



WTO Planning Processes

Description

A number of planning processes are used and promoted by the World Tourism Organisation (WTO). The group of processes (also known as the 'comprehensive approach') provide a framework for tourism planning at national and regional level. Their aim is to develop and manage tourism sustainably through a centralised top-down approach implemented by a 'tourism plan'. They operate within a framework of national and regional planning (see [regional and district tourism strategies](#) and [Resource Management Act framework](#)). More detailed plans can be prepared that pertain to specific tourism attractions, resorts etc. The approach is useful because it provides for an overarching policy base for tourism planning in a particular area. Elements of the WTO framework are evident in New Zealand tourism planning including the New Zealand Tourism Strategy 2010.

How and when the tool is used

WTO approaches are widely used in international tourism planning at national and regional levels. In some countries a national tourism plan is prepared and implemented by central authority - very much a "top-down" approach, but with a strong focus on sustainable development. A more "bottom-up" approach can also be used where early public involvement determines what the community would like to see developed. Local objectives are then fitted together in the national or regional plans. A combination of both 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches can be used.

Different models of tourism planning can be used at the more detailed local level plans and can be directed by a policy approach at national and regional level. For example:

- Planning Tourism as an Integrated System - balance of 'demand' and supply' factors
- Planning for Sustainable Development - balance of economic and environmental systems, conservation emphasised in natural areas; host community considered
- [Environmental Regional Planning](#) approach - addresses all environmental elements and key focus on community-based tourism and maximising benefits to local community
- Quality Tourism Approach - related to sustainable development - achieves benefits to both marketing perspective and community
- Long Range and Strategic Planning.

The general processes for tourism planning under the WTO approach do not differ greatly from those used in non-statutory strategic planning in New Zealand, including phases of Terms of Reference and objective setting, steering or reference group formation, survey, analysis and synthesis, policy and plan formulation, institutional recommendations and implementation and monitoring. As a top-down approach, however, driven by national or regional government, implementation mechanisms not part of New Zealand system may be available to agencies implementing plans. National and regional objectives generally prevail over local or sectoral concerns.

Monitoring is considered an integral part of plan implementation and management under the WTO approach. Typically monitoring will address progress of implementation, the number and types of tourists to see if market is being maintained, tourism satisfaction levels, economic, environmental, socio-cultural impacts of tourism generally. Targets can be set and these can then be monitored as to their achievement.

Application

Typically a plan prepared under a WTO model would include the following elements:

- *Spatial* - should cover most natural areas - generally concentrates tourism activities into zones ([zoning](#)) to maintain environmental protection, and adopts techniques of reducing impacts of tourism. Site-specific details are not usually covered at regional or national levels.
- *Conservation* - provides a focus on conservation in terms of providing capacity in an area that otherwise without tourism may not be conserved well. Considers that tourism is always a critical component to consider in the establishment and management of protected areas: if well planned it helps justify and pay for conservation of important natural areas, archaeological and historic sites, helps improve environmental quality, and increases local environment awareness. The WTO has published an influential set of guidelines that provide a theoretical structure and practical guidelines for natural area tourism managers. The underlying aim is to ensure that tourism contributes to the purposes of protected areas and does not undermine them.



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Environmental Protection - is often an integral part of the planning process - seen as application of environmental planning and sustainable development approach including establishing carrying capacities of tourism areas. At national and regional levels, [biophysical carrying capacities](#) must be considered more generally.

- Economic - planning is driven by a view that tourism 'fuels' economy, conservation, protection, heritage and cultural values of an area. Economic benefit is recognised as the primary reason for developing tourism but the approach acknowledges that economic, environmental and socio-economic costs and benefits must all be weighed together to achieve a balanced development.
- *Social* - Host communities considered as something to address as opposed to direct involvement in plan and policy development. Host community not generally considered except where bottom-up tourism plans used at more detailed level, nothing about indigenous peoples.
- *Institutional/legal* - planning generally carried out under a framework where central government assumes control and implementation of national and regional plans. Sometimes this makes an erroneous assumption that local communities have capacity and desire to work effectively within a national or regional framework.

Our evaluation

The WTO framework is a 'top-down' approach that does not necessarily engender community ownership or education on the ground. Ideally, a combination of 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' tourism planning could be incorporated within national/regional framework. It requires an appropriate institutional framework at local level to implement plans, and usually provides highly controlled development in face of rapidly growing market demand. Plans are comprehensive: they concentrate accommodation and other facilities in certain areas, establish controls and specific implementation mechanisms and procedures that need to be followed. It may enhance the conservation of natural areas.

Under this regime it is arguable to what extent local communities directly benefit from tourism. It is not generally applicable to tourism planning in New Zealand but provides an internationally consistent framework with excellent linkages and resources through the WTO.