

# THE SUBSTANTATIVE KNOWLEDGE BASE FOR TRAVEL AND TOURISM:

## A SYSTEMS MODEL

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Strategies for education and professional preparation in travel and tourism have generally been based in traditional tourism-related disciplines providing somewhat narrow perspectives of the tourism phenomenon. The need exists for models that provide comprehensive, holistic perspectives of travel and tourism. This paper presents one such systems model showing that travel and tourism is both a complex social phenomenon and also an industry or application area. The model may provide a solid foundation (philosophy) for study and managerial practice in travel and tourism.

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### Introduction

Mass domestic and international travel has nurtured and is nurtured by a mass industry in service to the needs, wants and desires of people living away from their home quarters. Depending on sources and statistics, some say the travel industry is the world's largest. It has also been shown to be a substantial industry in terms of employment and sales in the United States as well accounting for approximately 12% of our Nation's GNP and 14% of the civilian labor force in 1988 (Waters, 1990).

Such claims notwithstanding, there is little doubt that the travel and tourism industry, considered an export in terms of economic development, generates income and sales taxes, sales receipts, jobs, and other "spill-ins" for local, regional and national economic and social systems alike. Furthermore, the enormous size and comprehensiveness of the industry with the many positive and negative potentialities associated with tourism development, have created many conflicting forces and a complex management milieu with which tourism developers, entrepreneurs, civic leaders, educators and tourism professionals at all levels must deal. It is recognized that tourism development which maximizes economic and social well-being, provides for the proper management and tourism resources, and promotes long-term profitability to owners and managers requires a team of skilled professionals to plan, organize and manage the complex tourism systems.

In response to these needs, there has been an increase in interest in travel and tourism professional education in the United States, Canada, and elsewhere. Generally, most of the educational offerings that have evolved in tourism are included as single courses or concentrations in traditional business, geography/regional planning, recreation/leisure studies, hotel, programs have contributed a great deal to professionalism in and forest/recreation resource management programs. These

programs have contributed a great deal to professionalism in travel and tourism; many of the students who have experienced these programs now work in the travel and tourism industry. However, one drawback with these types of programs is that there remains a strong bias in favor of the traditional curriculum at the expense of travel and tourism core content areas (cf. Hawkins and Hunt, 1988). Moreover, few holistic tourism curriculum models exist and concerns are often raised about what core courses to offer, where to "house" the program, the appropriate mix of general education and professional courses, appropriate electives, and so on.

For tourism professionals and travel resource managers in the field, the lineage of thought and philosophy from this current educational approach to tourism sometimes leaves them ill prepared to cope with the comprehensiveness and systemic nature of the tourism phenomenon. Many have understandably limited views of tourism; they do not comprehend the totality of the tourism phenomenon and the many positive as well as negative impacts of tourism. The hotelier does not care to ask how the regional park may relate to his business; the forest manager does not seem to understand how the travel agent or tour packager relates to the efficacy of the resource base and management practice. The need exists for comprehensive, holistic models to provide direction for education, practice, and research in travel and tourism.

This paper deals with these issues by providing a broad systems model of the substantive knowledge base for travel and tourism. The model conceptually structures the total tourism system showing the interrelationships among traditional disciplinary content areas related to the phenomenon.

### The Model

The model recognizes that travel and tourism is both a phenomenon and an industry (cf. Hawkins and Hunt, 1988; Riegel, 1987).

### The Phenomenon of Tourism

The phenomenon of tourism creates the need for the travel and tourism industry. The tourism phenomenon is comprised of three highly interrelated analytical components: people (demand), place (supply), and activity (what). These components are outlined in Figure 1.

