

From Alpine Tourism to the “Alpinization” of Tourism

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From the very first, the Alps were associated with the emergence of leisure travel. While the origin of the word “tourism” does not derive directly from the growing attraction of western Europe’s highest mountains, visiting this region quickly became customary among European elites beginning in the early nineteenth century.¹ It is absolutely correct to speak about the emergence of an “alpine tourism” that, alongside spa, seaside, and urban tourism, varied regionally in intensity and form, yet which remained universally recognizable. Understanding the history of alpine tourism demands a consideration of myriad factors that converged during the eighteenth century to transform these mountains from being a “monde subi” to being a “monde aimé,” from being an undesirable area to being a region adored by legions of visitors every year.² At the same time as the “*désir du rivage*” illustrated by Alain Corbin,³ this “conquering sympathy” was fuelled by a subtle alchemy that explains its development, its perpetuity, and its success: scientific, technological, economic, political, social, physical, medical, geologic, symbolic, educational, and cultural dimensions joined and blended in the development of this new tourist model. It pulled its strength from human and material resources, often unfamiliar in the alpine environment, which modeled the new form of tourism according to plans and projects whose ultimate purpose was the domestication and exploitation of the mountain.

The tourist invention of the Alps did not remain strictly an alpine business. It quickly extended beyond the limits of a single mountain to reshape other

¹ On the creation of the word “tourism,” see James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to Culture, 1800–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

² Paul Guichonnet, “L’homme devant les Alpes,” in Paul Guichonnet (ed.), *Histoire et civilisations des Alpes* (Toulouse and Lausanne: Privat and Payot, 1980), pp. 169–248, p. 246.

³ Alain Corbin, *Le territoire du vide, l’Occident et le désir du rivage 1750–1849* (Paris: Flammarion, 1988).

mountainous spaces. Alpine tourism carried with it the very seeds of its own distribution. Henceforth, alpine models circulated globally, providing plentiful representations and practices that were flexible enough to meet a number of needs. “Alpine” came to express a specific type of tourism that includes a range of activities suited to hilly environments; climbing clubs, mountaineering, and downhill skiing are all activities that can be practiced in mountainous regions, regardless of specific location. Such activities, along with the plants, animals, and rocks native to the high country, were now grouped together under a common heading and seen through a shared lens.

Alpine tourism is not simply a product of altitude. It would be reductive to explain the development of alpine tourism purely in terms of spatial, physical, or natural factors. Such a view would leave out a substantial part of the story. For example, we must consider the political and institutional parameters that made the alpine tourist model possible. Tourism was nationalized during the nineteenth century in both Europe and America. It was used as a cornerstone of a new conception of the nation and helped to shape identities and territorial representations.⁴ From this perspective, the role of the Swiss Confederation must be emphasized. Art historians and literary critics alike have studied the role of the Confederation, showing its centrality in the assertion of the sensibilities and concepts that constitute the re-imagining of the Alps, not simply in Swiss areas but in the Savoy region if not in the whole of the western Alps as well.⁵ Aesthetic sensibilities are rife with political and philosophical content, even if the substance is stripped down and streamlined to more easily convey the vision of authors or artists. Through seemingly apolitical vectors, alpine Switzerland grew, little by little, into a “civic myth.” The Helvetic Republic emerged as a carrier of authentic and eternal values such as freedom,

⁴ Among a voluminous literature, see: Christopher Ely, *This Meager Nature: Landscape and National Identity in Imperial Russia* (De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2002); R.J.B. Bosworth, “The Touring Club Italiano and the Nationalization of the Italian Bourgeoisie,” *European History Quarterly* 27/3 (1997): pp. 371–410; Orvar Löfgren, “Know Your Country: A Comparative Perspective on Tourism and Nation Building in Sweden,” in Shelley Baranowski and Ellen Furlough (eds), *Being Elsewhere: Tourism, Consumer Culture and Identity in Modern Europe and North America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), pp. 137–54; Alexander Vari, “From Friends of Nature to Tourist-Soldiers: Nation Building and Tourism in Hungary, 1873–1914,” in Anne E. Gorus and Diane P. Koenker (eds), *Turizm: The Russian and East European Tourist under Capitalism and Socialism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), pp. 64–81; Marguerite Schaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880–1940* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001).

