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INTERNATIONAL TOURISM: A THEORETICAL STUDY

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Abstract: *When we talk about international tourism, we can think of the definitions of various types of tourism, its importance for the economy, culture, or the promotion of a country. Furthermore, the history of tourism is quite interesting and holds significant importance, as traveling is a popular activity, yet not many people are familiar with it.*

• Introduction

Tourism, being such a popular activity practiced by a wide variety of people, clearly encompasses a variety of types and forms of tourism, thus accommodating everyone. Among the types of tourism, we include: recreational and leisure tourism, spa tourism, scientific tourism, sports tourism, business tourism, shopping tourism, and religious tourism.

• Results and discussions

The World Tourism Organization was the first to distinguish between domestic and international tourism. During the "UN Conference on Tourism and International Travel" held in Rome in 1963, the term "international visitor" was defined for the first time as "any person who travels to a country other than the one of residence for any purpose other than the practice of a remunerated profession in the country visited".

International tourism is monitored through an evolving system of indicators, and these are used in the following activities:

- Tourism research
- Monitoring the behavior and evolution of individual or integrated tourism metrics
- Sectorial planning at the general, regional, or local level

- Tourism territorial planning policy
- Marketing activities and campaigns
- Guiding and implementing credit policies
- Organizing professional training programs
- Monitoring the evolution of prices as well as achieving a certain level of competitiveness of tourism products.
- Evaluating and quantifying the socio-economic impacts of activities in the tourism sector on other sectors of the national economy

To calculate these indicators, we need the following sources of information:

- Registers and statistics of tourist arrivals at the border.
- Registers and statistics of accommodation capacities.
- Registers and statistics of the tourism offer by categories of enterprises.
- Results from specific surveys regarding the tourism expenditures of each consumer category.
- Results from surveys of foreign tourists at the destination.
- Results from surveys of economic agents operating in tourism.
- Population census.
- Balance of payments and the balance of inter-branch connections

There are two main categories of indicators: simple or elementary indicators, which are directly obtained from statistical series and are formulated as averages, percentage structures, frequencies, etc., and synthetic indicators, which

are based on a series of data to which more complex processing methods are applied. These synthetic indicators refer to global aspects and include the factors that generate the tourism phenomenon being studied.

Their classification is as follows:

- Main indicators – These refer directly to supply and demand and aim to track the evolution and changes in the trends of these metrics.
- Indicators of correlation between the various facets of the tourism market.
- Indicators of the direct economic effects of international tourism on the national economy as a whole or on specific sectors of activity.
- Indicators of labor force utilization that reflect the situation, distribution, and evolution of employment in specific activities and professional levels.

The evolution of international tourism is an interesting one because, over the years, international tourism has experienced both growth and economic crises. The following data will give us an idea of how international tourism has evolved on a global scale. The evolution of international tourism between 2019 and 2024 was marked by significant changes, primarily due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, followed by a gradual recovery and the emergence of new trends influenced by global events and technological advancements

In 2019, international tourism reached a record level, with over 1.4 billion international tourist arrivals, according to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), marking an 8% increase from the previous year. The factors contributing to this growth included:

- Globalization and facilitation of travel: The rise of low-cost carriers, improvements in infrastructure, and easier visa policies made travel more accessible.
- Growth of experiential tourism: Tourists were increasingly seeking authentic, local experiences rather than traditional sightseeing. This included eco-tourism, adventure tourism, and cultural immersion.
- Growth of the Asia-Pacific region: Destinations such as China, India, and Southeast Asia were becoming major tourism hubs, attracting visitors from around the world.
- Digitalization: The use of online travel agencies (OTAs), review platforms, and social networks like Instagram transformed how travel was planned and destinations were chosen.

The launch of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 led to a sudden halt in international tourism. Governments worldwide imposed lockdowns, closed borders, and introduced travel restrictions to prevent the spread of the virus. The pandemic had a devastating impact on global tourism, with arrivals dropping by more than 70% in 2020, according to UNWTO.

Key factors during this period included:

- Massive decline in travel: Air travel, cruise tourism, and even domestic tourism in many countries experienced dramatic drops.
- Health and safety concerns: Health measures such as quarantine, COVID tests, and vaccination requirements became central to international travel.
- Shift to domestic tourism: With international borders closed, many people opted for domestic travel, exploring local destinations and nature vacations.
- Adoption of virtual tourism: As physical travel became restricted, virtual tourism experiences (such as online museum tours or VR travel experiences) gained popularity.

In 2022, vaccination campaigns began to be implemented, and some border restrictions started to ease, allowing for a gradual recovery of international tourism. However, the industry was still in an adaptation phase, and the recovery rate varied widely by region and destination.

Trends in 2022 included:

- Pent-up demand and "revenge travel": As restrictions were lifted, travel demand exploded, a phenomenon described as "revenge travel," where people sought to make up for lost time and missed vacations during the pandemic. This led to a rapid recovery, especially in the summer of 2022.

- Hybrid work and remote working: With remote work becoming more common, many people extended their vacations or worked from holiday destinations, leading to an increase in long-term stays and "workations." [15]
- Safety and flexibility: Tourists started placing greater importance on destinations that offered flexible booking policies and clear health protocols. Many countries and companies focused on creating a "COVID-safe" environment.
- Focus on sustainability: The pandemic highlighted the need for more sustainable tourism practices. Destinations and tourists increasingly showed interest in eco-friendly options, and demand for sustainable and responsible tourism grew.

• Material and methods

To carry out this work, I used web sites, proven information and studies already conducted by experts in the field, as well as opinions from individuals. I quoted and explained my point of view as clearly as possible to make this work easy to understand and captivating because, as mentioned in the abstract, it is important to understand at least the basics when it comes to tourism.

• Conclusions

Thus, as we have observed, international tourism holds significant importance in the economy of many countries, especially in developing nations, as it generates the majority of the income for those countries. It is continuously developing, and the World Tourism Organization regularly updates statistics and data on its evolution, among other aspects.

Ultimately, the purpose of tourism is not limited to people traveling from one country to another; it surpasses this boundary by affecting the economy, trade, and more. We are the ones who influence this data, its evolution or devolution, growth or decline. Therefore, I propose that we remain open to new horizons when it comes to tourism.