

## TOURISM TODAY: WHY IS IT A GLOBAL PHENOMENON?

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### Rezumat

*Globally, tourism has shown a steady increase over the last two or three decades, transforming the touristic activities into a real industry. In the new millennium, we have witnessed a continuous growth of interest in the way people spend their leisure time. There is also great interest in the development of what people “consume” during these periods of free time, especially in times dedicated to travel and holidays. With the growth of leisure time, accompanied by a better living standard, the tourism demand has increased. On a global level, we can see an improvement of the revaluation of leisure time and the diminution of the time spent working, fact which generated the engagement in a new form of consumption such as tourism. This article provides an overview of tourism, based on the following aspects: tourism - a major leisure activity, the necessity to measure tourism, tourism statistics, the importance of tourism at a global scale. We have identified and explained the factors that determine the development of tourism, focusing on the economic, demographic and social ones.*

**Key words:** *tourism, leisure time, tourism measurement, factors affecting tourism.*

**JEL classification:** Q010, L830

### 1. SOCIETY BASED ON LEISURE TIME

The researches made on the role of tourism in nowadays society revealed that it has “... a considerable impact on economies, societies and cultures of different countries of reference” (Py, P., 1996, p. 108). In other words, “tourism represents a socio-economical phenomenon specific to modern civilization, strongly anchored in the life of society and influenced by its evolution, with a high dynamism on the national and international level and having as target large social segments”( Minciu, R., Baron, P., Neacșu, N., 1991). We consider that tourism becomes a more and more diversified activity, which not only uses considerable human and financial resources, but also has a considerable impact on economy and society, arousing the interest for identification of incidences and for evaluation of its results.

Nowadays, tourism is known to be a social phenomenon, because the nature of the society in the most developed countries changed from one that, traditionally, had an economy based on production to one in which the dominant form of employment is in services and in the consumption industry (Page, S. J., 2004). However, many countries increased the period of leisure time and the right to paid vacations for the employees in the post war period, so that the employees have now the possibility to engage in new forms of consumption like tourism. These changes were described as being a part of what was named “society of amusement”, a term invented in the 1970s by sociologists. They studied the future of work and the way in which society changes to the extent that the traditional forms of employment disappeared and new services related to jobs, increased leisure time and new work habits (like the flexible

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business hours and part-time jobs) appeared.

While society passed from the stage of industrialization to one described as post-industrial, in which new technologies, new methods of communication and work appeared, sociologists, like Baudrillard (1998) sustain that we passed from a society in which work and production prevailed to one in which amusement and consumption prevail. This was reflected in social changes, like the growth on the global level of the new middle class, in many developed and developing countries, with a defining feature - interest in a life style with focus on recreation and consumption.

## **2. MEASURING TOURISM**

We sustain that the UNWTO definition ([www.untwo.org](http://www.untwo.org)) of tourism is the most representative for noticing what tourism is in fact and we further consider that measuring tourism helps us understand some problems that the decision factors must approach in planning tourism and in the scenarios of subsequent development. There are three basic reasons in trying to define tourism as an activity:

1. What is the purpose of the trip? (for example, business trip, holidays, visiting friends and relatives, other reasons)
2. What time dimension is implied in tourism having as purpose the visit? (in the majority of cases, tourism implies at least 24 hours and a maximum of 12 months away from home (Minciu, R., 2004))
3. What situations appear when some countries can or cannot choose the inclusion of travelers into tourists? (for example, the passengers on a cruise ship, the tourists in transit, the holiday makers that stay less than 24 hours in a destination)

