

New Strategic Positioning and promotion of the UNWTO "Affiliate Members" brand

1. INTRODUCTION

The elaboration of a new strategic positioning of the UNWTO Affiliate Membership, carried out between July - December 2022, addresses the challenges identified by the Affiliate Members Department (AMD) of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) regarding the **incorporation of new Affiliate Members (AMs)** and the **management of the existing red of UNWTO affiliate members**.

The objectives were the following:

- Identification of the **opportunities for improvement of the relationships with the current Affiliate Members** and of the management of the network of AMs.
- Identification of improvements in the **expansion of the Affiliate Membership / incorporation of new Affiliate Members**.
- Design of a new strategic scenario – defined by an updated **AMD's value proposition**, a reinforced **communication strategy** to be implemented and an **action plan** for short/medium term- to better highlight the value of belonging to the UNWTO as affiliate member and to increase both the number of affiliate members and their satisfaction with the membership.

2. Phase I: Strategic Analysis

Initially an exhaustive and in-depth analysis was carried out, to take a "snapshot" of the Affiliate Members Department and extract the main insights.

To address the **internal analysis**, several working sessions were held with both the management of the department and with the team, and the results of the last survey conducted with the Affiliated Members were analyzed. This analysis has allowed to work on the current business model and to identify the weaknesses to work on and the strengths to maximize.

For the **external analysis** have been taken into account both the tourism sector current situation and trends and the potential direct competition for the affiliate membership offered by UNWTO , taking as a reference for the analysis an entity such as the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), which has allowed to identify the threats faced by the UNWTO when it comes to retaining its affiliated entities and attracting new members, as well as the opportunities to be maximized.

Based on the conclusions obtained after analyzing all the information, the following main aspect have been considered:

STRENGTHS:

- **The institutional link with the United Nations** and the direct relationship with the topic of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- The capacity and commitment **to promoting Sustainable Tourism**.
- Having **relevant specialized information** that is highly valued by its Affiliate Members
- Having an extensive **network of international contacts** (private and public), with the database related to the tourism industry being particularly relevant.
- Counting on **different types of members** (and potential partners), both from the private and public sector.
- Promotion of **working groups and other specific frameworks for collaboration among AMs** to develop innovative projects for the tourism sector.
- **Access to major international tourism events**.
- Having its **own independent digital platform / tool** to communicate with the members of the AMs community.

WEAKNESSES

- **UNWTO working structure and procedures**. Bureaucratic procedures, which induce long execution times, as well as lack of efficient collaboration among the different departments of the Organization.
- The workload of the department's team fosters **reactivity over proactivity**.
- The **AMD's value proposition** does not respond to the needs and expectations of many of the AMs. There is **a lack of effective communication** of said value proposition (segmentation of AMs' profiles and planning of appropriate communication channels for each segment).
- **There are no different types of membership** hierarchized according to the benefits offered to members, but only one type & price of membership/affiliation.
- Although the affiliate members interact and collaborate with UNWTO, **AMD does not achieve to maximize the visibility of the actions of the AMs**.
- **Absence of Affiliate Membership's own communication channels**, especially social networks, which limits the development of an adapted and efficient communication.
- **Shortcomings in terms of incorporation of new affiliate members and retention (loyalty)** of the existing ones.

THREATS

- **Similar actions and alternative offers from other international and regional associations and networking platforms**.
- **Impact of the current economic and geopolitical challenges** currently impacting the development of the tourism sector, including current and potential affiliate members.

- **Limitations imposed by the UNWTO regulatory framework** towards the pragmatic business interests and objectives of many of the AMs, as well as the possible perception that the Affiliate Membership is a "business" for the Organization.
- **Conflicts of interest** or dissatisfaction may arise either between different affiliated destinations and Member States, or between public and private entities affiliated to the UNWTO, based on the perception that some AMs enjoy more and greater facilities and privileges than others.
- Reaching a level of having to **manage a larger number of Affiliate Members** than the AMD can properly manage with its available resources.
- **Erosion of the Affiliate Members' confidence** due to promises and expectations generated that only come true in specific cases.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Include among the benefits offered by the membership **the support of the Organization to achieve specific projects or grants.**
- Give **greater prominence to Affiliate Members** through the official UNWTO website.
- Support the affiliate members in the promotion of sustainable tourism and **certify that their practices are in line with the SDGs / 2023 Agenda.**
- Improve the knowledge of the affiliate members, **based on the precise identification of the interests and needs of the different segments of AMs**, both regarding the elaboration of the Programme of Work, and the communication of activities and the development of contents.
- **Dynamize the working groups** as a specialized framework for the development of collaborations and concrete and innovative projects, generating knowledge and good practices in the sector.
- Design and offer **different forms of membership and specific benefits**, according to the specific needs of interaction/partnership with the Organization and the capacity of each type of entity interested in membership to bring value to the Organization.
- Design an **effective strategy for attracting** potential new affiliate members and reinforcing the loyalty of existing ones.
- Open **new communication channels for UNWTO Affiliate Members**, such as other similar UNWTO channels (ex: "UNWTO Academy" or "UNWTO Best Villages").
- Explore the **trends in the tourism industry** to create new working groups, lines of action and/or connections between like-minded AMs.

