

Microsoft and World Tourism Organization to Drive Innovation in the Tourism Sector



The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and Microsoft signed today an agreement aimed at bringing the benefits of the most advanced technologies to the tourism sector and driving the industry's evolution towards the computing paradigm of the future. Jean-Philippe Courtois, President of Microsoft International, and Márcio Favilla, Executive Director of UNWTO, have forged this alliance that, in an increasingly demanding and competitive economic context, will promote technological innovation in world tourism and help the Spanish market strengthen the country's brand as a world leader in the application of innovation to the tourism sector.

With this agreement, Microsoft becomes a strategic partner of UNWTO that will propose, coordinate and spearhead technological innovation initiatives within the community of the Organization's Member States and Affiliate Members. It will also make new technologies available to the international tourism sector in order to enhance its competitiveness.

Jean-Philippe Courtois, President of Microsoft International, pointed out that "the tourism sector has undergone a drastic transformation over the past years and has been evolving towards Tourism 3.0, where users connect to travel websites and interact by sharing their experiences, thus directly influencing the perceptions and decisions of other users and potential travellers. Because of this, it is more and more important for tourism sector enterprises to develop their online businesses by looking to the most advanced technology. In this regard, the adoption of cloud computing is key, as it provides access to a solid web platform that will make it possible to offer more productive, efficient and competitive services."

According to Márcio Favilla, Executive Director of the World Tourism Organization, "cooperation with Microsoft is both timely, in light of the current economic context, and necessary in view of the technological demands we are subject to. Tourism has a proven track record when it comes to being at the leading edge of innovation and the dissemination of best practices, and our sector closely reflects the positive potential of globalization. Thanks to cooperation with Microsoft we will be able to more rapidly implement training tools and disseminate their content, stimulate the adoption of practical and advanced technological solutions in our sector and continue to promote tourism as a vehicle of sustainable development, in line with the position held by the UN."

The transformation of the tourism sector: the Tourist 3.

Today's tourists are geared towards the 3.0 environment; they are connected to the Net and are highly present in social networks. Consequently, it is more important than ever for destinations and tourism enterprises to not only have an Internet presence but also to offer their users a good experience and the necessary tools to interact with the supply side and with other users.

The Microsoft Innovation Center in Tourism Technologies (MICTT) will take part in joint efforts to develop technological projects led by UNWTO. UNWTO members will have preferential access to the services offered by the MICTT, including the development of proofs of concept and pilot projects applying technological innovation to the tourism industry.

By virtue of this agreement, Microsoft will also collaborate with the UNWTO Themis Foundation,

which is responsible for implementing the World Tourism Organization's programme of work in the field of Education and Training, in a training programme on technological innovation and the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to improve the competitiveness and sustainability of the tourism sector. These two entities will work together in actions for the dissemination of the use of information technologies, aimed especially at small and medium-sized tourism enterprises. They will also collaborate in the development of volunteer projects related to tourism innovation in emerging countries.

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