

## **GEOGRAPHY OF TOURISM**

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### **Summary**

Tourism is one of the world's largest industries. It has now become the subject of a specific sub-discipline of geography. The field has grown substantially since the early 1970s and encompasses a range of different traditions and approaches, including regional geography, spatial analysis, humanistic geography, applied geography, behavioral geography and more recent concerns surrounding issues of identity, globalization, political economy and encounters with space.

The specific characteristics of tourism as a partially industrialized form of temporary mobility have encouraged geographers to examine issues of demand and supply for tourism with particular focus on the patterns of tourism production and consumption, the spatial fixity of tourism product and the role of seasonality in tourism. Major concerns also include the number of negative social and environmental impacts that have accompanied rapid tourism development in some locations although the economic and employment benefits of tourism are often held in a positive light.

Attempts to provide better-balanced tourism development have led to the development of tourism planning approaches by geographers who have increasingly recognized the importance of sustainable development as an overarching value system for tourism. However, implementation of such strategies has proven to be difficult. Nevertheless, the dependence of tourism on high quality environments in order to attract tourists has meant public-private sector cooperation in sustainable tourism has become more important than ever.

## 1. Introduction

Tourism is widely recognized as the world's largest industry. For the year 2000, world international tourism arrivals were estimated by the WTO to have reached 698.3 million international visitor arrivals with world tourism growing by an estimated 7.4 % (Table 1). In 2000 receipts from international tourism grew to US\$476 billion, an increase of 4.5 % over the previous year. In the same year the travel and tourism industry constituted 11 % of global GDP (US\$3,575 billion); and supported 200 million jobs worldwide; representing 8 % of total employment or 1 in every 12.4 jobs. It has been estimated that by 2011, the travel and tourism economy will constitute 11 % of global GDP; support 260,417,000 jobs worldwide, representing 9 % of total employment or 1 in 11.2 jobs. However, tourism, tourists, and their impacts, are clearly not evenly distributed. Substantial differentiation occurs at a variety of international, regional and local scales. The Asia-Pacific region has been the fastest growing area for international travel since the early 1980s although developed regions, such as Europe, still dominate international tourist arrivals. Geographers have sought to understand these spatial and temporal differences as well as the associated economic, political, social and environmental dimensions of the impacts associated with tourism. Because of these tourism has been “discovered” by geographers and other social scientists in the late 1980s and 1990s. Tourism is utilized by government to respond to the effects of global economic restructuring and increasing concerns over conserving the environment.

Years	Total (Thousands)	% change over previous year
1950	25 282	-
1960	69 320	10.6
1965	112 863	7.9
1970	165 787	15.5
1975	222 290	8.1
1980	286 249	1.1
1985	329 538	3.3
1990	459 212	6.6
1995	561 027	2.8
2000	698 300	7.4
2010	1,006 400	
2020	1 561 100	

\* WTO forecasts as of 2001

Table 1: International tourist arrivals and WTO forecasts 1950-2020

## 2. Defining Tourism

One of the key issues associated with the study of tourism is the difficulty of defining the field of enquiry and the extent of overlap with other areas of analysis. Tourism is a form of leisure-oriented temporary mobility with both spatial and temporal dimensions. Temporally tourism is usually defined technically in relation to length of time away

from home environment, while some definitions also incorporate a spatial or distance function in terms of distance from the home environment. The international standard definition of tourism is that of the WTO which states that tourism comprises “the activities of a person traveling outside his or her usual environment for less than a specified period of time and whose main purpose of travel is other than the exercise of an activity remunerated from the place visited”: where “usual environment” is intended to exclude trips within the areas of usual residence and also frequent and regular trips between the domicile and the workplace and other community trips of a routine character; where “less than a specified period of time” is intended to exclude long-term migration; and “exercise of an activity remunerated from the place visited” is intended to exclude only migration for temporary work.