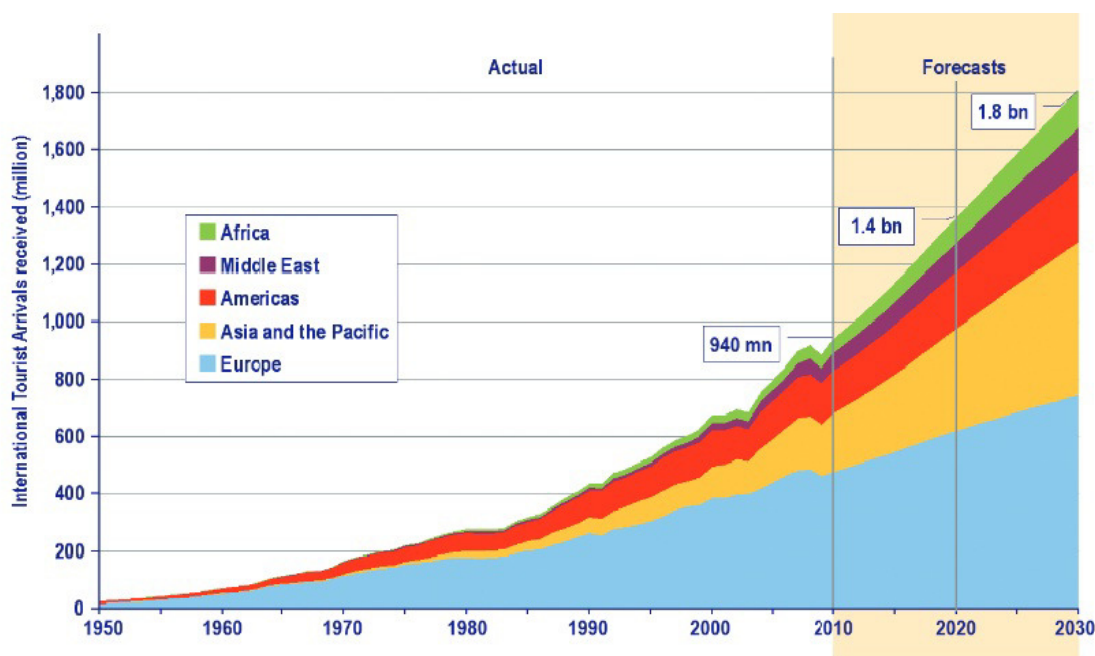
Thus, we consider that there are some main reasons for which measuring tourism is important:

- in order to understand the spreading and the value of visitors for certain destinations, countries and regions;
- in order to understand how important tourism is concerning the balance of payments of the reference countries;
- in order to assist the tourism industry and the governments in planning and anticipating the type of infrastructure necessary so that tourism increases and develops;
- in order to understand what type of marketing is necessary for tourists to become consumers;
- in order to help the tourism industry in making the decisions concerning the type of action necessary for the future development in the field;
- in a general level, measuring tourism by collecting, analyzing and interpreting the statistics is essential for the evaluation of the volume, the scale, the impact and the value of tourism at different geographical scales, from the global level, to the country level and to the individual destination level.

Figure 1 shows the trends of the global tourism, beginning with 1950. From the statistics of UNWTO for each year, it results that the international tourist arrivals didn't increase annually. Decreases of tourist arrivals were recorded, most recently, due to the terrorist attacks in the USA from September 11, 2001. Other reasons were represented by terrorist events and factors like the economic crisis in Argentina, the power of the USD and the conflict in the Middle East. In other words, a series of factors have impact on the arrivals of visitors on the international level, because tourism is a very capricious activity (being vulnerable to the above mentioned external factors, which act as elements of discouragement of trips; these adverse events can act as shock waves in the world and have impact on the availability of people to travel for pleasure).

However, the major religious events, like Jihad, a trip to Mecca (that the majority of

Muslims make once in a lifetime) are one of the biggest tourist events in the world and are also durable events, which are less sensitive to shock waves than other forms of tourism.



**Fig. 1. International Tourist Arrivals 1950-2010 and Forecasts 2010-2030**  
*Source: UNWTO Tourism Highlights, 2014 Edition, p. 14*

Table 1 illustrates the number of arrivals of international tourists in the period 1950- 2010, totally, and in the main regions of the world. One can see that between 1950- 2010, all regions recorded significant increases, but not in the same proportion. Europe attracts more than half of the international tourist flows, followed by Asia and Pacific and the American continent.

Tourism continues to record a positive trend, despite some temporary, conjuncture decreases (due to some phenomena like crises, regional conflicts or political instability), obvious on the level of the total number of arrivals in 2003 and 2009. Thus, totally, the number of tourists who travel abroad increased, managing to double from 1990 until 2010.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Africa</i>	<i>America</i>	<i>Asia and Pacific</i>	<i>Europe</i>	<i>Middle East</i>
<b>1950</b>	25,3	0,5	7,5	0,2	16,8	0,2
<b>1960</b>	69,3	0,8	16,7	0,9	50,4	0,6
<b>1970</b>	165,8	2,4	42,3	6,2	113,0	1,9
<b>1980</b>	278,1	7,2	62,3	23,0	178,5	7,1
<b>1990</b>	439,5	15,2	92,8	56,2	265,6	9,6
<b>2000</b>	687,0	28,3	128,1	110,5	395,9	24,2
<b>2001</b>	686,7	29,1	122,1	115,7	395,2	24,5
<b>2002</b>	707,0	30,0	116,1	124,9	407,0	28,5
<b>2003</b>	694,6	31,6	113,1	113,3	407,1	29,5
<b>2004</b>	765,1	34,5	125,7	144,2	424,4	36,3
<b>2005</b>	806,8	37,3	133,5	155,4	441,5	39,0
<b>2008</b>	919	44,5	147,8	184,1	486,3	55,9
<b>2009</b>	880	46	140,6	181,2	459,3	53
<b>2010</b>	949	49,9	150,4	205,1	485,5	58,2

