

HISTORY OF CUSTOMER BEHAVIOUR IN TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY

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ABSTRACT

Customer behavior in tourism and hospitality involves understanding the decision-making process, motivations, and actions of consumers when choosing and using products and services. It is influenced by personal, psychological, social, economic, and technological factors, and businesses study it to attract and retain customers by understanding their needs, preferences, and experiences.

We do not know the name of the first tourist or the era in which the first holiday was taken. This may be because it is so difficult to define what is meant by the words ‘tourist’ and ‘holiday’. Or does it reflect the fact that chroniclers did not believe that the phenomenon of tourism was significant enough to be worth recording? Perhaps, but we know that for centuries tourism has existed in one form or another and has given us a legacy of travel writing, dating back to Roman times. It has also stimulated some of the world’s greatest literature, like Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales, for instance. Therefore, while we may talk of mass tourism as a twentiethcentury phenomenon, tourism in the broadest sense of the word, has existed for centuries. In this chapter, the authors will endeavour to address briefly the chronological development of tourist behaviour. It is difficult to understand current tourist behaviour, or predict future behaviour, unless one understands a little about the past. As we shall see, the history of tourist behaviour is a complex subject. Furthermore, there is relatively little by way of empirical data or artefacts from which we can derive a history or chronology of early tourist behaviour. Most historians of tourism have tended to focus on Europe, from the Greeks and the Romans to the railway and Thomas Cook in the UK. However, it is important to recognize that tourism has existed in other continents for centuries. Furthermore, we need to remember that there are many different types of tourism, including, for example, business tourism, health tourism, religious tourism, educational tourism, and hedonistic tourism.

Today, Europe is the most popular continent as a destination for international tourists, although it is slowly losing its position in the world tourism market to other regions, such as the Pacific Rim. It is appropriate that Europe should continue to hold this pre-eminent position, for most commentators consider it to be the birthplace of modern tourism. The development of tourism in Europe, as elsewhere, rested on two essential pre-requisites: • a desire to travel • the removal of obstacles that prevented people from taking trips. As we shall see, the desire to travel until relatively recently, was predominantly based on religious

devotion, concerns over health or on trade, rather than pleasure. The obstacles that needed to be overcome so that people could become tourists of whatever kind, were largely related to transport, both in terms of the lack of adequate roads and sea transport, and the risk of attack faced by travellers. Tourism could only begin to develop when these problems were removed or ameliorated.

The rapid growth of mass tourism in Europe since the late 1940s, has been well documented. It has been explained by the coincidence of a number of interrelated factors occurring at the same time, including:

- increases in disposable income
- advances in aircraft technology
- the greater availability of motor cars
- further increases in leisure time
- education
- the growth of tour operators and the package holiday.

The first wave of mass tourism in Europe consisted of annual migrations to the Mediterranean, in search of sun, by the residents of Northern Europe. Until recently this was largely a one-way flow, although now there is a rapid growth in outbound tourism from these Mediterranean countries, notably from Italy and Spain. Furthermore, not all Europeans have shown the same desire to visit other countries even though they can afford to, as we can see from the example of the French, who still show a preference for holidaying at home. This may reflect the variety of tourism opportunities that exist within their own country, as well as being the result of government initiatives designed to encourage people to holiday at home for economic reasons. These initiatives include the development of new purpose-built resorts on the Languedoc and Aquitaine coasts and in the French Alps.

Today many people who like to wander and explore buy these packages as per their interests, priorities, and budget (which is always pre-determined). This package designed by the tour operator includes travel (to and from/surface), accommodation, escort/guide, and so on. The person who puts together all these aspects of travel into a tour operator package is called a tour operator.

The countries of the Middle East have a long history of involvement in the tourism industry, most notably in terms of religious tourism. This region is the most important pilgrimage destination in the world for three major religions: • Muslims for whom both Mecca and Jerusalem are very sacred places; the tourist flow to Mecca is probably the largest single annual movement of tourists in the world

- the cities of Nazareth, Bethlehem, Jerusalem and Jericho, which are the most important religious cities for Christians
- Jerusalem which is the holiest city for Jews. However, it is not only religion which has brought tourists to the region.

The Middle East has also always been an important crossroads for business travellers. Some silk route caravans used to be routed through Syria and Jordan to the Mediterranean coast, for instance. Until its civil war, the Lebanon, and Beirut specifically, was one of the world's most fashionable and sophisticated tourist destinations.

There have clearly been considerable differences in the nature and volume of tourism demand between different countries and regions of the world. Some have been generators of international trips while others have generated very few such trips. Certain regions have traditionally been popular tourists destinations while others have until recently attracted relatively few tourists. There are also very different levels and patterns of domestic tourism between different countries, even within the same region of the world. For example, French people take far more domestic holidays than their neighbours in Germany

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