In line with the previous aspects, two trends have been identified as relevant for the UNWTO due to their direct link to the values of the Organization and their potential to become lines of communication for the affiliate membership:

- **Better business.** Promotion of institutions and entities that work to reduce the negative impact of the sector and of tourists on the planet, being able to link this trend with the **promotion of sustainable tourism** by AMD and the Affiliate Members.

- **Norm-nudging.** Evolution of the previous trend, going further to seek to create and **inspire positive change**. This positive change in the sector is directly linked to the **commitment to SDGs compliance** by Affiliate Members.

Other trends have also been identified that could **inspire and activate initiatives and events promoted by AMD during 2023**, such as nature/health/sports tourism or MICE, already booming in 2022, sustainable/accessible/inclusive/gender-equal tourism, as future trends, or new evolving tourism segments such as "Slow traveling", "Live like a local", "Ed-ventures", "Solo travel" or "Blue tourism".

3. Phase II: Elaboration of the Strategy

AMD'S Strategic Positioning. Based on the conclusions drawn from the strategic analysis phase, it has been designed a new strategic scenario, on which to base the **new positioning of the UNWTO Affiliate Members Department**, as a fundamental part of its strategy to promote and manage the affiliate membership:

What is the Affiliate Members Department? - It should be **responsible for forging alliances between the Organization, Member States and public and private entities affiliated to UNWTO worldwide**, ensuring effective and lasting links and collaboration between all the Organization's members and *partners*, which serves as a driving force for the development of the tourism sector and of all its players.

How does it do this? - **By outlining a membership expansion plan** targeting to attract new affiliate members; **facilitating the affiliation** of all those entities who are aligned with the Organization and its values; **defining a joint action plan** with its affiliate members that guarantees their development and creates a valuable relationship with UNWTO; **planning, organizing and carrying out activities** that help affiliate members to develop their business; **proactively monitoring the membership** in a way to generate a sense of belonging and build loyalty among affiliate members.

Why does it do it? - To **achieve the sustainable development of the tourism sector** by helping UNWTO members – both States and affiliated entities - to improve their practices and develop their business in a responsible, SDGs-compliant and sustainable way in the long run.

Who does it do this for? - A diversity of States, organizations and public & private entities affiliated to UNWTO - DMOs, universities and training and research centers, professional associations, specialized public entities, private companies etc. - that share and are committed to promote the values of the United Nations and UNWTO.

Construction of the Brand. Based on this positioning, work has been done on the **construction of the "Affiliate Members" brand**, establishing for it the following pillars:

MISSION - *to help public and private entities to forge alliances to face the challenges of the tourism sector in a joint and coordinated manner, fostering dialogue, collaboration and synergies between the Organization, Member States and public and private entities around the world affiliated to the UNWTO.*

VISION - *To be a driving force for change, both of the tourism sector and of society as a whole, helping States, associations, and companies to contribute to an inclusive and sustainable development of tourism.*

PURPOSE - *To achieve the development of the tourism industry, helping its members to develop their business models so that they contribute to the fulfillment of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and achieve long-term profitability.*

VALUES

Sustainable Development	Support
Responsible Tourism	Multiculturalism
Partnerships	Inclusion
Cooperation	Social Impact
Business Development	

Value Proposition.

In order to build the Value Proposition of the UNWTO Affiliate Members Department, it has been done a "**customer profile**" **definition** for each type/segment of affiliate members (DMOs, universities and training and research centers, professional associations, specialized public entities, private companies, etc.), developing a "**value map**" for each of these segments and seeking a fit that would allow AMD to **define a universal and common value proposition** for all the affiliate members.