⁵ Claude Reichler, *La découverte des Alpes et la question du paysage* (Genève: Georg Editeur, 2002).

democracy, peace, harmony, happiness, and simplicity. The “helvetism” movement reinforced this intellectual trend. Consumption of the Alps through tourism further bolstered the political and social idea of alpine terrain as both the foundation for and unifying force behind the Confederation while at the same time legitimizing the region as a universal cradle of egalitarian virtues. Thus, the politicization of this alpine space contained the germs of a unique Swiss identity, a “*Sonderfall*” that could stand as a worthy example for the rest of the world.⁶

As the Swiss Alps were transformed into a symbol, they simultaneously began to generate an emotional response. Alpine space and Swiss territory grew increasingly linked.⁷ The Swiss people self-identified with the Alps and, reciprocally, alpine tourism took on distinctive Swiss features.⁸ Therefore, we must question why the alpine tourist model found in its Swiss referent, besides the political, symbolic, and aesthetic parameters that were already attached to it, the economic and technical anchorage points that explain, during the nineteenth century, its development and its widespread distribution.

Fully explaining the spread of a regional “playground”⁹ to the wide world requires that attention be paid to the totality of the actors involved. We must not only study the “builders” (entrepreneurs, financiers, employees, innkeepers, guides, politicians) and the “inspirers” (artists, painters, writers, philosophers, authors, scientists, historians, journalists) but also those who utilized alpine space such as mountaineers, scientists, hikers, tourists, students, sportsmen, and patients. If alpine tourism led to an “alpinization” of tourism, it is important to examine the process broadly, including both distribution channels and modalities.

In this chapter, particular attention will be paid to three specific moments in this process. The first section examines the invention of the Alps as a tourist site, a period when summits and altitude were explicitly celebrated. The second section traces how the invention of the Alps as tourist site was so intimately tied to its Helvetic frame. The third, and final, section illustrates the mechanisms that allowed for the widespread dissemination of this model worldwide.

⁶ Oliver Zimmer, “In Search of Natural Identity: Alpine Landscape and the Reconstruction of the Swiss Nation,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40/4 (October 1998): pp. 637–65.

⁷ François Walter, “La montagne des Suisses. Invention et usage d’une représentation paysagère (XVIIIe–XXe siècles),” *Études rurales* 30/121–4 (1991): pp. 91–107.

⁸ Marc Boyer, “Les Alpes et le tourisme,” *Histoire des Alpes* 9 (2004): pp. 24–7.

⁹ Leslie Stephen, *The Playground of Europe* (London: Fredonia Books, 1871, 2004).

The Tourist Invention of the Alps: Making Altitude Multifunctional

The emergence of an alpine tourist ideal largely rested on an almost obsessive search for new heights. This pursuit has little equivalent in human history, leading some to suggest that the conquest of the highest summit in the Alps by Horace-Bénédict de Saussure represented a new chapter in the evolution of society.¹⁰ Already celebrated by scientists such as Johann-Jakob Scheuchzer¹¹ and Albert de Haller, and subsequently popularized by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the Alps were recognized globally as a unified geographic space. More than this, they elevated those who climbed them, both literally and spiritually. The individual could find fulfillment in the mountains, where everything seemed to fall into perspective and man could discover all that really matters. Much more than a simple playground, although they were that too, the peaks helped make the sick well and they revitalized the spirit.¹²

Yet summit conquests also demonstrated the advantages of a meritocratic hierarchy, illustrating the benefits of effort and calculation. Nothing more clearly showed the success of such a civilization. From a nineteenth-century perspective, a successful climb symbolized man's ability to dominate nature, just as he did during the concurrent process of industrialization. Alpine ascents vindicated faith in progress and science, as well as a belief in the power of technology. Alpinists clearly demonstrated the strength of positive values and mountains offered a clear reference point with which to judge the success of human endeavor. To conquer new heights, one had to call upon all available resources, whether political, economic, financial, technological, social, or cultural, assuring that positive results reflected on civilization as a whole.

