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THE ORIGINS OF TOURISM AS AN IMPORTANT SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PHENOMENON: CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL ISSUES

The beauty of natural world lies in its incredible diversity which seems to be endless. Since ancient times nature has served man, being the source of his life, and no wonder that in the earlier epochs of human history it inspired explorers, discoverers and travelers to undertake adventurous journeys to the new places to appreciate their beauty. Through many centuries these journeys, in spite of all difficulties they came across, has given birth to a modern industry called tourism. Tourism is commonly associated with the activity of visiting places for pleasure, but may also refer to the movement of people outside their home area. In today's world, tourism industry is rapidly changing and evolving field, because of its strong linkages with the related activities [1]. The desire to understand this global phenomenon better led us to consider the origins of tourism.

According to Shackley M. [2, p. 6], "in the ancient world the key motivations for travel were mainly commercial, religious, political or military, although limited amounts of travel for pleasure had been evidenced from at least Greek times". As Jayapalan N. [3, p. 8] states, "traveler of the past was a merchant, a pilgrim, a scholar in search of ancient texts, and even a curious wayfarer, looking forward to new and exciting experiences". Since the earliest times travelers made the hazardous journeys on foot, to far flung places, or rode the domesticated animals, like horses and camels. Their journeys were generally uncomfortable, exhausting and took much longer than those we make today.

In general, the history of tourism can be divided into three separate periods in the development. Following the position of Shackley M. [2, p. 7], "the first one goes from its roots in early leisure travel, which we have already considered, right through the medieval and Renaissance world to a conventionally agreed date of 1840 (in Britain), which marks the start of the railway age", despite the fact that in the whole world this happened a little bit later. The next period embraces the age of steam railroads and the

time between the two World Wars, which “witnessed the significant development of the private motor car and also of the bus and coach travel” [4, p. 26]. Furthermore, the third period of tourism history began after the World War II, when the private car became the dominant mode of transport in the international tourist system and continuous improvement in the travel technology space gave us increasingly sophisticated means of travel, which are as follows: jet airliners, turbojet-powered supersonic passenger airliner, titled “Concorde”, first flown in 1969, high-speed electric trains, hovercrafts and so on. Meanwhile, Shackley M. [2, p. 7] emphasizes that “the 1970s should be taken as a watershed in tourism history since they marked the development of the Boeing 747”. This wide-body commercial jet airliner ushered in an era of mass tourism based on all-inclusive package holidays and charter flights, primarily to the incredible destinations in the Mediterranean region and, in course of time, throughout the world”.

A more detailed chronology of the tourism development is shown in Figure 1.

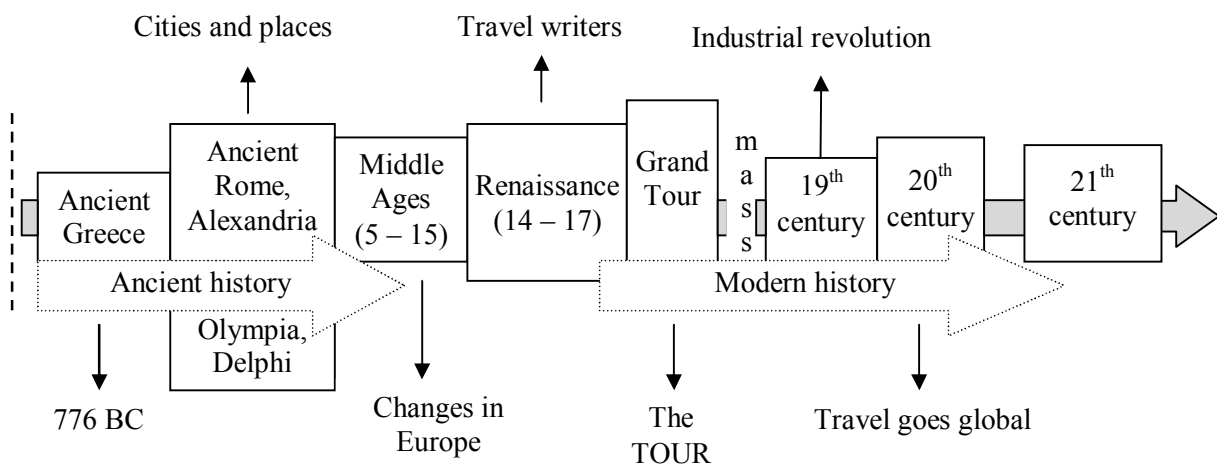


Figure 1. A timeline of the development of the world tourism history [5]