The WTO recommended that an international tourist be defined as “a visitor who travels to a country other than that in which he/she has his/her usual residence for at least one night but not more than one year, and whose main purpose of visit is other than the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the country visited”; and that an international excursionist, for example cruise ship visitors, be defined as “a visitor residing in a country who travels the same day to a country other than which he/she has his/her usual environment for less than 24 hours without spending the night in the country visited and whose main purpose of visit is other than the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the country visited”. Similar definitions were also developed for domestic tourists, with domestic tourists having a time limit of “not more than six months.” Such definitions are important as they serve to distinguish tourism activity from other forms of temporary mobility such as migration. However, it should be noted that there are a number of forms of temporary mobility such as travel for education, working holidays, and short-term work visas which share a number of characteristics with tourism.

Given changes in transport technology, same-day travel is also becoming increasingly important to some countries. Therefore there is increasing international agreement that “tourism” also refers to all activities of visitors, including both overnight and same-day visitors. Such definitional issues are significant because of the potential impact of tourists and daytrippers/excursionists, who are also often described as recreationists. Tourism, recreation and leisure are generally seen as a series of interrelated and overlapping concepts. The concept of leisure is generally used as a period of time, activity or state of mind in which choice is the dominant feature; in this sense leisure is a form of “free time” for an individual; as an objective view in which leisure is perceived as the opposite of work and is defined as non-work or residual time; and from a subjective view which emphasizes leisure as a qualitative concept in which leisure activities takes on a meaning only within the context of individual perceptions and belief systems and can therefore occur at any time in any setting.

Figure 1 illustrates the relationships between leisure, recreation and tourism which indicate the value of viewing tourism and recreation as part of a wider concept of leisure. Work is differentiated from leisure with there being two main realms of overlap: first, business travel, which is seen as a work oriented form of tourism in order to differentiate it from leisure based travel; second, serious leisure, which refers to the breakdown between leisure and work pursuits and the development of leisure career

paths with respect to hobbies and interests. Such differentiation between activities is important for statistical as well as conceptual purposes.

