Technical Note

THE 12TH UNWTO ASIA/PACIFIC EXECUTIVE TRAINING PROGRAM ON TOURISM POLICY AND STRATEGY

Tourism and Technology

19 March – 22 March 2018
Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala India

Regional Programme for Asia and the Pacific
World Tourism Organization

1. Background

Since 2006, the UNWTO has convened the Asia and the Pacific Executive Training Program on Tourism Policy and Strategy annually. This Executive Training Programme is the only programme of its kind in the region and is renowned for its stimulating content and thought-provoking discussions. The theme and subject of the Programme changes each year and has historically had far-reaching impacts both for the host destination and the attendees.

The delegates who attend the Executive Training Programme are high-level officials within their respective governments across the Asia and the Pacific region. Through a series of lectures, group discussions, debates, presentations and technical tours, the Training Programme provides a welcoming forum in which public sector tourism executives gain a better understanding of the latest trends in tourism management. It also provides a platform for sharing knowledge and experience, to learn of successful practices in policy and strategy formulation and implementation. The Training Programme gives participants the opportunity to improve their strategic tourism management skills and, through a newfound network of regional contacts, continue to develop these skills going forward.

Attending the Executive Training Programme is the opportune chance to learn about the most important issues in the tourism industry and engage with other high-level officials while enjoying the beauty of Kerala.

2. Context

For almost seven decades now, tourism has experienced continued growth and deepening diversification to become one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world. Despite occasional shocks, over time, the sector's strength and resilience is evident. As a global export, the travel and tourism industry ranks fifth after fuels, chemicals, food and automotive products, while ranking first in many developing countries. International tourism now accounts for 29 percent of the world's exports of services and six percent of all exports of goods and services.

According to UNWTO data global international tourist arrivals have increased from 25 million in 1950 to just over 1.3 billion in 2017. There was a 7% growth in arrival numbers in 2017 as compared to 2016. This is well above the sustained and consistent trend of 4% or higher growth since 2010 and represents the strongest results in seven years. By 2030, the UNWTO projects continued steady growth with over 1.8 billion international tourism arrivals.

Arrivals to the Asia and the Pacific region were up 6% with 324 million international tourist arrivals recorded in 2017. Arrivals grew 10% in South Asia, 8% in South-East Asia, 7% in Oceania and 3% in North-East Asia as compared to 2016.

International tourism receipts earned by destinations worldwide were US$2 billion in 1950 and are expected to hover around US$1.3 trillion in 2017 when the UNWTO reports final results in May 2018. Roughly 25% of global tourism receipts benefit countries in the Asia and the Pacific region. Destinations earn the bulk of this money from visitor expenditures on accommodation, food and drink, entertainment, shopping and other services and goods.

One of the reasons for the continued growth and success of tourism is the advent of technology which has changed the way in which the travel and tourism sector conducts its business. More than ever, the tourism industry is reliant upon technology to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of marketing and operations of both public institutions and private companies.

Technology is enhancing the travel experience by providing customers with access to a wealth of information and knowledge before and during their journey. Over the past twenty years, the digital world has expanded exponentially with the emergence of mobile applications and social media, which have brought about significant changes in the way consumers behave and services are delivered. Social media is emboldening visitors and guests to express their candid opinions and impressions with a wider audience, which in turn is driving destinations and businesses to improve the quality and value of their product offerings. It is also empowering people to share their stories and photos with their friends and family during and after their trip.

A third phase of change is emerging in which a combination of disruptive new technologies and applications will change the way people work and play, including their interaction with friends, family, businesses and tourism destinations. This new wave of technology will include wearable technology, big data, driverless cars, robotic devices, artificial intelligence, 3D printing, mobile payment applications, wireless optimal networking, the 'Internet of Me', gesture technology, voice recognition and instant and efficient mobile translation.