As we can observe from Figure 1, this timeline captures some of the key events, related to the main periods of the history of tourism development. For instance, “the earlier evidence for the history of travel and tourism is to be found with the focus moving towards the Greek world, around 500 BC, which was considered to be one of the most brilliant civilization in the world history, and to the Roman world between 300 BC and AD 300” [4]. Thus, the origins of travel, tourism and exploration were limited to a comparatively small geographic area on a global scale, and were related to cultural or political history. By contrast, Middle Age Period (from about AD 500 to 1400), there

was a growth of travel for religious reasons. It had become an organized phenomenon for pilgrims to visit their “holy land”, such as Muslims to Mecca, and Christians to Jerusalem and Rome.

According to Jayapalan N. [3, p. 12], “Renaissance in Italy quickly spread to other European countries during the 15th century. It attracted the European countries to come to Italy to enjoy the fruits of Renaissance”. “In the 17th century, the sons and daughters of the British aristocracy traveled through Europe for periods of time, usually 2 or 3 years, to improve their knowledge”. This was known as the Grand Tour, which became a necessary part of the training of future administrators and political leaders [6].

“Industrial Revolution Period (from about AD 1750 to 1850) in Europe created the base for mass tourism” [6]. This term is briefly used for pre-scheduled tours for groups of people who travel together with similar purposes usually under the organization of tourism professionals. Mass tourism owes its existence to mainly two specific reasons: the first reason is the development in the transportation technologies and the second one is the individual efforts of an English entrepreneur Thomas Cook, who invented the package tour [7]. Moreover, in the 19th and 20th centuries, the social, economic and technological changes have had a huge impact on tourism. Great achievements in technology made possible the invention of rapid, comfortable and relatively cheap forms of transport.

The first fifty years of the 20th century made tourism a major industry globally and a major sector in many national economies. “The emergence of the middle class in Europe along with the technological, political and social events of the day gave trust to tourism. A large number of people were moving out both for leisure and business purposes. This period saw the mass movement of people annually from their home location to another country for a temporary stay for a few days or a week [4].

In the early 1990s “aviation industry was facing high operational costs, including wage, oil prices, handling fee of Central Reservation System (CRS), landing charge of the aircrafts and advertising fee. During this period, CRS became possible for agents to book a huge inventory of tourism products, such as hotels, car rentals, cruises, rail passes, and theatre tickets from the CRS” [6]. Today most tourists can log on to the Internet and get a necessary travel information or book cheap flights, hotel rooms and

car hire through their personal computer at home. In this regard it should be emphasized that “in the 21st century tourism generates wealth and can play a significant role in the achievement of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals” [8].

Despite the growing importance of this social and economic phenomenon, there is no clear definition of its deepest essence because of its multidisciplinary nature.

“The need for an international definition of a tourist was satisfied in 1937 by a Committee of statistical experts at the League of Nations. They defined a tourist as one who travels for a period of 24 hours or more in a country other than that in which he usually resides. This definition included as “purpose of visit” those travelling for business as well as pleasure, health or family reasons. It also included cruise visitors even if they were staying less than 24 hours. It excluded persons travelling to establish a residence or to take up an occupation, or those who were travelling to stay abroad and persons who were commuters travelling to work. The definition clarified that persons who arrived at a destination for a period of less than 24 hours should be classified as excursionists. During the next 30 years the position did not alter substantially” [10].

Coming to the conclusion, it should be mentioned that today UNWTO notes that “tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. As such, tourism has implications on the economy, on the natural and built environment, on the local population at the destination and on the tourists themselves” [11]. In this regard, the following facts can appear: tourism is the movement of individuals and groups and residence in different places; movement of people is a temporary format within certain limits determined by the tourist itself and this section depends on satisfying the need for tourists and duration ranging from 24 hours or less a year; tourism is an economic phenomenon appears in tourist spending in the host country as consumer element; tourism is for any purpose except for the purpose of work.

This is particularly evident that tourism can bring many broader benefits that will contribute to the economic and social well-being of local communities as well as to individuals. From the one hand, it can be the focus of regeneration of urban and rural areas, as has been demonstrated by its success in many seaside resorts. From the other

hand, it can provide not only a catalyst for growth in a certain area, raising its profile and stabilizing outmigration, but also some opportunities for retraining for the resident workforce and help to diversify over-specialized economies, as well as to help maintain and expand underused sports and recreation facilities in urban areas.

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