Alpine tourism represented a convergence of a set of needs, expectations, experiences, certainties, and hopes that together helped convert the Alps into a tourist product. This brand of tourism required that mountains could be dominated while also assigning them attributes that rendered them perfectly consumable. The result was a process whereby a certain number of appropriate economic supports and technical arrangements were introduced to realize

¹⁰ In particular, see: Philippe Joutard, *L'invention du Mont-Blanc* (Paris: Gallimard, Julliard, 1986) and Nicolas Giudici, *La philosophie du Mont Blanc: De l'alpinisme à l'économie immatérielle* (Paris: Grasset, 2000).

¹¹ Simona Boscani-Leoni, "Johann Jakob Scheuchzer (1672–1733) et la découverte des Alpes: Les itinera alpina," in Christiane Demeulenaere (ed.), *Explorations et voyages scientifiques de l'antiquité à nos jours* (Paris: Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques, 2008), pp. 81–100.

¹² Jon Mathieu and Simona Boscani Leoni (eds), *Les Alpes!: Pour une histoire de la perception européenne depuis la Renaissance* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005).

demand while also assuring future expansion. From the second half of the nineteenth century, a number of material changes were introduced to allow for just such development:

- the introduction of technological innovations such as mountain railroads, rack-trains, funicular railways, railway tunnels, cable cars, elevators, and so forth;
- the construction of luxury mountaintop hotels that were impressive both technologically and in terms of taste, comfort, and sophistication;
- the application of medical knowledge to the mountains through the development of high altitude sanatoriums featuring treatments such as aerotherapy and heliotherapy, both of which contributed to a growing cult of fresh air, as well as to much older remedies involving the use of water such as thermalism;
- the further introduction of mountain sports such as climbing, hiking, skiing, and sledding in order to further transform the Alps into a mountain playground filled with fun and excitement;
- the creation of landscapes designed to enhance the beauty of the mountain setting, such as panoramic viewpoints and carefully signed scenic vistas, by clearly telling visitors where to look for the most spectacular views.

Put another way, Alpine tourism is a system comprised of various constituent parts—a notion that has sparked numerous studies and commentaries.¹³ To comprehend it, one must understand the composition of the system itself and a system cannot be reduced to a single object. Each part only makes sense in relation to its constituent parts. Even public acceptance demands that each component work together. It follows that the technological system of alpine tourism is inseparable from the social, administrative, human, organizational, political, and aesthetic devices that mold it. In this respect, Thomas Hughes speaks about socio-technical systems.¹⁴ In a similar vein a system comprises many components that interact and evolve based on constraints related to devices, but also to actions, which can depend on choices and which give a style or a

¹³ With regard to the railway system, see; François Caron, “La naissance d’un système technique à grande échelle: Le chemin de fer en France (1832–1870),” *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 53/4–5 (1998): pp. 859–85; and concerning the electrical system: Thomas Hughes, *Networks of Power: Electrification in Western Society, 1880–1930* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

¹⁴ Thomas Hughes, “L’histoire comme système en évolution,” *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 53/4–5 (1998): pp. 839–57.

profile to a particular system. In fact, this concept of system makes it possible to understand how these multiple components can hold together and give a direction to the disseminated product. In the case of the tourist system, one can characterize these constituents in the following way:

- technical constituents relating to the construction and operation of transportation networks (road, railway, maritime, air), to urban developments (esplanades, parks, walkways), to the organization of attractions (museums, ski lifts, casinos, theatres), to the establishment of the reception infrastructures (hotels, boarding houses, restaurants, etc);
- economic constituents relating to the creation and the organization of travel agencies and tour operators in the development of an integrated, coherent, and effective offering for tourist. They also relate to the sale of the tourist product and the financial consequences that it implies in terms of flows and liquidities;
- political constituents relating to the role of the communities (states, regions, municipalities) in the definition of a tourist policy and to the share left to private initiatives in the construction and the operation of activities;
- professional constituents relating to the creation of a formal, certified, recognized, and transmissible tourist expertise (installation of hotel schools or tourism schools, professionalization of the functions and trades);
- cultural constituents relating to information and promotion through the publication of travel guides, tourist folders, and the opening of tourist offices entitled to inform the public about the existence of the product, its quality, its price, its accessibility, and its availability;
- symbolic or psychological constituents relating to the development of an image or the representation of the product suitable to associate it with a certain form of tourism, with reaching certain consumer sensitivities or creating needs. This data is summarized beautifully by film director Daniel Schmid who associates tourism with “the invention of paradise” or with Mediterranean Club which promises the embodiment of “utopia.”¹⁵

This list, although far from exhaustive, illustrates the extraordinary complexity of the development of a tourist region. Yet the story is even more complicated as a result of the expectations expressed by both users and consumers—a reality

¹⁵ Peter Christian Bener and Daniel Schmid, *Die Erfindung von Paradies* (Zurich: Beobachter, 1983) and Gilbert Trigano, “Consumption de loisir et nouvelle convivialité,” *Temps Libre* 1 (1980): p. 83.

that is difficult to measure or fully understand. The world of “desire” is linked to multiple considerations such as changes in taste, transformation of consumption patterns, and behavior modifications.¹⁶ In the case of alpine tourism, these configurations can prove to be extremely variable, making the system highly unstable. From this perspective, it may be misleading to speak of a “tourist model” because doing so fails to acknowledge the particularities of individual cases. The attraction of the Alps as a tourist environment utilizes images that are forever evolving because they are altered by the ever-changing mountains themselves as well as by shifting ideas about space and man’s emotional relationship to the landscape. If the development of tourist places is bound up with emotional, cultural, and social vectors, so too, such spots (to say nothing of areas trying to develop a tourist following) utilize a variety of instruments of dissemination that take into account their geographic and economic situation, their traditions, as well as the creativity of the publicity agents involved in marketing. This is to say that a tourist system is carrying on several models over the long term, not necessarily complementary, but not at all contradictory. Thus, futuristic or avant-garde ski areas, such as appeared after 1960 in the French Alps at Avoriaz and Morzine or in the Alpes Valaisannes at Thyon 2000, endeavor to domesticate the landscape and the consumer, while offering a tourism free of any constraint. In contrast, several other results offer a symbiosis between tourism and tradition, for example Zermatt or Lauterbrunnen. Such facilities endeavor to ally modernistic style with the construction of cable railways and residential mountain chalets, while at the same time preserving a pronounced village-like character, even if that means relying on imagined authenticity. From this point of view, the essence of alpine tourism—and tourism in general—is to create and recreate a specificity that allows the illusion of either traditional or modern attractions. Therefore, we cannot say that there was ever a single “invention of the Alps,” but rather there is a continual process of invention and reinvention of various models within a vast playground. Within the alpine arc, imitation is but one process that allows the perpetuation of tourism, even as it is central to more widespread development. To a large degree, imitation kills the creativity or, in any case, reduces it.

Another characteristic is associated with the touristic operation of alpine playgrounds: “pluriactivity” or the capacity of a space to be adapted to changing situations through the above-mentioned transformations. Its plasticity strengthens its highly attractive potential. This capacity of adaptation and creativity can be seen in the alpine world in many ways. The renewal of ideas

¹⁶ I have developed these points more fully elsewhere. See: “Storia del turismo e storia economica: considerazioni metodologiche ed epistemologiche,” in Andrea Leonardi and Hans Heiss (eds), *Tourismus und Entwicklung im Alpenraum, 18–20. Jh.* (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2003), pp. 23–41.

