Standards & Tourism

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Content

Tourism industry & Standardization

Today, tourism is one of the world's fastest developing sectors, with increasing growth forecasted for the coming years – by 3.3 % annually until 2030. Last year alone, 1 235 million travellers crossed international borders in one single year. By 2030, this 1.2 billion will become 1.8 billion, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Tourism Highlights (2017 edition).

Tourism is also one of the leading sectors for employment, accounting for about 10 % of jobs worldwide, according to World Travel and Tourism Council *Economic Impact 2019*. But how can standards bring clarity and contribute to this development?

International tourism currently accounts for 30 % of the world's services exports as well as bringing economic benefits to local communities and encouraging greater global connectivity – the role of standards is less likely to be discussed. In fact, with international tourism on the increase, standards will be more important than ever. With many countries lacking regulation and guidance, the role of standards shouldn't be underestimated.

Standards represent the best practices agreed among the tourism industry worldwide. They have become a valuable tool and a useful source of knowledge for tourism service providers.

Standards developers – tourism industry stakeholders – create standards by finding consensus on the best way to deliver tourist-related services. This has resulted in over 20 international standards that help public and private organizations improve their tourist services in such areas as diving, thalassotherapy, protected natural environments, adventure tourism and marinas.

Standard are surrounding us. When we planning our trip, standard travel with us every step of the way. For example:

- ✓ **ISO 21401 "Tourism and related services - Sustainability management system for accommodation establishments - Requirements"** – helps the hospitality industry to reduce its impact on the environment, promote social exchange and make positive contributions to local economies.

- ✓ **ISO 13810 "Tourism services - Industrial tourism - Service provision"** – this system helps any organisation (product, process sector, historical adventure, food sector, energy sector like wind farms, power plant) to offer their products or services to tourism market.

- ✓ **ISO 21101 "Adventure tourism - Safety management systems - Requirements"** – helps providers to reduce risks and increase safety, provide conformity to regulatory requirements, and increases access to more markets.

- ✓ **ISO 20611 "Adventure tourism - Good practices for sustainability - Requirements and recommendations"** – gives adventure tourism providers the guidance they need to minimize, or mitigate, the negative environmental, economic or social impacts of tourism and enhance the positive ones.

- ✓ **ISO 18065 "Tourism and related services - Tourist services for public use provided by Natural Protected Areas Authorities - Requirements"** – helps the authorities of such nature hot spots as protected forests or conservation areas meet the needs of visitors while giving priority to their conservation objectives. Tourists can thus experience the natural environment while respecting it at the same time and learn more about the importance of conservation.

- ✓ **ISO 13687 "Tourism and related services - Yacht harbours"** - requirements setup commercial and non-commercial harbours for leisure craft in order to define the basic level to deliver services to the boating community for all types of recreational boating activities, excluding the standardization of sports activities.

- ✓ **ISO 13009 "Tourism and related services - Requirements and recommendations for beach operation"** – a guidance for both beach operators and users regarding the delivery of sustainable management and planning, beach ownership, sustainable infrastructure and service provision needs, including beach safety, information and communication, cleaning and waste removal.

- ✓ **ISO 24802 "Recreational diving services – Requirements for the training of scuba instructors"**, and **ISO 13970 "Recreational diving services – Requirements for the training of recreational snorkelling guides"** – provide international best practice in training. They help to ensure a high level of quality, bringing benefits for the diving industry and the country's tourism industry as a whole.

- ✓ **ISO/TR 21102 "Adventure tourism – Leaders – Personnel competence"**, a technical report that details what the market considers as required competencies, giving employers an internationally agreed benchmark and employees a competitive edge.
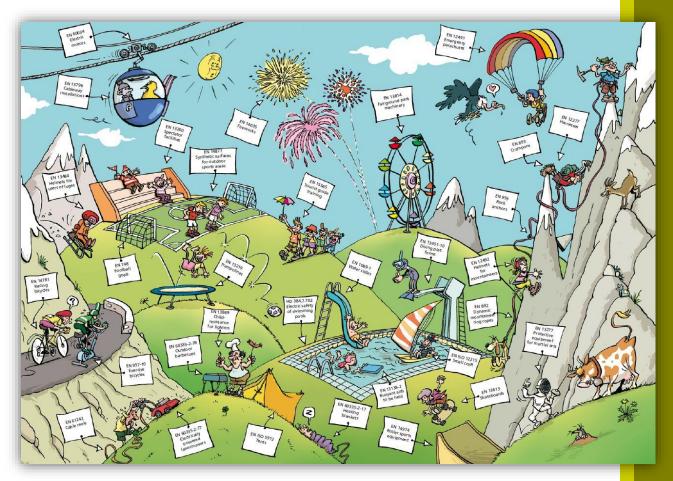

There are also standards that are indirectly related to the tourism industry, for instance:

- ✓ **ISO 9001 "Quality management systems - Requirements"** – organisations with Quality Management System in place give you a quality and proven services.

- ✓ **ISO 22000 "Food safety management systems - Requirements for any organization in the food chain"** – organisations with Food Safety Management System in place have ability to control food safety hazards in order to ensure that food is safe.

- ✓ **ISO 14001 "Environmental management systems - Requirements with guidance for use"** – organisations with this Environmental Management System in place are taking serious on environment protection.

- ✓ **ISO 45001 "Occupational health and safety management systems - Requirements with guidance for use"** – organisations with this Occupational Health and Safety Management System in place are taking serious on the safety among their work area.

