

UNCTAD and Tourism

«International efforts to build sustainable, locally rooted tourism industries should be supported, since they can play a crucial role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and in building sustainable sources of income for the vulnerable countries of our global community. UNCTAD will continue to support the sustainable development of tourism in developing countries, and particularly the least developed countries, with a view to broadening the range of available economic opportunities.»

Dr. Supachai Panitchpakdi
UNCTAD Secretary-General

In June 2003, UNCTAD established the Task Force on Sustainable Tourism for Development. The Task Force aims at designing and implementing an UNCTAD-wide integrated programme on tourism as a tool for development, with a special focus on the needs of LDCs. UNCTAD's mandate in tourism for development comes from:

- the São Paulo Consensus - UNCTAD XI (2004)
- the Plan of Action adopted by the Third UN Conference on the LDCs (Brussels, 2001)
- the UNCTAD X Plan of Action (Bangkok, 2000)

The e-Tourism Initiative is the ICT part of the Task Force and its philosophy is derived from plans of action listed above.

The UNCTAD e-Tourism Initiative in a nutshell

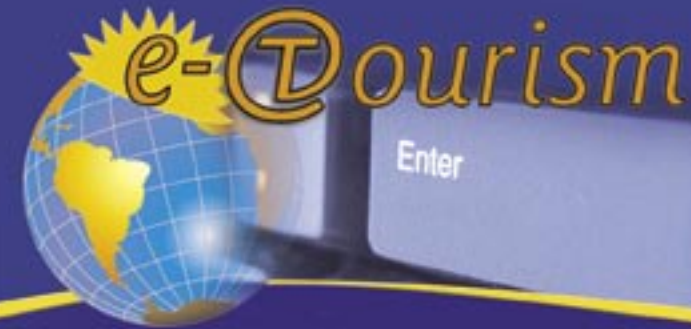
The e-Tourism Initiative promotes **ICT-driven growth** through a **participative strategy** - networking and competitive collaboration - for the tourism sector of developing countries. It is a comprehensive assistance **package**, aimed at enhancing the competitiveness of beneficiaries - particularly SMEs - on the market.

Implementation relies on various components - **research and analysis, consensus-building and technical assistance:**

- Country case studies to provide updated analysis and input to the training courses;
- Training courses and validation seminars developed with the UNCTAD TrainForTrade methodology: ICT and tourism, introduction to e-marketing (available in various languages / also through distance learning);
- Recommendations and project formulation;
- Development of customized open-source based electronic platforms, to enable local actors to tap directly the international market.

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Matching market efficiency and social inclusion



Tourism is one of the **leading services** in many developing countries. It is among the highest **producers of foreign exchange** and accounts for a growing part of GDP. The sector is **heterogeneous** and fragmented. Many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are sidelined from the tourism market.

Tourism opportunities could be of increasing benefit to developing countries if **local input** into the final tourism product were amplified. In this **information intensive** sector, information and communication technologies (ICTs) can give local tourism actors the means to market and sell their own **tourism services online**.

ICT could serve as the bridge between isolated suppliers and access to information, between social inclusion and market efficiency, between sustainable development and competitiveness.

e-Inclusion

In just a few years, increasing use of the Internet has radically changed consumers behaviour and the tourism market environment. The tourism value chain is heavily impacted by the **ICTs** from intermediaries' infrastructure to supplier integration, service transformation and distribution, and revenue management and sharing. SMEs could benefit from this window of opportunity through e-inclusive strategies and tools.

Furthermore, **free and open source software** (FOSS) can now empower local stakeholders and lead to an environment that fosters the development of local industry and skills, sovereignty and security distribution.

ICT + tourism Two driving forces for an inclusive approach

Comprehensive e-Tourism strategies should include all stakeholders in endogenous **capacity development, human capital management** and the creation of an **environment encouraging innovation**:

Empowerment

E-inclusive strategies and tools can increase sustainable revenues from tourism in developing countries by:

- Developing **local capacity** that encourages ownership and autonomy as well as branding
- Efficient private and public IT-centric **networking** collaboration schemes
- Enabling local stakeholders to increase their competitiveness on the tourism market
- Increasing the **visibility** for the destination countries.

Beneficiaries include public and private sector actors:

- Ministries of tourism
- National tourism boards
- Small and medium-sized tourism enterprises
- Travel industry associations
- Local hotels and resorts
- Tour operators
- Local suppliers to the tourism sector
- Civil society representatives.

Development

UNCTAD launched its e-Tourism Initiative in order to raise awareness about the strong positive externalities e-Tourism can bring and to assist developing countries in addressing this issue.

UNCTAD, in cooperation with other international institutions, offers technical assistance packages that design **integrated solutions** for **capacity development**, tailored to developing destination countries, such as the use of a national dynamic e-Tourism platform. Encouraging sustainable linkages between the tourism sector and local suppliers is essential if tourism is to reduce poverty.

The e-Tourism Initiative also addresses others development issues, such as **Millennium Development Goal 8** - Global Partnership for Development. Its concrete impact on a destination country's development is measurable:

- Increased capacity of beneficiaries in the design and implementation of innovative **e-business models and solutions**
- Improved **cooperation** at the national and regional levels among tourism stakeholders and fostering of economic linkages
- Increased **autonomy** in the management of the destination.



*e-Tourism:
a tool for sustainable development*