

Conceptual meaning of tourism planning

Tourism planning should be an integral part of any destination's tourism development plan in order to achieve the best results and satisfy all stakeholders. Tourism planning is key to maintaining sustainable tourism and whilst some destinations do this very well, others (often developing countries), fail to recognize the importance of effective tourism development planning. Tourism development refers to the growth and maintenance of the tourism industry in a given locality. And, of course, tourism planning is a very important part of this.

On a basic level, tourism development can be defined as creating strategies and plans to increase/develop/encourage tourism for a destination. The fundamental reason behind planning and implementing strategies for developing the tourism sector is primarily to make money and to subsequently increase the GDP of a country/area.

Tourism industry is viewed as an inter-related system of demand and supply factors. The demand factors are international and domestic tourist markets and the local resident community who use the tourist facilities and services. The supply factors consist of the tourist attractions and activities as natural and manmade attractions like waterfalls, forests, beaches, monuments, zoos, etc.,

According to Williams cited in Mason (2003);

- *'The aim of modern planning is to seek optimal solutions to perceived problems and that it is designed to increase and, hopefully maximize development benefits, which will produce predictable outcomes'.*

And Getz (1987) cited in Pearce (1989) defines tourism planning as;

- *"A process, based on research and evaluation, which seeks to optimize the potential contribution of tourism to human welfare and environmental quality"*
- D.Getz (1987) defines tourism planning as " a process, based on research and evaluation, which seeks to optimize the potential contribution of tourism to human welfare and environmental quality".
- According to Faludi (1973) "Planning is a very important part of the process by which tourism is managed by governments at the national, local and organizational levels".

Evolution of tourism planning

New Delhi, Jan 29 (IANS/ife) The travel industry has evolved exponentially over the last decade. Megatrends across the globe have affected the industry; from digital advancements to the rise of Airbnb as an accommodation platform, over tourism, and the growth of social media influencers. These factors and more have shaped the way the travel industry looks today and the predicted direction it will go in the future.

The last 10 years have seen significant changes with varying effects. One of these is the impact that social media has created in attracting tourists to a country. In today's digital age, people turn to social media for travel inspiration.

The emergence of facebook,instagram,whatsapp, twitter have introduced a new type of celebrity to social media, a generation of users called "influencers". This channel has proven its power to influence and even generated a constant state of "FOMO" (Fear Of Missing Out) among its audiences.

The digital space however is oversaturated with influencers and users are now savvier about recognizing images that are staged, over-edited and lack authenticity. Some will attest to the fact that influencers are ruining the integrity of travel. Before the turn of the decade, the word "influencer" had been deemed as having a negative connotation.

Another challenge faced by the industry today is over tourism. Advancements in mobile app technology have made it easier to plan trips, book hotels and travel the world conveniently. Today, we see that travel apps play an integral role in every stage of planning a trip, a trend that shows no signs of slowing down. With accommodation apps, the ability to book rooms has contributed to a boost in tourism globally, providing tourists cost-effective lodging.

Before the decade began, ticking popular destinations off a bucket list was a core motivation. This took the spontaneity out of travel and contributed heavily to over tourism. This wave of over-tourism led to a new trend of discovering unexplored destinations. As this shift began, travelers started considering different countries rather than following the crowd.

There is now an appeal in discovering unexplored destinations and experiencing authentic hidden gems. Tourists have begun globetrotting to places many did not consider only a few years ago, which has made room for lesser known destinations like the Caucasus region and countries like Azerbaijan, which has a rich history and culture and its capital Baku which has emerged as a popular city break destination.

With air tickets selling more than ever to both new and established destinations, the decade also saw the expansion of low-budget airlines and the ability to fly further and faster. We've also seen that direct travel access is increasingly pertinent for travelers. People want quick access and no longer want to wait for transfers or long layovers.

Activists like Greta Thunberg are fuelling awareness of the environmental impact of travel. She has helped inspire a generation of travelers to travel responsibly, think about the planet's wellbeing, and consider the carbon footprint. Greta's flight shaming movement, "flygskam", is not only about travel accountability but also entails a reminder to travel slowly.

The number of mobile phone users in the world has reached the five billion mark this year, and the shift to mobile for travel planning continues to rise. According to Criteo's Summer Travel Report, hotels receive over 70 percent of last-minute bookings through mobile devices.

Despite its impacts, tourism brings great joy, opening the world to new cultures and adventures. As a major source of income for many nations, it additionally creates new jobs and opportunities and increases regional development. Working together with these objectives we can help create a sound and sustainable ecosystem in the travel and tourism industry.