In addition, a bunch of important upcoming standards will focus on important to tourism components, like:

- ✓ **ISO/CD 18513 "Tourism services - Hotels and other types of tourism accommodation - Terminology"**
- ✓ **ISO/DIS 22483 "Tourism and related services - Accommodation: Hotels - Service requirements"**
- ✓ **ISO/DIS 22525 "Tourism and related services - Medical tourism - Service requirements"**
- ✓ **ISO/WD 21620 "Tourism and related services - Heritage Hotels"**
- ✓ **ISO/AWI 23405 "Tourism and related services - Principles and terminology of sustainable tourism"**
- ✓ **ISO/DIS 21902 "Tourism and related services - Accessible tourism for all - Requirements and recommendations"**
- ✓ **ISO/DIS 21406 "Tourism and related services - Yacht harbours - Essential requirements for luxury harbours"**

Standards are meant to improve sustainability, safety and professionalism in tourism activities, instil confidence in travellers and reduce the environmental impact.

Sustainable tourism

While tourism has a number of benefits, the impact on the environment is not always as beneficial. The resources we consume as a result of staying in tourist accommodation are often much greater than that if we stayed at home.

Sustainable tourism is becoming so popular that what we presently call 'alternative' will be the 'mainstream' in a decade. Hotels and tour companies want to be sustainable, airlines and cruise companies also want to be sustainable. "Sustainability within the tourist industry can only be achieved when products and services have been developed taking quality into account," says Miguel Mirones, the President of the Spanish Tourist Quality Institute.

ISO/TS 13811 "Guidelines on developing environmental specifications for accommodation establishments" – a technical specification that aims to help conserve the natural environment and its biodiversity, taking into account specific local conditions.

The guidelines outline a number of things that accommodation establishments can do to reduce their impact, including conserving their use of resources, reducing pollution and better managing their waste, as well as ways they can make a positive contribution to the area. This includes things such as restoring natural areas of scenic beauty and educating staff, clients and the community, of the important role they too can play.

It has become a widely recognized technical reference for a wide range of stakeholders, not just accommodation providers who want to be more environmentally friendly. It is also aimed at countries with no regulations to constitute a framework; national and international bodies to assess and harmonize their existing schemes or certifications; and consumers who want the choice to choose establishments that have the environment in mind.

Tourist accommodation is one of the biggest players, meaning its potential impact on sustainable development is huge. Despite the many sustainable tourism programmes in existence worldwide, put forth by travel operators or other organizations with commercial interests, there has never been a truly impartial International Standard before dedicated to accommodation.

Luckily, a new international guidance for accommodation facilities to help them improve their impact has been published this year.

ISO 21401 "Tourism and related services - Sustainability management system for accommodation establishments – Requirements" specifies the environmental, social and economic requirements for implementing a sustainability management system in tourist accommodation. It addresses issues such as human rights, health and safety for employees and guests, environmental protection, water and energy consumption, waste generation and the development of the local economy.

This internationally agreed standard provides clarity in a confusing market, applies to all types of accommodation and can serve as a tool to improve sustainable management. It will also help to stimulate the market for more sustainability in both the accommodation sector and the tourism industry as a whole.

ISO 21401 will benefit accommodation facilities by strengthening their management and improving their reputation, while providing better-quality services to clients and improving relationships with suppliers, employees and the local community.

> **The implementation of standards and their application on a large scale is expected to ensure a positive impact on the sustainability of its activities at all levels of service delivery.**

As global tourism reaches unprecedented levels of demand, the need for sustainability will be imperative for the industry to survive as a whole. How? A key priority will be to develop standards that truly respond to market needs, are practical, target-oriented and feasible.

Tourism accessibility

As much as it is enjoyable, tourism also has its challenges. We often face difficulties when travelling, but imagine how much harder it is to travel with a disability. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Secretary-General Taleb Rifai reminds us that "accessibility for all should be at the centre of tourism policies and business strategies, not only as a human right, but also as a great market opportunity".

Luckily, there are many international and national standards that can support this goal. They set out guidelines and best practices that promote universal accessibility in tourism and enable travel industry service providers to reap the commercial benefits that flow from it.

For example, **ISO 13009 "Tourism and related services - Requirements and recommendations for beach operation"** raises the importance of making beaches accessible, with such amenities as toilets, showers or foot washes and a drinking water point adapted for people with specific needs.

Access to the beach should also be facilitated by access ramps and boardwalks, with direct access to the water, if at all possible. Beaches that are more accessible are believed to attract more holidaymakers, including visitors with special needs and their families.

Meanwhile, **ISO 14785 "Tourist information offices - Tourist information and reception services – Requirements"** provides a number of recommendations to make tourist information offices (TIOs) accessible to all.

TIOs should consider aspects related to mobility (entrance, parking and barrier-free rooms) as well as hearing and sight access (large print or Braille copies) in their buildings and the information material they disseminate.

They should also ensure there are signs in areas near the principal access that are clear, visible and concise and do not represent an obstacle for free circulation. What's more, tourist offices should provide information that accounts for the needs of people with disabilities, such as a list of the best accessible hotels, activities and adapted transport, so that they can travel safely and independently.

A number of other standards address accessibility issues and help put tourism within reach of visitors with special needs. **ISO 17049 "Accessible design - Application of braille on signage, equipment and appliances"** for instance, enables blind and visually impaired people to have access to information through the standardized usage of braille in many different parts of the world.

ISO 23599 "Assistive products for blind and vision-impaired persons - Tactile walking surface indicators" helps ensure that tactile walking surface indicators provide standardized information internationally, helping blind and partially sighted visitors to get around easily and safely.

SOURCES

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