and the rebirth of initiatives are constant: the extension of the season, the diversification of destinations, the exploration of new tourist activities assures the rekindling of the process.¹⁷

It is true that the dramatic growth of tourist products over the long term, combined with the top-down effort of tourism developers, resulted in a homogenization and a standardization of tourism. “Fordist” mass tourism results in the unlimited reproduction of an accessible product to the largest possible clientele. However, at the same time, the tendency toward sameness is offset by an equally powerful move toward distinctiveness and individual site recognition. Amid homogenization is found not only the will of producers to attract legions of product-hungry tourists, but also the possibility of attracting new tourists through the introduction of new attractions. Thus, the appearance of “fun” sled-related sports re-energized many winter resorts, which, by the 1980s, had begun to suffer as a new generation grew less interested in their parents’ “traditional” ski holiday. The tourist development cycle follows a logic that was already in place during the nineteenth century. It rests on the re-appropriation of distinctiveness by whole sectors of the industry. If “inventing the consumer” requires the tourist promoters’ continuous effort, the challenge involved rests on the convergence of, on the one hand, the peculiarity of the consumer, and, on the other hand, the similarities between tourists. Tourism promoters must assume that tourists are unique while at the same time reproducing them on a mass scale—such is the essence of tourist development.

If tourism developers have flexibility for innovation and creativity, the tourist is not necessarily a passive being. Far from it. The image of a herd of bleating tourists marks virtually all of the tourism literature and continues to concern scholars. The stereotype of the “idiot tourist”¹⁸ consuming tourist products in a virtual state of unconsciousness is usually contrasted with the “true” traveler who truly seeks to understand the ins and outs of the places she visits. The birth of the tourist industry in the nineteenth century simply amplified an already latent phenomenon in much older forms of travel. To a certain extent, this view is based on an infantilization of the consumer, yet many examples show that consumers are every bit as influential as are producers. Indeed, we might fairly suggest that the consumer is even more demanding, capricious, innovative, and unconstrained than are those responsible for creating tourist sites. Perhaps most notably, tourists are apt to be more sensitive to environmental impact or to the

¹⁷ Readers interested in exploring many more specific examples should consult: Laurent Tissot, *Naissance d'une industrie touristique: Les Anglais et la Suisse au XIXe siècle* (Lausanne: Editions Payot, 2000).

¹⁸ For more on this subject, see the work of the sociologist Jean-Didier Urbain, *L'idiot du voyage: Histoires de touristes* (Paris: Editions Payot, 1993).

impact of tourism on native cultures than are tourism developers. Many tourists are well aware of the often predatory and destructive nature of the tourist industry and they increasingly demand newer forms of leisure travel that leave behind a smaller footprint. “Ethical tourism” or “soft tourism,” to limit ourselves to two recent examples, suggest a redefinition of the relationship between hosts and guests, a redefinition that imposes entirely new criteria on developers, on tourists, and on tourist practices.

Nationalization of the Alpine Model: Switzerland as a Privileged Space of High Grounds

The identification of the Swiss alpine space with the alpine tourist model took place in confused conditions, largely because the operation of mountain tourism was established outside of the Helvetic Confederation. France, Italy, Austria, Germany, and Slovenia all participated to a greater or lesser extent in the process of alpine tourist development. If alpine tourism was actually international from the start, how should we understand the emergence of a Swiss model, which subsequently pioneered alpine tourism across the tourist map? I have already outlined the generic basis on which alpine tourism was able to take off and develop itself. Pursuing this analysis further, Marc Boyer sees in Switzerland a space where the characteristics of the alpine were most pronounced. It was here that emotional attachments were the strongest, the attractions the liveliest, and experiences the most easily replicated. Boyer insists on four elements that played an essential role in Switzerland’s election:

- the verticality criterion in its spatial dimension: in other words, “the higher or the deeper the place is, the more it is worth visiting.” Guides published during the nineteenth century primarily focus on accurately indicating the height of summits, depths of gorges, heights of bell towers, etc.;
- the verticality criterion in its temporal dimension: the more ancient the site, the more “ecstasy” experienced by the tourist. The search for the origins of the world deeply marked the rediscovery of the Alps because the discovery of fossils and rock bands offered a window into the beginning of the world;
- the “Rousseauist” criterion involving a search for inner peace and the comfort of the “womb.” Tourists search for happiness in the admiration of nature and its plenitude, finding both a source of pacification and serenity;

- the “anecdotal” criterion. The Swiss Alps abound in stories which tourists are fond of—most notably that of Guillaume Tell, hero of freedom, independence, and enfranchisement.¹⁹

By emphasizing the ideal type represented by the Helvetic alpine territory, Boyer draws attention to the spectacular, emotional elements likely to attract the tourist in her frantic search for mountains. In other words, in the greater history of tourism, Switzerland had the best assets. Still, nothing could be left to chance. Predisposition is not itself sufficient; simply having resources is not always enough. The development process, shaped by factors that extend beyond geographic and natural dimensions, is a determining factor as well. Let me describe several points that appear to be especially significant.

Welcome Structures

Tourists must find places to welcome them to a region, most notably hotels. In the case under discussion, the great luxury hotels of La Belle Époque played a particularly important role, standing as emblems of mass alpine tourism.²⁰ The construction of new establishments was first visible from the 1830s but expanded dramatically in the last third of the nineteenth century—so much so that by the eve of World War I, in certain regions at least, there was a relative over abundance of luxury accommodations, brought about by an impressive level of entrepreneurial investment.²¹ These structures assumed a recognizable profile in both their monumentality and architectural style. Although grand hotels developed elsewhere, a product of larger transnational tourist trends, they nevertheless contributed significantly to the marketing of Swiss alpine territories. Such buildings profoundly alter the landscape on which they are established, bringing about completely new cityscapes and landscapes, while also redefining more isolated terrain such as mountainsides or alpine summits.

¹⁹ Boyer, “Les Alpes et le tourisme,” p. 26 and also *Histoire de l'invention du tourisme, XVIe-XIXe siècles* (Tour d'Aigues: Editions de l'Aube, 2000), p. 135.

²⁰ Roland Fluckiger-Seiler, *Hotel Traüme zwischen Gletschern und Palmen: Schweizer Tourismus und Hotelbau 1830–1930* (Baden: Hier + Jetzt, 2001) and also *Hotelpaläste: Zwischen Traum und Wirklichkeit: Schweizer Tourismus und Hotelbau, 1830–1920* (Baden: Hier + Jetzt, 2003).

²¹ Peter Püntener, “Der Beitrag des Fremdenverkehrs zur Entwicklung der Schweizer Wirtschaft (1850–1913)” in Andreas Ernst, Thomas Gerlach, Patrick Halbeisen, Bettina Heintz, and Margrit Müller (eds), *Kontinuität und Krise: Sozialer Wandel als Lernprozess* (Zürich: Chronos, 1994), pp. 51–60, p. 57.

Technological Aspects

The Swiss alpine model also features very high technological demands. Continuing with the example of the hotel business, from the start, luxury hotels needed to feature the latest inventions, competing to display ingenuity and boldness, in terms of both technology and design. Thus, luxury hotels were among the first to introduce electric lighting, hot water, improved sanitary facilities, elevators, and other such innovations. Incessant improvement testifies to the concern of innkeepers to be leaders in the process of modernization. Even the design of buildings and the design of interior spaces reflect an obsessive need to anticipate consumers' needs, creating a universe free of everyday constraints. Collectively, the effort is to assure control of time, places, and practices while also guaranteeing total safety with regard to a mountainous environment that might otherwise be perceived as threatening.