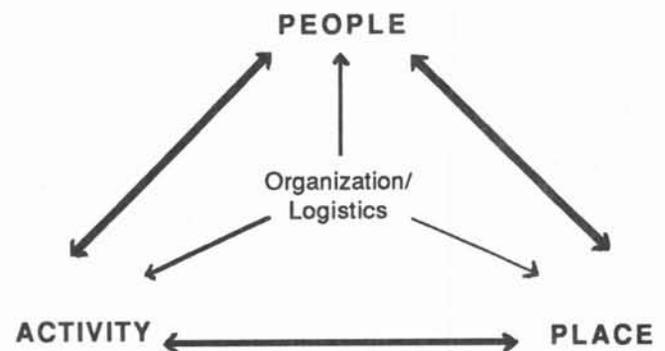


Figure 1. Basic systems model.

<sup>1/</sup> The contributions of Neal Cheek and others to the basic analytical framework utilized in this paper are acknowledged.

Knowledge bases related to the "people" component would involve a behavioral orientation focusing on "who" is participating in travel/tourism and the functions (benefits) of tourism to the participants. Three appropriate levels of analysis would involve the individual, the group and the collective (society) at large. At the individual level, the focus is on the "subjective" tourism experience. Some areas of study are: needs/wants/expectations in tourism; leisure attitudes and orientations; psychological states and tourism; psychological outcomes/benefits of travel; motivations for tourism behavior; identify formation/development through tourism; and sex, age, personality, and life-cycle differences in tourism styles. A shift in analysis to the social group level would involve the role of travel behavior as related to primary association bonding and bond maintenance, type of social group and travel choices, tourism decision processes, and the primary group as a deterministic medium for socially constructed motives for travel and regularities in travel behavior. At the collective or societal level, appropriate areas of study would involve the history of travel/tourism; the social and economic impacts of travel; aggregated demand determinants of travel; the study of social circles, occupational groups, class structure and ethno-religious groupings as social structural contexts for travel motives; and the study of the latent functions of tourism/leisure/sport for society including collective identity (solidarity) and others.

The "place" component of the tourism phenomenon involves an analytical approach to the setting where tourism activity occurs including physical, cultural and geographical analysis. Some substantive knowledge areas would involve: the social definition of tourism places (establishment of normative order); image analysis; locational tendencies/spatial distribution of tourism places; ecological/physical impacts of tourism activity; tourist attractions and their classification (historic, memorial, cultural, natural); actual use history of places; ownership/management patterns; and the functions of tourism places involving bonding, solidarity, and fantasy concerns.

The "activity" or participation component is concerned with what tourism participants do in tourism settings. Some content areas would involve the incidence and prevalence of tourist activities across populations/over time (patterns of participation); how patterns emerge, change, stabilize over time; activity and place dependency or non-dependency; activity and social group dependency; activity specialization (travel careers); activity substitutability; structural properties of tourism activities; and the bundling (packaging) of activities and places.

### The Travel and Tourism Industry

The broad systems focus also presents travel and tourism as an industry or application area. The application area is called the "organization/logistics" component (Figure 1). This component ties the three primary components (tourist-setting-activity) together as it provides formally organized tourism services to the traveling/touring public. The organization/logistics component is comprised of three interrelated sub-components: (1) distribution systems (travel suppliers and intermediaries), (2) management/administration of the distribution systems, and (3) regulation and support of the components (Figure 2).

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### (1) Distribution Systems (tourism industry/application area)

#### Primary Suppliers

Carriers  
Accommodations/food service  
Attractions/entertainment/destinations

#### Intermediaries

Tour operators/wholesalers  
Meetings/conventions planning  
Retail travel agency system

### (2) Management/Administration of the Distribution Systems

### (3) Regulation/Support of the Distribution System

Tourism PublicPolicy Issues  
Public/Private Sector Support

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Figure 2. Organization/logistics subcomponents.