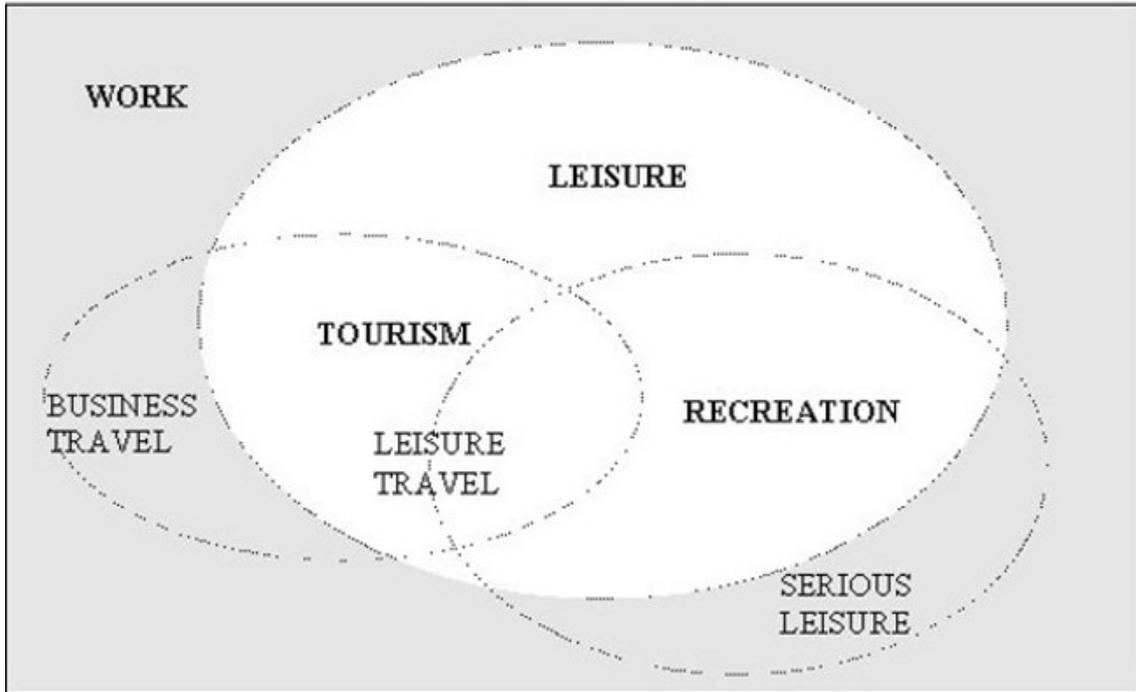


Figure 1: Relationships between leisure, recreation and tourism

Traditionally, tourism was regarded as a commercial economic phenomenon rooted in the private domain. In contrast, recreation and leisure was viewed as a social and resource concern rooted in the public domain. Outdoor recreation studies have historically focused on public-sector (i.e. community and land management agencies) concerns, such as wilderness management, social carrying capacity, and non-market valuation of recreation experiences. In contrast, tourism tended to have a more applied industrial orientation which concentrated on traditional private-sector (i.e. tourism industry) concerns, such as the economic impacts of travel expenditures, travel patterns and tourist demands, and advertising and marketing. Although the division between public and private activities may have held relatively true from the end of the post-Second World War period through to the early 1980s, in recent years the division between public and private sector activities has been substantially eroded in western countries with a corresponding erosion of technical boundaries. The distinction between tourism and recreation, and other forms of temporary mobility such as excursions, travel to second homes, seasonal travel and work or study abroad, may therefore be best seen as related to differences in temporary mobility in time (how long away from the home environment) and space (how far away from the home environment has a person traveled). (See Figure 2). Outdoor recreation and tourist resources should therefore be seen as complimentary contexts and resources for leisure experiences which differ more according to the home environment of the user and individual definitions of activities rather than intrinsic differences in the nature of the resources or the activities undertaken.

