CONCLUSIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON NEW TECHNOLOGIES APPLIED TO TOURISM

We can refer to new technologies as the fourth industrial revolution. In 1784 we witnessed the 1st revolution with the arrival of steam power and mechanical production; in 1870 the 2nd revolution brought the division of labour, electricity and mass production; and in the 1970s the 3rd revolution introduced us to electronics, information technology (IT) and automated production.

This fourth revolution is that of digitization, Big Data, virtual reality, and the Internet of things (IoT). The interaction of technologies with the value chain of the tourism sector:

- Tourism resources (natural and cultural heritage, gastronomy, events, and sports activities)
- Infrastructures (transport, ICT, energy, health, safety & security)
- Marketing and sales (physical and online travel agencies, tour operators, reservation centres, meta-search engines / intermediaries)
- Tourism services (accommodation and food service, entertainment, transport, information)

At present, 85% of people who travel do so with a mobile device. We spend 4 to 5 hours a day on mobile phones and 42% of mobile users use it to plan or book trips. We share our experiences in real time, TripAdvisor has 150 million users and 97% of millennials share travel photos.

It would seem that the “non-digital” future does not exist. The 4th revolution is rapidly changing the tourism sector and putting consumers in the driver’s seat and imposing their criteria; they have stopped adapting to existing offerings and instead are demanding products that meet their specific tastes and needs. We are, therefore, faced with better-informed consumers, with more power and with higher expectations in relation to what they expect from providers.

Emerging destinations are competing with traditional destinations and small actors are competing with big operators.

The three key factors that are shaping the evolution of markets and that determine the strategies to be applied are: globalization and deregulation processes applied in many geopolitical spaces; information and communication technologies; and sustainability.
Let us cite five important aspects that tourism actors must face in relation to new technologies:

1. Financing technology and innovation while investing in human capital

2. Promoting smooth and positive interaction between visitors and destination residents

3. Strengthening public-private partnerships with key players in the area of technology in relation to the tourism sector

4. Better understanding the benefits of technology in key aspects such as safety & security, crisis management and the management of sustainability, competitiveness, and quality

5. Ensuring that new business models based on digital platforms are developed on the basis of fair and orderly competition, protecting consumers and ensuring safety standards and coexistence with resident communities, as well as compliance with tax or other obligations. In short, these models are to be analysed from the perspective of a business model, when there is an economic transaction for a service rendered, and not necessarily as a social phenomenon. The UNWTO is ready to facilitate dialogue between the parties to ensure a proper fit of these models in the system.

What we already know as smart tourism is not a trend; it is a reality of the present and the future of tourism. The processing and management of Big Data by smart destinations helps to enrich the visitor experience and compete more effectively.

Access to more and more information about the tastes and activities of visitors at destinations, recognizing trends in the seasonality of demand and other key factors of tourist behaviour becomes a fundamental piece in the development of product-linked strategies.