<b>2011</b>	995	49,4	156,0	218,2	516,4	54,9
<b>2012</b>	1035	52,4	163,1	233,6	534,2	52,0
<b>2013</b>	1087	56,1	168,9	247,7	562,8	51,9

**Table 1. International Tourist Arrivals, 1950-2013 (millions)**

*Source: Tourism Market Trends, 2006 Edition – Annex 3; Tourism Barometer, 2010; UNWTO Tourism Highlights, 2011 Edition; UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, 2014, vol. 12, p. 13*

We can summarize the results as follows:

- International tourism is dominated by destinations to Western Europe;
- New fields for tourism activity, like Asia and Pacific region (including the growing economies from Singapore, Thailand, South Korea, Taiwan and China ) are expected to take over the traditional domination from Western Europe;
- The dominant destinations on the global level concerning the arrivals in 2013 were represented by countries from Europe (like France, Spain, Italy, etc), then the USA and China.

Nevertheless, one of the persistent problems (which is not evidenced in table 1) is that, far from being a complete source of information, the statistics of tourism are often only an estimation of the total model of tourism. Moreover, these statistics are often dated when they are published because there is a significant time difference in their generating, analysis, presentation and dissemination. This is due to the fact that many published statistics of tourism derive from the sample survey, the results being manipulated from a statistic point of view in order to obtain a figure which is supposed to represent the real situation (Page, S.J., 2003, 2007). Consequently, several tourism statistics at the country or regional level are recognized as being estimated for this reason. In reality, this means that the statistics of tourism are often submitted to significant errors, depending on the size of the sample.

According to Latham's findings (Latham, J., 1989), the typical problems associated with measuring tourism include the following:

- Tourists are a transitory population, extremely mobile, making the statistic procedures difficult when one tries to ensure the statistic precision;
- Interviewing the mobile populations, like tourists, is often done in strange environments, usually, in harbors or points of departure or arrival, where the noise in the background can influence the answers;
- Other variables, like weather, can affect the answers.

Even in the case in which the problems of sampling can be minimized, such statistics of tourism must be treated carefully, because it is important to know what a tourist constituted and the type of approach used. The main modalities of measuring tourists through surveys include:

- Before-trip studies concerning the travel habits of the tourists and the possible choice of destination (intentional studies);
- Studies concerning tourists in transit (real and intentional studies);
- Studies made on tourists arrived at destination and in specific tourist locations (real and intentional studies);
- After-trip studies made on tourists on the return from destination or on return to their residence place (after-tourism measures).

Such studies can be also used in order to analyse different aspects of tourists, as the following three approaches suggest:

1. Measuring the tourist volume, the enumeration of arrivals, departures and the number of visits and stays;
2. Studies based on expenses, which quantify the value of expenses at destination and during the trip;

3. The analysis of the characteristics and features of tourists, in order to build a profile of different markets and segments which visit a destination.

In the commercial world, the data concerning tourism is also gathered by organizations which specialize in collecting and analysing it, including research companies like Mintel, from London. The tourism advisers can be requested, especially, to collect data for feasibility studies concerning the evolution of tourism or new business opportunities. Still, in the majority of cases, the national governments corroborate the statistics concerning tourism through intern and international tourism studies. The international tourism is studied on a much larger scale, and the results are transmitted normally to UNTWO and OECD, which gather and publish the international travel statistics from the member states.