Below is the detailed a "fit" for each "customer profile":

- **DMOs** | Help them achieve **greater awareness and visibility** to promote tourism in their destination.
- **Training and research centers**
 - University/academic institutions | Help them to improve the **quality and reputation** of their institution and training proposal.
 - Research institutes | Help them to have more **relevance** in order to build useful alliances and engage with sources of financing.
- **Associations** |
 - Professional associations | Help them to create **alliances** to achieve new business formulas for their members.
 - NGOs and foundations | Help them to have **more credibility and prestige** to enhance their development.
- **Corporations** |
 - Consultancy companies | Help them to **improve their positioning** in the market.
 - **Companies** from all types of sectors | To help the development of the tourism industry.

Taking this into account, it is established that the **universal Value Proposition** of the Affiliate Members Department for all AMs is based on the figure of "*partner*":

The UNWTO Affiliate Members Department offers a membership that promotes the sustainable development of tourism and of its public and private entities, in line with the SDGs.

ACTION PLAN

In line with the value proposition developed, it has to be developed an **Action Plan** that includes specific initiatives to be carried out, adapted to each type of affiliate members, to enable the achievement of **7 main objectives**:

- Give **visibility to its affiliate members** through the communication channels of the Affiliate Members Department, planning the communication needs for each type of members and, consequently, the number of annual appearances.
- **Promote networking among AMs**, based on identifying the needs, interests and opportunities of each typology of AMs and of each member.
- **Activate the participation of AMs in activities and events** promoted by AMD and by the members themselves, establishing different levels of involvement in the initiatives (co-organizer, host, sponsor etc.).
- **Share relevant information, data, and research** regarding the tourism sector, both developed by UNWTO and by affiliate members.
- **Propose and promote cooperation** in joint projects of AMs with UNWTO (events, research, publications, certifications etc.), as well as business projects between AMs.
- Support and endorse relevant initiatives and projects developed by the AMs **through recommendations to Governments or other companies**.
- Promote the creation and development of **new innovative business projects** that contribute to **the sustainable development of the tourism industry**.

4. Phase III: COMMUNICATION PLAN

Based on the mentioned new strategic positioning defined, in which the AMs have been segmented and categorized into main typologies and the positioning of the Affiliate Members Department and its value proposition have been redefined, it has been addressed all those basic aspects of the brand on which **a coherent and consistent communication plan will be built**, with the following characteristics:

BRAND STYLE AND PERSONALITY

The Affiliate Members Department is an enabler that creates connections among its members (the *wise connector* archetype) and that has a **panoramic vision**, which allows it to know and understand the tourism sector in depth. For this reason, it should have an **expert and trustworthy voice** that conveys, through a warm, close and inspiring style and tone, the experience and knowledge about the present situation of the tourism sector and the future trends, which allows it to become a partner for its affiliate members.

STRATEGIC LINES OF COMMUNICATION

The foundations on which AMD's communication will be based will be the following:

- **Development of the tourism sector** in line with the SDGs.
- **Transformation of the tourism industry** through knowledge generation and activation of innovative business projects of its AMs.
- **Creation of alliances** between Affiliate Members, Governments of the Member State and other interested UNWTO partners.
- Support to AMs in terms of **visibility and credibility** in the tourism sector.
- Provision of **relevant and up-to-date knowledge and information** on the tourism industry and its stakeholders.

STORYTELLING

Storytelling has been developed that will allow the construction of messages coherent with the strategic pillars established for communication:

The world we live in needs the public and private sectors to come together to face the challenges of tourism in a joint and coordinated manner. To this end, it is essential to forge alliances that foster dialogue, collaboration and synergies between States and entities around the world.

For this reason, UNWTO offers a membership that serves as a platform and driver of development for both the tourism sector and the entities that make it up, which allows us to have a Community ready to build the future we want for tourism, consistent with the SDGs, as well as to draw up concrete action plans to promote the development of the tourism sector and of its entities, in order to make them more inclusive, sustainable and profitable in the long term.

ECOSYSTEM OF COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

The channels that will be part of AMD's communication ecosystem are detailed below. Each one will have a particular objective and, therefore, will require the development of specific content and actions included in the Marketing and Communication Plan.

