

DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE STUDY OF TOURISM

B. Ostapishyn

National University of Food Technologies

From the very inception of life, travel has fascinated man. Travel and tourism have been important social activities of human beings from time immemorial. The urge to explore new places within one's own country or outside and seek a change of environment and experience has been experienced from ancient times.

Tourism is one of the world's most rapidly growing industries. Much of its growth is due to higher disposable incomes, increased leisure time and falling costs of travel. As airports become more enjoyable places to pass through, as travel agency services become increasingly automated, and as tourists find it easier to get information on places they want to visit, tourism grows.

Tourism today is much more than just developing products. It is more about quality, insightful thinking and ability to have global information about technology, partners, contacts and responding quickly to global and regional trends. The fundamental task before tourism promotion is to facilitate integration of the various components in the tourism trade as active participants in the nation's social and cultural life. There is a long road ahead. All must work towards a society where people can work and participate as equal partners. Tourism should be a vehicle for international cooperation and understanding of the various civilizations and a harbinger of peace.

From the foregoing we can see how fast the face of tourism is changing and how challenging the job of travel agencies is now. There is therefore a need for proper training of the personnel working in the industry through thorough and a detailed study of the subject. A unified approach to the subject is also needed since at present people from different fields have been studying tourism from different perspectives:

1. Geographical Perspective. From a geographer's perspective the main concern of tourism is to look into aspects like the geographical location of a place, the climate, the landscape, the environment, the physical planning and the changes in these emerging from provisioning of tourism facilities and amenities. A geographer feels that it is the climate, landscape or physical attributes which draw the tourist to a destination, for example; if a person from Delhi goes to Shimla in the summer he does so because of the cooler climate which he cannot get in Delhi.

2. Sociological Perspective. From a sociologist's perspective tourism is a social activity; it is about interaction between different communities – hosts and guests – and encounter between different cultures. This approach studies social classes, habits and customs of both hosts and guests in terms of tourism behaviour of individuals or groups of people and the impact of tourism on society.

3. Historical Perspective. From a historian's perspective tourism is a study of the factors instrumental in the initiation of tourism to a particular destination, the order of happenings leading to tourism development, the reasons for happening of the occurrences in that order, beneficiaries of the

tourist activity and an untimely and premature identification of negative effects. For example we all know that a lot of tourists visit Taj Mahal in Agra but a historian would be interested in studying the factors that bring the tourist there, e.g. the architecture, the story behind the monument, or something else that draws them there.

4. Managerial Perspective. From the management perspective tourism is an industry, and therefore needs managerial skills in order to be properly managed. As the industry grows we see continuous changes in various organizations and services linked with the industry, the tourism products and so on so this approach concentrates on management activities such as planning, research, pricing, marketing, control etc. as vital to the operation of a tourist establishment.

5. Economic Perspective. From an economist's perspective tourism is a major source of foreign exchange earnings, a generator of personal and corporate incomes, a creator of employment and a contributor to government earnings. It is a dominant global activity surpassing even trade in oil and manufactured goods. Economists study the effects of tourism industry on the economy. This is a two way process.

Now due to higher disposable incomes, increased leisure time and falling cost of travel, the tourism industry has shown a very high growth and since tourism is a service industry it comprises of a number of tangible and intangible components. The tangible elements include transport systems – air, rail, road, water and now, space; hospitality services – accommodation, food and beverage, tours, souvenirs; and related services such as banking, insurance and safety and security. The intangible elements include rest and relaxation, culture, escape, adventure, new and different experiences.

Tourism industry is very fast growing and this industry involves activities and interests of Transport Undertakings, Owners of Tourist Sites and Attractions, Various tourist Service Providers at the tourist destinations and Central and Local Government, etc. Each of these serves both the resident population and the tourists and their management must reconcile the needs of tourists with the needs of the resident population. So it becomes important to study tourism from the perspective of management, since the management of various bodies in this industry is invaded.

References

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