Components of tourism

Tourism policy and planning typically involves a number of components, namely:

1. Tourism attractions and activities
2. Accommodation
3. Other tourist facilities and services
4. [Transportation facilities and services](#)
5. Other infrastructure
6. Institutional elements

COMPONENTS	ELEMENTS/SAMPLES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism attractions and facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all natural, cultural and special features of an area which attracts tourists to visit the area
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hotels and other types of facilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other tourist facilities and services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eating establishments, outlets for handicrafts and souvenir, tourist information offices, medical facilities, etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation facilities and services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • access into the country or area, internal transport, and facilities related to all modes of transportation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • water supply, power and sewage systems, telecommunications as well as drainage systems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional elements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • manpower planning and educational programs, training and development, public and private sectors investment policies and control of tourism impacts

Levels of tourism planning

Tourism policy and planning takes place on different levels. This can take a top-down approach, for example by international or national bodies, or a bottom-up approach, from a local level.

1. International tourism planning

At the international level tourism planning typically involves; international transportation services; the movement and scheduling of the tours of tourists among different countries; the development of major tourist attractions and facilities in neighboring countries and the working strategies and promotional programs of many countries.

Examples of international level participation groups include:

- **International Government and Intra-government Org's:**g. [World Tourism Organization](#); Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)
- **International Producer Organizations'**. World Travel and Tourism Council
- **International Non-Producer Organizations'**. [Tourism Concern](#); World Wildlife Fund (WWF); Greenpeace;
- **International Single Interest Organizations'**. World Congress Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children

The following organizations will consider similar issues, but not limited by the concerns or boundaries of a single nation. Decisions and influences from this level can be significant for tourism at a national and local level

- European Union
- of Caribbean States (ACS)
- The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
- The South Pacific Tourism Organization (SPTO)
- The "Tourism Program" of the Organization of American States (OAS)

2.National tourism planning

The national level of tourism planning is concerned with: tourism policy; infrastructure facilities and a physical structure plan which includes important tourist attractions, selected tourism development regions, international entry points, facilities, and services. It is also concerned with: the amount, kinds, and quality of accommodation and other required tourist facilities and services; the important tour routes in the country and their regional connections; tourism organizational entities, laws and investment policies; tourism marketing strategies and promotion; education and training programs and environmental, economic, and socio-cultural analysis.

Examples of national level participation groups include:

- **National Government and Intra-government Organizations'**- e.g. Visit Britain, Tourism New Zealand

- **National Producer Organizations'** - e.g. Visit Scotland, ABTA, The Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO)
- **National Non-Producer Organizations'** - e.g. National Trust; The British Association for Nature Conservationists
- **National Single Interest Organizations'** - e.g. The Wilderness Society; Society for the Protection of Birds

3.Regional tourism planning

Regional planning looks at aspects including; regional policy: regional entry points and transportation facilities and services; kinds of tourist attractions and their locations; the amount, kinds, and location of tourist accommodation and other tourist facilities, and services and location of tourist development areas including resort areas.

In addition, they will manage: socio-cultural, environmental, economic, and impact analysis's; education and training programs on the regional level; marketing techniques and promotion; organizational establishments, laws, regulations and investment policies and implementation methods which include project plans and regional zoning regulations.

Examples of regional level participation groups include:

- **Regional Government and Intra-government Organizations'**– g.Cariocom, Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)
- **Regional Producer Organizations'**– e.Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association
- **Regional Non-Producer Organizations'**– e.g. European Environmental Bureau (EEB), Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe
- **Regional Single Interest Organizations'** - e.g. Coast watch Europe, Climate Action Network Europe

Local tourism planning

Local level participants will consider tourism planning goals/objectives, analysis, plan preparation, outputs, outcomes, and evaluation at grass roots level.

Examples of local level participation groups include:

- **Local Government and Intra-government** Organizations'- e.g. local government involvement in leisure and tourism provision, e.g. Visit Cornwall, Tourism South East
- **Local Producer** Organizations'- e.g. local chambers of commerce and industry associations; local sporting clubs and private sport and leisure centre's
- **Local Non-Producer** Organizations'- e.g. ratepayers and resident associations,
- **Single Interest Organization** – e.g. organizations such as 'friends of a park' or a group which has been formed in order to prevent particular developments such as a hotel or airport

