Department of Statistics and TSA

Summary

UNWTO Project on the Dissemination of International Recommendations on Tourism Statistics & Tourism Satellite Account

The Project represents an initiative by the UNWTO Department of Statistics and Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) as part of its strategic endeavour towards not only developing national statistics for improved international comparability and propelling TSA, but also towards stimulating the macroeconomic analysis of tourism. The recent enactment of the International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008 (IRTS 2008) and the Tourism Satellite Account: Recommended Methodological Framework 2008 (TSA:RMF 2008) form the only international recommendations on tourism statistics and, therefore, the pillars for the measurement of tourism’s economic contribution. Consequently, there exists now the need to communicate this important achievement, as well its contextualization within the striving for future improvement of tourism statistics and tourism understanding.

This Project proposes the design of specific material in order to disseminate the official recommendations on tourism statistics and TSA to different groups of prospective users. In a sense, it concerns going beyond the mere implementation of the Recommendations to focus on their understanding and utilization. People representing the multi-stakeholder approach to tourism advocated by the UNWTO must be informed of (a) the new International Recommendations, (b) their importance for consolidating the field, and (c) the prospects they bring forth.

The intentions underlying this Project are the following:

1. To provide stakeholders and persons interested in tourism with official documentation that draw attention to the essential points covered in the IRTS2008, TSA: RMF2008 and other relevant publications relating to tourism.
2. To raise awareness of the UNWTO as a coordinating institution working to foster the development of national Systems of Tourism Statistics (STS), the international comparability of tourism statistics and the macroeconomic analysis of tourism. Its roles in this context include: (a) providing guidance for the development of a national STS and TSA; (b) protecting the TSA brand; and (c) conveying its separate role from commercial consultancy bodies.
3. To overcome constraints on the public and private promotion of tourism, heighten the discourse on tourism analysis, and stimulate enthusiasm and further thinking into tourism research and policy.

The current context in which the IRTS 2008 and the TSA: RMF2008 were produced plays a large role in the approach used for dissemination. On the one hand, tourism has

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clearly gained economic importance, media coverage and policy attention. Based on the two International Recommendations, the Statistical Capacity Building Programmes have been initiated in several countries, which eventually will yield increasing amounts of data, and which in turn opens many possibilities for interesting future research. On the other hand, not many people know what tourism is nor where to find information on official developments in the field. Research is held back by misconceptions, its weaknesses in adjacent research areas, and the fact that developing basic statistics and TSA constitute both long term projects. Nevertheless, many countries are seeking technical guidance from the UNWTO to improve their tourism statistics and there is a large yet untapped group of researchers gaining interest in tourism statistics and analysis in addition to the many public administrations. Two important considerations that this Project must make relates to the management of expectations created by the recent developments, and the many commercial institutions keen on profiting from, not always sincere, reference to the International Recommendations.

Hence, the Project proposes the design of specific material in order to disseminate the official recommendations on tourism statistics (the IRTS2008), TSA (TSA:RMF2008) and other relevant publications to different groups of users: (a) students, (b) researchers and consultants, (c) policy makers, and (d) the business community. In order to cater to their specific interests, needs and expectations, two customized applications will be made for each specified group:

1. A lecture guide (Lecture Guide for Understanding Tourism and the Measurement of its Economic Contribution), useful for thorough individual reading and reference; and
2. A PowerPoint presentation, useful as a primary communication device that enables reaching a wide audience at once and interactively.

These documents will cover the essential concepts, definitions and other elements that allow for the procurement of data on tourism (as defined by the activity of overnight and same-day visitors) and its analysis. At the same time, each lecture guide will function as a preliminary reading list of the main contributions on tourism, and will include a glossary on definitions and technical issues. As the intended audiences vary in their tourism experience, it must be possible to incorporate differing degrees of technicalities into the main text and construct glossaries of differing depth. Each manual and PPT should cover: (a) a background of the developments in tourism statistics, (b) the essentials that each group should know about tourism, and (c) current initiatives taken by the UNWTO. Both documents will be downloadable free of charge from the organization’s website.

Collaboration will be sought with experts and representatives from the different user groups. Not only will these individuals provide their opinion and suggestions on the dissemination efforts, they also constitute an important dissemination channel in themselves.