Tourism recorded a significant expansion in the last decades, becoming an important socio- economic phenomenon of the 21st century. However, new destinations were identified, besides the known ones, which were Europe and North America. One can see that, per total, the number of arrivals of international tourists increased from 25.3 millions in 1950, to over 1 billion in 2013, which means an increase of approximately 40 times (fig. 1). This spectacular growth is due, especially, to the technical progress, to the increase of incomes and leisure time allotted to travels and holidays. We must mention that, at the record of the ascending evolution of tourism contributed the fact that its definition knew different approaches, meaning that, in time, more travels were included in the tourist category (for example, the business trips). It results also the way of including tourists in statistics, that made this data be more comprising. Of course, the reported aspects have no major impact on tourist statistics and do not doubt the extent of the development of tourism in the last decades.

### **3. THE NEW FACTORS AFFECTING TOURISM**

The tourist activity within the national economies and on a global level takes place under the incidence of a complex of factors. In the specialized literature one can see different modalities of grouping, the authors (Minciu R., 2004, Niță I., Niță C.m 2008), trying to complete one another in analysing the typologies of factors which influence the development of tourism.

The main groups of factors are analyzed in the specialized literature as follows:

- According to the nature of factors, they divide into:
  - economic: the income of population, the prices and the tariffs, the touristic offer;
  - demographic: the quantitative evolution of population, the structure on ages and social categories, the modification of the average life duration etc;
  - social: leisure time;
  - political: the visa regime, border formalities;
  - psychological and educational: level of education, individual character etc;
  - technical: the advance of technologies in constructions, high performances of the means of transport etc.

◆ According to their importance in influencing tourism, the factors are divided into:

- primary: leisure time, the income of the population, its movement, the tourist offer;
- secondary: supplementary services, facilities for getting a visa;

◆ According to the time duration of their action, one can distinguish the factors:

- permanent: the growth of leisure time, the modification of the incomes of the population;
- conjuncture: natural disasters, political instability, meteorological conditions.

◆ According to the basic components of the market, there are:

- factors of tourism demand: dynamics and the incomes of the population, leisure time;
- factors of tourism offer: prices, diversity and quality of services.

One can mention other groups: objective and subjective factors, endogenous (from the inside of the tourist system) and exogenous (outside it), factors of tourist attraction,

promotional factors.

With the growth of leisure time and a better living standard, the tourism demand increased. On a global level one can see an improvement of the revaluation of leisure time and the diminution of the time spent working. On a national level, the things are a little different; even if one doesn't recognize it (people work extra hours and are not paid sufficiently), while by working less, people can take advantage of their free time and holidays.

The economic factors are very important in the development of tourism and in the increase of the number of tourists. If the personal or family income is big or medium, there are big chances for people to become tourists. Depending on the budget, travelers can establish the place and the duration of their holiday.

Concerning the demographic factor, we know that people who live in the urban areas have bigger possibilities to travel, especially from the point of view of the leisure time. The persons living in rural areas are not willing to leave any time from their domicile because there are certain seasonal activities which cannot be omitted (agriculture, sheep breeding etc). Thus, the increase of the degree of urbanization determines the growth of the national tourist demand, phenomenon which manifested very dynamically in the last quarter of century.

The social factors. Due to the fact that society evolved and the mentality of the individuals changed in comparison to the years before democracy, the exceeding of some geographic habitats was reached. Through tourism, the connection between societies, cultures, civilizations and some changes benefic for the evolution of society are being achieved (Niță I., Niță C., 2008). The tourists who go abroad can see other cultures, traditions, civilizations, other people and, returning to their domicile, have other ideas, outlooks, needs, demands, another mentality. Thus, there is the connection between a society and another one, between a culture and another one, through tourism. Also through tourism, the individuals can have other aspirations, being capable to evolve.

Researching those zones that are developing from the point of view of the international tourism, it is obvious that most part of the trips abroad are made from the developed countries of Europe, North America and Asia-Pacific. In some cases, tourists travel in the developing countries where the majority of the population lives at a level of subsistence or at standards inferior to the visitors. The contrast between the well-being of the visitor and that of the host is often very big and reveals a clear inequality between those who have the necessary income to enjoy the luxury of intern and international trips and those who work in the industry for small wages and unskilled and badly paid jobs.