The construction of mountain roadways and tunnels, an endeavor so bold that it helped to advertise the accessibility of formally horrifying places, reflects the same concerns. Indeed, the tourist exploitation of the Swiss Alps resulted in technological knowledge that has influenced roadway construction since the 1880s. The drilling of the Saint-Gothard, Simplon, and Lötschberg tunnels contributed to the consolidation of this as a center of excellence in mastering and developing technologies adapted to mountainous regions.²²

Politico-Institutional Aspects

In Switzerland, as in most places, tourism developed without any state intervention during the nineteenth century. Even if local development regulations sometimes harmonized well with private initiatives to improve tourism growth, public support for such development was minimal. No official organization actively considered the contribution of tourism to regional or national economies and there was little political support for more coordinated action on a development plan. Nevertheless, as more people recognized that tourism might actively contribute to economic growth, political attitudes gradually shifted beginning in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In an effort to supplement agricultural earnings, tourist development was gradually promoted as an important element of general development policy. Although Swiss developments pale in comparison with efforts undertaken

²² Laurent Tissot, "La philosophie du Saint-Gothard ou la naissance d'un profil touristique alpin" in *Bollettino storico della Svizzera Italiana*, forthcoming.

in the Tyrolean Alps, for example, the idea gradually took hold that tourism might slow rural depopulation.²³ In the absence of a classic industrial economy, tourism represents a new form of industry capable of creating jobs and raising revenue—a fact made more important as skill level requirements and salaries dropped steadily in urban areas.

Increased support for tourism development resulted in an increase in vocational training as illustrated by the creation of the Lausanne Hotel School in 1893.²⁴ In this area, professional associations, in particular the Swiss Society of Hotels, played a critical role. The professionalization and certification of tourism-related careers helped to strengthen development activities that were increasingly listed in economic studies as a separate sector with its own rules, its own market, its own dynamism, and its own constraints.

Symbolic Aspects

With tourist symbolism, we encounter the vector by which an image of the Swiss Alps was rapidly disseminated to the wider world through advertising campaigns and effective marketing. Tourism is intimately bound to the creation of dream worlds. The principle challenge, then, is to recognize and understand the development of the myths that founded a separate alpine identity. This symbolism had a broad reach and conveyed an image of both Switzerland and the Swiss to the wider world. That part of this image involved technological innovation, allowing for a melding of modernity and tradition, only added to the appeal, joining further substance to the idea of Swiss tourism.²⁵ Advertising campaigns combined to form a virtual “carousel” of images, both traditional and modern: bridges, tunnels, railroads, and electricity, were merged with lugers, skiers, fishermen, natives in traditional costume, twinkling lakes, customary homes, churches, and so on.²⁶ This telescoping might make one’s head spin, but it is why Switzerland is so attractive to such diverse constituents. Together, those elements that make the mountain appealing combine to create a coherent system

²³ Compare with Laurent Tissot, “Tourism in Austria and in Switzerland: Models of Development and Crises 1880–1960,” in Timo Myllyntaus (ed.), *European Crises and Restructuring in History: Experiences of Small Countries* (St. Katharinen: Scripta Mercaturae Verlag 1998), pp. 285–302.

²⁴ Philippe Gindraux, *L’art et la manière: L’école hôtelière de Lausanne: 100 ans d’existence* (Lausanne: Editions Payot, 1993).

²⁵ *Rêves de voyages: Anton Reckziegel (1865–1935). Pionnier de la publicité touristique* (Lausanne: Musée historique de Lausanne, 1999).

²⁶ Guy P. Marchal and Aram Mattioli (eds), *La Suisse imaginée: Bricolage d’une identité nationale* (Zurich: Chronos, 1991).

which places the mountain in the natural order of things from the second half of the nineteenth century: power, knowledge, hierarchy, strength, regeneration, and peace.

Diplomatic Aspects

The foundation of the Swiss Federal State in 1848 contributed to a large-scale movement that generated institutional, political, economic, and symbolic profits. By joining the chorus of nations, Switzerland not only attained greater international legitimacy, it was also thrown into sharper contrast with other places, appearing more unique and recognizable by comparison.²⁷ Beyond maintaining political independence or defending its national interests, Swiss diplomatic action was particularly focused on showcasing national distinctiveness during the second half of the nineteenth century.