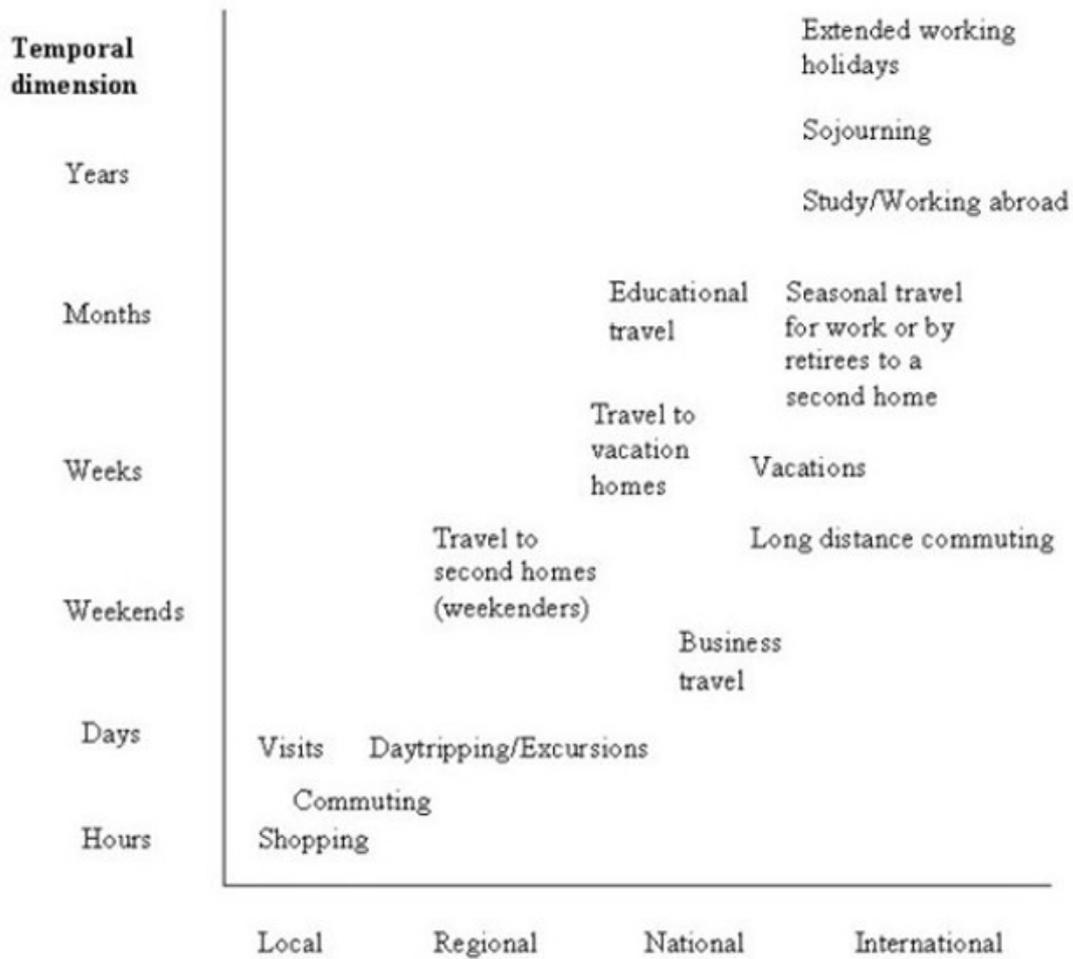


Figure 2: Temporary mobility in space and time

### 3. The Development of the Geography of Tourism

Tourism has been the direct subject of geographical analysis since the 1920s and has developed into a significant area of applied human geography as well as other social scientific fields. In that time methodologies and philosophies have changed, as has the subject matter. Building on initial research on tourism in American and German economic geography in the 1920s and 1930s, research was primarily undertaken in the post-war period on the economic impact of tourism in both a regional destination setting and on travel routes. Research on issues of seasonality and travel motivations was already being undertaken by 1947. The geography of recreation and tourism was of sufficient profile in the discipline to warrant a chapter in an overview text on the state of geography in the United States in the 1950s. In Britain significant research was undertaken pre- and post- Second World War on the development of British seaside resorts which was also influential in the European context. However, little further direct research was undertaken on tourism and recreation in the United Kingdom until the 1960s. In Canada over the same period substantive geographical research on tourism was primarily focused work on cottaging which laid the foundation for later research on the geography of second home development at an international level, particularly in

Scandinavia which has a long-standing tradition of second home ownership and access.

In the 1960s research started to accelerate with a major growth in publications on tourism and recreation in the 1970s. During the 1960s several influential reviews were undertaken of the geography of tourism and recreation in Anglo-American geography, while a substantive contribution to the development of the area also came from regional sciences, economic geography and migration studies. French geography also has a strong tradition of research on tourism and recreation that was, arguably, much further advanced in the 1960s and 1970s in terms of both theoretical development and extent of publication than the Anglo-American tradition. One reason for this advanced interest possibly lay in the long recognition of tourism as a factor in the economic development of French alpine regions and its impact on the cultural and physical landscape. In addition, the growth of tourism in the Mediterranean coast provided a basis for research on coastal resort development while the significance of second homes for tourism and leisure also has a strong research tradition.

During the 1970s and early 1980s, a number of influential texts and monographs appeared in the geography literature providing significant impetus to research. The 1970s and 1980s also witnessed the development of several journals solely devoted to the study of tourism. However, it was from the late 1980s onwards that the study of the geography of tourism began to enter a rapid phase of development in which it is still engaged. Several reasons can be given for this growth: first, recognition of the economic importance of tourism by government and industry; second, as a result of recognition increasing funding for university courses in tourism and, to a lesser extent, research monies for tourism research; three, greater recognition by government, industry and the public that tourism development may have substantial positive and negative impacts which require effective management and planning; four, increased use of tourism as a mechanism for regional development; five, increased recognition in the social sciences overall, of the importance of circulation and mobility, of which tourism is one of the primary forms, as central theoretical and applied concepts in understanding development issues.

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### **Biographical Sketch**

**Prof. Michael Hall:** At the time of writing Michael Hall was Professor and Head of the Department of Tourism at the University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand, and Honorary Professor in the Department of Marketing, Stirling University, Scotland.

Other positions include Chairperson of the International Geographical Union Study Group on Tourism, Leisure and Global Change (2000-2004) and the Study Group on the Geography of Sustainable Tourism (1998-2000) and co-editor of the journal *Current Issues in Tourism*.

He received his doctoral degree from the University of Western Australia and his Masters from the University of Waterloo in Canada. Michael has written widely on various aspects of tourism, leisure, geography, environmental history and heritage and has authored, co-authored or edited over 30 books and monographs as well as numerous journal articles and book chapters.

Current research interests concentrate on issues of tourism and regional development, particularly in peripheral areas, tourism SMEs and entrepreneurship, gastronomy, and the production and consumption of cool climate wine and horticultural products, including walnuts, herbs and fruit trees.