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The definition(s) of Hospitality and Tourism in relation to economic studies  
Sector analysis project

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## **The definition(s) of Hospitality and Tourism in relation to economic studies**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this research is to provide the reader with a clear cut definition of both Tourism and Hospitality. These will be looked at from the angle of macro-economic research. Most of the existing macro-economical research on these industries is based on tourism so it is very important to clearly understand the difference between tourism and hospitality, in order to be able to adapt tourism research to the hospitality industry. Definitions however in order to be usable for economic research should be clear and should look at the sector from the suppliers side (industry definitions), not from the consumer's perspective (market definitions). A consumer definition does not show an economically measurable unit as most of the supplier companies that can be considered either hospitality or tourism are only partially included in these definitions. Most definitions however are consumer based.

### **A definition for tourism**

#### ***The consensus on the costumer definition***

The definition of tourism as used by the UN and the WTO (World Tourism Organisation).  
“According to the WTO/United Nations Recommendations on Tourism Statistics, Tourism comprises the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.world-tourism.org/market\\_research/facts&figures/menu.htm](http://www.world-tourism.org/market_research/facts&figures/menu.htm)

### ***The confusion on a supplier definition***

Tourism definitions are divided into two groups, according to Trembley (1998) some researchers tend to refuse defining tourism as an industry, they however define it as ‘a complex market or a marginal consumption activity super-imposed on real growth industries’ (Trembley, 1998:840). Wilson (1998) adds to this that the definition of an Industry, namely being ‘*a grouping of firms which operate similar processes and could produce technically indetical products (or services) within a given planning horizon*’ does not allow for the tourism industry to exist, he states however that there might be a tourism-related industry. This means that there can not be a supply side definition of tourism as it interferes too much with other industries.

The other group led by Leiper states that tourism should be looked at as an industry because of its commercial importance. Leiper (2000) divides tourism definitions into three categories. One group for the common use one for the qualitative research and one for the technical quantitative research. Leiper (2000) argues that this is logical as for example the definition as used by the WTO (see above) includes far too many people into the tourism to fit a common sense definition of a tourist.

According to Leiper not recognizing tourism as a separate industry will lead to an overestimation of the effect of tourism. He uses in this context the reference to a left handed industry, if it is not clearly identified it can encapsulate about 10% of the total economy as approximately 10% of the people are left-handed, and therefore indicate that there are millions of jobs attributable to this industry. The reality however is that the industry is existing but only employs a handful of people working in shops especially targeted at left handed people.

Leiper defined tourism as follows (according to Wilson K. 1998, p. 803):

The system invoking the discretionary travel and temporary stay of persons away from their usual place of residence for one or more nights, excepting tours made for the primary purpose of earning remuneration from points en route. The elements of the system are tourists, generating regions, transit routes, destination regions, and a tourist industry.

These five elements are arranged in spatial and functional connections.

However even with this definition of tourism the question for a definition of the tourism industry remains. According to Wilson the ISIC (International standard industrial specification) does not include a definition for tourism he also quotes (1998:813) David Lengyel who states that :

Enterprises, whose main activity is required to be separately identified for tourism statistics purposes, often get lost in a category which comprises a majority of enterprises which are not of special interest to tourism. This is particularly a problem when only a small portion of the activity of the relevant enterprise is a result of tourist activity. [...] Many enterprises could be significant suppliers to tourists of a product which is only the secondary activity. This activity then is “lost” in another category. This may not be significant when looking the total activity within a category, but could represent significant activity for tourism.

## **Conclusion**

The general conclusion of this part on tourism can be that tourism is mostly considered not as an industry on itself but as a market, no clear definition can be found as to what companies should be included in any research and what companies should not. It is therefore important to understand that all economical research or statements conducted or expressed under the umbrella of ‘tourism’ should be approached with caution and an individual scope of the author on tourism therefore should be included in the paper.

General statements found on tourism like on the employment in the ‘tourism industry’ should be regarded mainly as a misuse of the statistics in order to convince people of the megalomania of the tourism industry.

## **A definition for Hospitality**

### ***Some definitions***

#### **General**

The Oxford English dictionary hospitality is defined as : “the act or practice of being hospitable; the reception and entertainment of guests, visitors or strangers”.

According to Lashley (2000) the Joint Hospitality industry Congress defines hospitality as ‘The provision of food and/or drink and/or accommodation away from home’. The Higher Education Funding Council – England’s Hospitality Review Panel defined hospitality as being ‘ the provision of food and/or drink and/or accommodation in a service context’, furthermore the Nottingham group (at a conference held in Nottingham) defined ‘Hospitality is a contemporaneous exchange designed to enhance mutuality (well being) for the parties involved through the provision of food and/or drink and/or accommodation’. Lashley (2000) furthermore describes these definitions as being the economical oriented definitions and formulates some interesting social extensions to these definitions which are not relevant in this paper.

#### **King (1995)**

King (1995) identifies a difference between private and commercial hospitality, where private is defined as ‘ acts by individuals towards individuals in a private setting such as the home’ and commercial hospitality is defined as ‘meals, beverage, lodging and entertainment provided for profit’. Clearly in an economic research paper one would be looking at the second, commercial, definition. So according to the King definition we would be looking for a more clear definition of Commercial hospitality.