This situation is worsened by the growth of the impact of globalization. In the case of Romanian tourism, it is related to the performances of the Romanian economy, including the transnationals in the country. The 24 years of transition wasted a good part of the Romanian economy resources. The Romanian capitals didn't succeed in entering the global circuits, and the foreign capitals avoided or postponed penetrating the Romanian production sector, including the services sector, limiting themselves to the exploitation of the market for the final consumption. Only in the recent years, after the external market of Romania installed, they headed, with uncertain results, towards the key sectors, immediately profitable, of the Romanian economy. Responsible are the political factor and also the Romanian businessmen. No one can invoke the lack of information concerning the mechanisms of the functioning of the global economy, at least in comparison to their counterparts from other countries in similar conditions (Rotaru I., 2004, p. 283). Among the major effects of globalization on tourism in Romania of the last 2 decades, one can mention:

- promoting the durable development in tourism;
- increasing the quality of tourist services;
- changes in the lifestyle and the need to detach from the daily routine;
- the growth of the number of well-informed tourists, following the education and the

means of communication;

- the increase of competition between the holiday destinations and other forms of spending leisure time;

- imposing some highly ecological standards;

- maximization of the positive effects on the environment and minimizing the negative ones;

- changing the attitude towards the life quality and increasing the need to learn new things by knowing new regions and cultures;

- changes in the structure of the family by decreasing the birthrate, changes in the age structure on the tourist market;

- integration of local roads into the national infrastructure network;

- growing the importance of the Internet as a means of promotion and sale;

- the rapid growth of the number of „low-cost airlines”.

Globalization is a process associated with the development of big international companies and corporations, controlling various forms of economic development and production in the host-country, using low costs of production in the developing countries, in order to manufacture goods and to offer low cost services, using cheap workforce. Tourism doesn't make an exception because the big hotel chains and many tour operators use the developing countries and their destinations as a basis for their tourist products. In these economic situations, the connections with the local community are limited, therefore the unskilled work and the reduced economic benefits are left in exchange of the economic profits and benefits of the tourist development, which are expropriated in the country of origin of the multinational company. In many cases, the underdeveloped character of the local economic connections in the developing countries means that these are caught in exploitation relations, because they don't have autochthonous capital or entrepreneurs to create by themselves tourist businesses.

Thus, the lack of education, of knowledge and the incapacity of negotiating with the multinational companies to maximize the benefits for the local people mean that tourism can be a form of exploitation for such communities.

The development of local products to create connections with the local economy, rather than the import of food products to satisfy the tourists's tastes, and the demands for internationally known brands, can counterfact this situation. Still, tourists export together with their holiday the style of spending their leisure time and can be perceived, more and more evidently, through the purchasing power they practise; this could be rendered valuable in the benefit of local economy (Page S. J., 2004, 2007). This is not only the case of less developed countries, but is, also, an ever bigger problem in many tourist destinations in the world, where the development of tourism and the expropriation from the profits resulted from the development of tourism mean that the essential resource of environment, which is used to attract tourists, is disappearing (for example, attractive beaches, wilderness, the cultural environment and the built environment). Using the environment without preserving it for the future generations and for posterity is one of the central issues in debating the inequalities that tourism generates for various localities. The international agencies, the governments and the locals have the responsibility to lobby and take measures to assure themselves that the development of tourism is not only durable, but also to minimize as much as possible the negative impact. The vulnerable groups, like children and the workforce, must not be marginalized, taking into account that ILO ([www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org)) estimated that between 10 and 15 percentages of the workforce in tourism, at the world level, is formed by children who don't benefit from adequate standards of work and employment conditions.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

Tourism is now widely acknowledged to be a global phenomenon, as the nature of societies throughout the world has changed into a consumer-based one. Most of the countries worldwide see that the amount of leisure time and holiday entitlement of their workers has increased, fact which generated the opportunity to engage in new forms of consumption such as tourism. The tourist activity within the national economies and at a global level takes place under the incidence of a complex of factors, among which the most important are economic, social, demographic, political, educational and technical ones.

The growing international significance of tourism can be explained in many ways: tourism is a discretionary activity, globally – it has a very important economic significance through its contribution to world's economy, tourism is increasingly becoming associated with quality-of-life issues, global travel is becoming more accessible in the developed and developing countries, technology and Internet make tourists easily organize their holidays etc.

Since tourism continues to record a positive trend, once there is an understanding of the way in which tourism is measured and processed, we can begin thinking what models and trends in tourism should be applied, globally, and what are the implications and the critical problems concerning the forces that affect tourism, as a global activity.

All in all, tourism must function as a profitable activity, but for a long term, the relations and connections mutually advantageous between industry, people and environment may bring financial and durable benefits for all and may increase the prestige and the image of tourism, as a global phenomenon. The advantages offered to tourists may also be extended to the host population and may help approach many global inequalities that exist, because the multinational companies try to exercise a bigger control on the selection and character of tourism offered to consumers.

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