Types of Tourism Planning

- **Spatial Tourism Planning**
 - The space as well as the environment is scrutinized for creating good quality infrastructure. Eg. Corbett
- **Sectorial Tourism Planning**
 - Region to be developed is divided in to various broad sections called sectors.
 - Eg. South East Asia
- **Integrated Tourism Planning**
 - Parts of a tourist region are integrated so that the region becomes a hot destination
- **Complex Tourism Planning**
 - When several regions are considered for planning which are far away
 - Eg. Char dham Yatra
- **Centralised Tourism Planning**
 - Single authority, usually state or central govt, no private sector intervenes
- **Decentralised Tourism Planning**
 - Parties who are keen to develop the spot, govt do not interfere
 - But it provides financial support
 - Eg. Nedumbessary airport
- **Urban & Rural Tourism Planning**
 - Urban – modern infrastructure
 - Rural – culture, history, built from scratch.

Planning process

Planning process for tourism industry comprises the following stages:

1. Study recognition and preparation. The first stage in planning process is associated with the recognition of the need for the strategy in order to obtain and/or increase competitive advantage to contribute to long-term growth. Depending on available budget and a range of other factors, studies may be planned to be conducted on local regional or national levels.

2. Setting of objectives or goals for the strategy. Goals and objectives need to be formulated according to SMART principle, where the acronym stands for specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound.

3. Survey of existing data. The survey of existing data or secondary research can be done through analyzing relevant information available on wide range of tourism reviews websites, newspapers, magazines, books and other online and offline published materials. The types of data that need to be collected from these sources include, but not limited to patterns of tourist behaviors, availability and quality of accommodation, impacts of environmental factors, social and cultural characteristics of tourism destinations etc. Importantly, the survey of existing data should cover all three directions: the state of issues at present, projected changes in the state of issues, and outline of principles for monitoring for the future.

4. Implementation of new surveys. New surveys are conducted in order to obtain fresh data and/or fill the information gap in relation to the tourism industry. Surveys can be conducted through online or offline questionnaires or interviews. When conducting the survey it is very important to select respondents i.e. sample group members from amongst target customers for tourism destinations.

5. Analysis of secondary and primary data. In case of questionnaires, data analysis can be done through representing collected information in bar-charts, pie-charts etc. In case of interviews, on the other hand, data analysis may involve finding common patterns in responses provided sample group members and critically analyzing these patterns. In data analysis it is important for secondary and primary data to be analyzed in an integrated manner.

6. Initial policy and plan formulation. As the next stage in planning process, analysis of the entire primary and secondary information enable decision makers to develop initial policies and formulate initial plans.

7. Recommendations. A set of recommendations can be developed as a result of initial policy and initial plan formulation.

8. Implementation. Recommendations that are found as sensible and feasible by strategic level executives can be implemented into the practice.

9. Monitoring and plan reformulation. The last stage of the planning process involves monitoring the levels and nature of implementation of plans and engaging in strategy re-formulation if changes in internal and especially external environment require doing so.

Consequences of unplanned development

What can happen if a destination area does not involve itself in tourism planning'? The examples are numerous and often well-documented, especially 'as they relate to tourism's

impact on the physical environment. Some of the symptoms of a lack of tourism planning may include the following:

PHYSICAL IMPACTS- Damage or permanent alteration of the physical environment
Damage or permanent alteration of historical cultural landmarks and resources
Overcrowding, congestion
Pollution, Traffic problems.

HUMAN IMPACTS- Less accessibility to services and tourist attractions for local residents resulting in local resentment. Dislike of tourists on the part of local residents, Loss of cultural identities, Lack of education of tourism employees in skills and hospitality
Lack of awareness of the benefits of tourism to the destination area .

MARKETING IMPACTS- Failure to capitalize on new marketing opportunities · Erosion of market shares due to the actions of competitive destination area
slack of sufficient awareness in prime market
slack of a clear image of destination area in potential market
slack of cooperative advertising among individual operators. Inadequate capitalization on packaging opportunities.

ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACTS- Fragmented approach to the marketing and development of tourism, often involving "competitive" splinter group, Lack of cooperation among individual operators· Inadequate representation of the tourism industry's interests
Lack of support from local public authorities· Failure to act upon important issues, problems, and opportunities of common interest to the industry.

OTHER IMPACTS- Inadequate signage program. Lack of sufficient attractions and events
High seasonality and short lengths of stay· Poor or deteriorating quality of facilities and services
Poor or inadequate travel information services.

Although the critics of tourism as an economic activity have made much of these negatives, particularly as they relate to environmental conservation and negative cultural/social effects, the blame can more properly be attached to the lack of tourism planning than to the inherent nature of tourism itself.