- **WEB.**

Objective | *To communicate the differential and benefits provided by UNWTO Affiliate Membership to potential affiliate members.*

- Next Steps | *Development of the new contents for the "Affiliate Members" section of the webpage that conveys the new positioning and value proposition, and gathers relevant information for current and future affiliate members (benefits, affiliation process, news etc.).*

- **SOCIAL MEDIA**

As a starting point, it has been established that is necessary **to open new institutional social media profiles of the Affiliate Members Department on LinkedIn and Twitter**, to be able to develop a communication strategy adapted to the department's specific needs, without being subordinated to the main UNWTO channels. Likewise, work will continue with the personal profiles of the director and of the members of AMD under a coherent planning with the rest of the channels.

LinkedIn of the Affiliate Members Department

Objective | *Lead the specific institutional communication of the UNWTO Affiliate Members Department, being the main social media channel and external to the dedicated AMConnected platform (from the perspective of a professional network).*

Next Steps /

- **Creation of the profile** and development of a **posting plan** that includes, on one hand, the institutional communication associated with the Department (value proposition, benefits of membership, work methodology to take advantage of membership, specific projects etc.) and, on the other hand, the visibility and relevance of the affiliate members (presentation, news, specific projects developed etc.).
- **Launching of an investment campaign** focused on attracting the profile's followers and new AMs.
- **Additionally, the development of initiatives that complement the AMD profile will be evaluated**, such as the opening of private groups, linked to working groups, lines of action or the broadcasting of events via streaming etc. will be considered in the medium term.

LinkedIn of the Director of the AMD

Objective | *To be the spokesperson and visible image of the AMD with an inspiring and motivational narrative for current and potential affiliate members.*

Next Steps | *Development of a content plan aligned with the communication strategy and focused on communicating the new positioning and value proposition, as well as support for affiliate members (events and activities carried out, projects etc.) and relevant news for the institution.*

Twitter of the Affiliate Members Department

Objective | *Give visibility to this type of UNWTO membership and to its affiliate members, from the perspective and with the tools of a generalist and massive social network.*

Next Steps /

- *Creation of the profile and development of a posting plan that includes the contents elaborated for the AMD LinkedIn profile, with a style and tone adapted to Twitter.*
- *Establish an action guide/procedure for daily interaction in social media and participation with external content (UNWTO, members, conversations on topics relevant to the AMD and to its affiliate members, etc.).*

Twitter of the Director of the AMD

Objective | *Feed the institutional image of the director of the department as representative of the AMD and give a personified visibility to the most relevant affiliate members.*

Next Steps | *Development of a content plan aligned with the communication strategy and focused on communicating the new positioning and the value proposition, as well as support for the affiliate members (events and activities carried out, projects etc.) and relevant news for the institution.*

UNWTO LinkedIn & Twitter

Objective | *Support the Affiliate Members Department's communication from the Organization to a large community of users.*

Next Steps | *Development, well in advance, of a monthly proposal for contents to be posted from the UNWTO accounts, as well as associated resources.*

- **The MEDIA**

Objective | *Maximize the dissemination of news from AMD and the visibility given to its affiliate members..*

Next Steps |

- *Establish a direct relationship with both generalist and specialized media.*

- *Development of a content plan that includes the main editorial angles and considers the department's most relevant milestones (expansion campaigns, relevant dates, events etc.).*

- **AMConnected PLATFORM**

Objective | *Convey department's institutional messages to its affiliate members, provide them with relevant and exclusive information and other valuable resources, and encourage them to build partnerships with other affiliate members.*

Next Steps |

- *Development of a content plan with global messages.*
- *Development of a customized content plan - with private messages tailored to the interests, needs and characteristics of each customer segment.*

- **NEWSLETTER**

Objective | *To inform Affiliate Members about new developments in their membership, providing added value to each member type.*

Next Steps |

- *Design of a new newsletter - personalized by member type/segments - with relevant information adapted to the specific interests and needs of each segment.*
- *Content plan and delivery/ mailing schedule.*

- **AMs EVENTS**

Objective | *To publicize the "Affiliate Members" brand, the characteristics and advantages of this UNWTO membership, among attendees of the most relevant international tourism events (both of the UNWTO and of the affiliate members themselves).*

Next Steps | *Development of a "communication pack" for events that includes all the materials needed to actively participate and take advantage of these events to promote & communicate the membership and the most relevant current projects and collaboration opportunities.*