These technology-based applications pose major challenges to the traditional ways of doing business and provide exciting opportunities for those willing and able to adapt and innovate. One example of innovation that is bringing about a fundamental shift in consumer behaviour is new platform tourism services or the 'sharing economy'. This concept is already well established, and will potentially have a much broader impact on the way in which society purchases and owns goods and services that will increasingly be available on a shared basis.

At the same time that the aforementioned digital technology revolution takes place, there are continued advances in engineering technology and material science that will enhance ground and air transport systems and advances in speed, economy, efficiency and comfort of travel.

Access to technology is allowing emerging destinations and small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to compete on a level playing field with their larger and well-endowed competitors. Tourism is one of the sectors most impacted by the digital revolution and tourism SMEs are particularly challenged to keep up with the rapid evolution of digital tools and online marketing and distribution channels. In many cases, SMEs lack technological knowledge, funds and e-skills. In order to nurture the continued growth and development of SMEs, policymakers must create an enabling environment that boosts the capacity of tourism businesses to engage in the knowledge economy and respond to new consumer demands. This digital transformation, if fully embraced, will improve the overall competitiveness of tourism destinations across Asia and the Pacific.

While technology is disrupting the entire travel and tourism value chain, it is also driving innovation, entrepreneurship and opportunities. Experts suggest that these changes in the tourism landscape due to enhancements in technology will continue over the coming decades and it is therefore imperative that destinations adapt.

3. Training Programme Objective

The overall theme for the 12th iteration of the UNWTO Asia/Pacific Executive Training Programme is <u>Tourism and Technology</u>, which as previously described is a pressing topic for destinations across the globe.

The programme is specifically designed to support tourism policy makers and managers. It aims to strengthen effective and responsive policies and strategies that in turn must adapt to changing priorities and concerns at the national and destination levels.

The overall objectives of the training programme are to deepen participants' understanding of how to maximize the use of technology for the benefit of tourism with a focus on the following areas:

- How to inform national tourism authorities of the importance of technology to support management of the unprecedented growth of sector growth in the region;
- How to prepare national tourism authorities for the continued expansion of technology as a tool for destination development, management and innovation;
- How technology can support inclusive and sustainable growth of tourism in the region;
- How technology and social media can contribute to destination marketing and quality assurance; and
- How policy level decisions can help improve the effectiveness of the use of technology to ensure the competitiveness and sustainability of a tourism destination.

Moreover, the training program strives to enable UNWTO's Asia and the Pacific Member Countries to share successful tourism good practices in the use of technology. The ultimate aim is to strengthen the capacity of destinations at the regional, sub-regional, national and destination levels.

4. Executive Training Programme Overview

The 2018 Asia/Pacific Executive Training Programme will kick off on 19 March with the Opening Ceremony, Forum on Tourism and Technology, and Country presentations and discussions. The opening day for both the morning and afternoon sessions may be open to local participants in Kerala which will broaden the discussion. During the Country presentations segment, participants will provide an overview of their respective policies and practices as they relate to tourism and technology. These country presentations will detail national policies and strategies to utilize technology to augment marketing efforts, improve sustainability measures, and spur innovation.

Day two of the Training Programme (March 20) will begin with a session called "Good Practice in Destination Management and Operation through the Application of Transformative Technological Solutions." This session will examine the cases of tourism and hospitality companies that have been successful in adopting emerging technological developments and have as a result produced new business models. The session will also discuss how government organizations can

encourage and manage tourism growth using technology. After each of these sessions, delegates will break into small group discussions to further debate the concepts presented and subsequently report on the insights they have gained as a group.

On March 31, the third day of the Training Programme, keynote presentations by dedicated experts will cover good practice in tourism and technology and examine how the visitor experience is optimized and a new level of appreciation for the destination achieved. These keynote presentations will again be followed by break-out session during which participants will discuss the impact of tourism and technology on their respective destinations and future considerations.

The last day of the Training Programme on March 22 will consist of a Technical Tour organized by Kerala Tourism. This tour and other social events are a wonderful opportunity for delegates to experience the cultural richness of the state of Kerala and network with tourism leaders across Asia and the Pacific region.