours to the Mediterranean were by motor coach (bus) during the 1930s and postwar years. It was not until the late 1970s that Mediterranean sun and sea vacations became popular among working-class families in northern Europe; the label "mass tourism," which is often applied to this phenomenon, is misleading. Such holidays were experienced in a variety of ways because tourists had choices, and the destination resorts varied widely in history, culture, architecture, and visitor mix. From the 1990s the growth of flexible international travel through the rise of budget airlines, notably easyJet and Ryanair in Europe, opened a new mix of destinations. Some of these were former Soviet-bloc locales such as Prague and Riga, which appealed to weekend and short-break European tourists who constructed their own itineraries in negotiation with local service providers, mediated through the airlines' special deals. In international tourism, globalization has not been a one-way process; it has entailed negotiation between hosts and guests.

Economic Impacts

According to a UNWTO report, in 2011, "international tourism receipts exceeded US\$1 trillion for the first time" (UNWTO, 2012). UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai stated this excess of \$1 trillion was especially important news given the global economic crisis of 2008, as tourism could help rebuild still-struggling economies, because it is a key export and labour intensive (UNWTO, 2012).

Tourism around the world is now worth over \$1 trillion annually, and it's a growing industry almost everywhere. Regions with the highest growth in terms of tourism dollars earned are the Americas, Europe, Asia and the Pacific, and Africa. Only the Middle East posted negative growth at the time of the report (UNWTO, 2012).

While North and South America are growing the fastest, Europe continues to lead the way in terms of overall percentage of dollars earned (UNWTO, 2012):

Europe (45%)

Asia and the Pacific (28%)

North and South America (19%)

Middle East (4%)

Global industry growth and high receipts are expected to continue. In its August 2014 expenditure barometer, the UNWTO found worldwide visitation had increased by 22 million people in the first half of the year over the previous year, to reach 517 million visits (UNWTO, 2014a). As well, the UNWTO's Tourism 2020 Vision predicts that international arrivals will reach nearly 1.6 billion by 2020.

Environmental Impacts

Tourism relies on, and greatly impacts, the natural environment in which it operates. Even though many areas of the world are conserved in the form of parks and protected areas, tourism development can have severe negative impacts. According to UNEP (2003b), these can include:

Depletion of natural resources (water, forests, etc.)

Pollution (air pollution, noise, sewage, waste and littering)

Physical impacts (construction activities, marina development, trampling, loss of biodiversity)

The environmental impacts of tourism can reach outside local areas and have an effect on the global ecosystem. One example is increased air travel, which is a major contributor to climate change. Chapter 10 looks at the environmental impacts of tourism in more detail.

Whether positive or negative, tourism is a force for change around the world, and the industry is transforming at a staggering rate. But before we delve deeper into our understanding of tourism, let's take a look at the development of the sector in our own backyard.

Today, the tourism sector has become one of the great economic engines in many countries, forming part of the international political agenda. In recent years, with low-cost flights and the existence of alternative accommodations, managed by online companies, it is much easier for tourists to afford to travel and they can design their itinerary and experiences to their liking.

Tourism not only impacts the local economy, but it is also starting to affect the social structures, culture and lifestyle of the destinations visited. Therefore, the challenge now is to provide solutions by developing a tourism awareness that is respectful with the environment and the local way of living of its inhabitants.

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