### Distribution Systems

Travel distribution systems involve both formally organized travel suppliers and travel intermediaries. Travel suppliers can be further subdivided into carriers, accommodations/food service, and attractions/entertainment. Emphasis on the carriers would involve air, rail and sea transportation as well as private car, motorcoach and car rental services. Emphasis on accommodations/food service would involve study of hotels, motels, condos, campgrounds, resorts, restaurants, and cafeterias. Attractions/entertainment would involve study of contrived attractions of all sorts, forests, parks, lake shores, sea shores, entertainment and planned tourism destinations overall.

Travel intermediaries involve all the various producers, operators and agents in the travel and tourism industry. Travel intermediaries connect the tourist with the primary suppliers. Emphasis would be placed on the study of tour operators/wholesalers, incentive travel companies, meeting/convention planning, and the retail travel agency system overall. The distribution systems sub-components (primary suppliers and intermediaries) provide the range of services necessary for the tourism experience including trip planning, travel to, on site and travel home components.

### Management/Administration of the Distribution Systems

Management and administration of the suppliers and intermediaries involves all the activities for the daily, weekly, and long-term survival of these travel/tourism businesses and organizations. This would involve all normal business functions including sales, accounting, personnel, marketing, promotion, finance/budgeting, and overall management of the public and private organizations in the tourism industry. Although many of these functions are universal, it is important to recognize the unique management circumstances involved in the organizational systems of the wide array of tourism suppliers and travel intermediaries that exist. Although they both must consider people, their activities and settings (destinations), the state park and the travel agency each faces certain unique management challenges. The travel agency manager must monitor the challenges of automation, agency to agency competition, and employee motivation. The state park manager, somewhat insulated from the need to maintain profits,

must face equally complex management issues such as establishing appropriate management objectives, selection of appropriate management tools, carrying capacity considerations, crowding and overuse issues, multiple-use, depreciative behavior, ORV use/conflict, and others.

### **Regulation/Support of the Distribution Systems**

The final organization/logistics sub-component involves regulation and support of the travel suppliers and intermediaries. This sub-component is primarily concerned with tourism public policy issues (allocation/regulation issues) that cut-across any particular tourism business or natural resource management agency. The tourism public policy framework includes a complex mixture of public, quasi-public and private sector organizations involved with the allocation and regulation of tourism business, tourism resources, and the movement of people. Emphasis would be placed on the politics of the provision of "public goods" (roads, harbors, airports, forests, parks, museums, water/sewage); the management/regulation of common property resources and tourism "assets"; positive and negative externalities of tourism development; safety, health, sanitation, building, zoning codes and regulations; land use planning, master planning and project planning of tourism concerns by general purpose governmental units; air transport agreements; visa, passport, customs regulations; regulatory agencies (FAA, ICC, etc.); destination marketing organizations (national, state, local); the role of the Airlines Reporting Corporation (ARC); travel/tourism trade associations; and the functions of visitor and convention bureaus and chambers of commerce.

Public/private sector support would involve the unique promotional, educational and service roles of travel writers, guides and maps, travel publications, travel trade associations, travel finance and insurance businesses, and destination marketing organizations as they aid and abet the traveler and the travel business.

### **Conclusion**

Travel and Tourism is an interconnected phenomenon and industry requiring skilled professionals in the planning, organization, and overall management of tourism businesses and travel resources. Many of these professionals have been trained in traditional travel-related disciplines such as hospitality, geography, recreation and parks and others. Oftentimes, the focus in these programs is understandably a somewhat narrow "product" or "functional" one leaving the student without a broad, more liberating orientation to the total travel and tourism system. Presented in this paper is a broad, systems model of one approach to the substantive knowledge base for travel and tourism. The model explains the three primary analytical components of tourism involving people, place and activity. The organization/logistics component (travel suppliers and intermediaries) brings the three primary components together as it provides for a wide range of travel and tourism related services. The model then illuminates in preliminary fashion the importance of basic business skills and role of the public policy framework for tourism allocation and regulation decisions. Overall, the model shows that travel and tourism may represent a discrete body of knowledge that can be codified and communicated.

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