King also provides us with four necessary parts of hospitality :

1. A relation between individuals, a host-guest relationship
2. This relation can be commercial or private (in a commercial relation the guest has the obligation to pay and to behave reasonably, the guest has the power as opposed to private hospitality where an equality of power is assumed)
3. A key element is having knowledge of what would invoke great pleasure in the guest ( he paraphrases White (1970) and states that ‘ Arab hospitality in the desert, where to hesitate to give food before a stranger would shameful’ and ‘Arctic hospitality of the Eskimos, who place there wives at the disposal of the guest’)
4. Hospitality is a process that includes arrival, which involves greeting and making the guest feel welcome ... and departure.

These parts of hospitality might clarify what hospitality is but again looks at it from a consumer (market) side and not from the sector perspective.

### **Angelo and Vladimir**

They first of all realize that the question ‘what is hospitality’ is not an easy one. They however find four different sectors that make up the hospitality industry, namely : lodging, food, entertainment and travel. This however they recognize as being the same as the definition used by the US travel data center for tourism, so they shorten down their definition to only lodging and food operations. They give a non exhaustive list<sup>2</sup> of sub sectors comprised within the hospitality industry as follows

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<sup>2</sup> Angelo and Vladimir p 28

<b>Lodging operations</b>	<b>Food service operations</b>	<b>Other operations</b>
All-suite hotels Casino hotels Conference hotels Full-service hotels Limited-service hotels Resorts Retirement communities	Commercial cafeterias Education food services Employee food services Full-service restaurants Health-care Lodging food service Quick-service restaurants Recreational food service Social caterers	Airlines Campgrounds City clubs Country clubs Cruise ships National parks

This definition is already closer to a supply side definition however the confusion remains as the list of industries is not a limited list.

## **Powers**

Powers gives a more ethnological definition of what hospitality is stating that ‘hospitality is derived from the medieval word hospice and therefore means a house of rest to travellers and pilgrims’. He also states that these type of food and shelter accommodations have common problems of management but he fails to provide us with a clear definition as to what hospitality is.

## **Brymer and Huffman**

According to Brymer and Huffman the hospitality industry is ‘an umbrella term used to encompass the many and varied businesses that cater guests’. This statement indicates that they also recognise the difficulty in limiting the scope of the hospitality industry.

They however like Angelo and Vladimir find some major segments in the hospitality industry, namely : ‘food service, lodging, travel and tourism, and meeting and convention planning’. This would mean that the tourism industry, as we discussed before is not a real industry, would be an integral part of the hospitality industry.



## **Ditmer**

Ditmer also provides us with an ethnological definition, however he goes back to the Latin verb *hospitare*, which means 'to receive as a guest'. In order to receive people as a guest their needs should be satisfied, according to Ditmer this means that the guest needs: food, beverage and lodging or shelter.

He does not like Brymer and Huffman include the tourism industry into the hospitality, and also leaves the entertainment out of the hospitality definition claiming that this would be a part of travel and tourism.

The hospitality industry as it does provide its services mainly to travellers, also provides them to local residents and is therefore not an integral part of the travel industry itself.

## ***Conclusion***

### **Some common characteristics**

Although the previous definitions show that there is not such thing as a general definition of the hospitality industry, it shows that there are some parts common to all definitions. Lodging and food are included in every definition as being part of the hospitality industry.

### **Some differences**

Is tourism part of hospitality or is it the other way around ? Does entertaining the guests belong to hospitality or not ? Is hospitality only applicable to people away from home (tourists) or can it be granted to local residents ?

These things are either unclear or contradict in the foregoing definitions, this makes the defining of hospitality as a problem as the sectors are not always the same.

## **Why there is no universal definition for hospitality**

According to Brotherton (1999) who conducted a similar type of study the answer the ‘What is hospitality [...] generates a number of varied and interesting responses’(1999:165). He also finds what we have shown in this section that the definitions of hospitality are ‘unclear’. According to him many of the definition’s makers ‘fall into a trap of suggesting that one of the important features of hospitality is making the guest “feel at home”’(1999:167).

To many different definitions are used according to the need of the authors, some are more economical in nature, some more sociological, but all are different. Brotherton also suggests that ‘any attempt to define hospitality per se is doomed to failure’, by this meaning that there in no generally and universally applicable definition of hospitality.

The debate however according to Brotherton (1999) is not over and should continue.

## **Conclusion**

Although the purpose of this research was to provide the reader with definitions of tourism and hospitality usable for economical research in order to be able to transform economical research from one to the other, it has not succeeded in doing this. This paper however has shown the reader that there in no such thing as a tourism industry in the economical sense of the word. It also showed that the hospitality industry does not so far has a universal definition, but rather has ad hoc definitions created to serve a certain purpose.

The suggestion would be to carefully investigate the definition of tourism used in each research that one would like to convert from tourism to hospitality and if none is specified within the work to rather let it be, since there is a high chance that the research has been conducted with the intent of supporting a certain point rather than it trying to be academically in its approach.

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As to the reader wanting to write an economically inspired work on the hospitality industry the author would suggest him/her to use great care in selecting a definition and to certainly mention the used definition within the work. Even better would be to restrict the economically inspired work to one of the sub-sectors of hospitality like the hotel sector or the restaurant sector, they should be far more easily definable.

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