Little by little, diplomatic initiatives defined the image of Switzerland as a distinct nation-state. The notion that Switzerland represented a “*Sonderfall*” supported the idea of the country as an excellent tourist destination. Promoting this difference represented a kind of warfare by other means, defining Swiss independence using different tools than were traditionally drawn upon during major power conflicts. If Europe still represented a “battlefield,” the presence of a “playground” at the center assured that Swiss tourism provided a safe harbor away from international confrontations and sheltered from nationalist reflexes. In this context, the hotel business came to play a fundamental role as a meeting place, as a place of exchange, and as a diplomatic space.²⁸

Universalization of the Alpine Tourist Model

Far from limited to its place of birth, Helvetic-style tourism quickly spread beyond Swiss borders. It is safe to say that from the middle of the nineteenth century there was an “alpinization” of tourism that made altitude a primary reference point. The universalization of this tourist model rested on several elements, which, for lack of substantial research on the subject, remain difficult to measure precisely. The German geographer Irmfried Siedentop has pointed

²⁷ Urs Altermatt, Catherine Bosshart-Pflugger and Albert Tanner, *Die Konstruktion einer Nation: Nation und Nationalisierung in der Schweiz, 18.-20. Jahrhundert* (Zürich: Chronos, 1998).

²⁸ Bertrand Muller, “Construire l’événement: hôtellerie de luxe et diplomatie: Le Beau-Rivage Palace et la Conférence de Lausanne de 1922–1923,” in Nadja Maillard (ed.), *Beau-Rivage Palace* (Gollion: Infolio, 2008), pp. 116–28.

to 116 areas in the world with the “Swiss” label.²⁹ They are mainly situated in Germany. In this process, various modalities played a role. In an illuminating article, François Walter considers graphic arts and photography to be responsible for this “astonishing spreading.”³⁰ But this diffusion of images goes together with a vaster movement that operates in the end of the eighteenth century and, to a greater extent, during the first three decades of the nineteenth century.

We can distinguish three of them, each of which enjoyed particular periods of intense reproduction. The first modality involved both the climbers and climbing; in essence, climbers and their sport made mountains seem both accessible and controllable, without necessarily making alpine areas seem corrupted. The second modality grew from the impact of tourist promoters—railroad companies, travel agencies, development officers, and editors of travel guides among others—who generated reams of advertising material and distributed it on a global scale. These efforts assured that the alpine model was relentlessly in the public eye and that it was therefore always topical. The third modality involved the spread of hotel practices where a focus on accommodation and reception was soon associated both with alpine hotel architecture and with the model of hotel management utilized in Swiss resorts.

This distinction may seem arbitrary insofar as, as I have just shown, it was the *combination* of numerous elements that was central to the successful construction and assertion of the alpine tourist model. Without any real hierarchies, it falls within the scope of the functioning of a socio-technical system to give additional roles to the various actors involved. This organizational overlap does not imply the idea of absolutes. The global system conditions the emergence of sub-systems because a particular tourist profile can emphasize certain activities instead of others, on certain grounds to the detriment of others, on certain consumers instead of others, on certain promoters to the detriment of others. In this respect, the construction of tourism is parallel to that of a tourist market where competitors are confronted, not only at the national level, but also at the regional as well as local levels. However, in every case, competition is based on the dissemination of a generic model that gains support by adapting to more localized contexts.

Although difficult to fully quantify its real impact, it is imperative to consider the major role of mountaineering in the spread of the alpine model. This

²⁹ Irmfried Siedentop, “Die Schweizen—eine fremdenverkehrsgeographische Dokumentation,” *Zeitschrift für Wirtschaftsgeographie* 28 (1984): pp. 126–30. In a former article, he counted 90 places. Irmfried Siedentop, “Die geographische Verbreitung der Schweiz,” *Geographica Helvetica* 1 (1977): pp. 33–43.

³⁰ François Walter, “La montagne alpine: Un dispositif esthétique et idéologique à l'échelle de l'Europe,” *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 51/2 (2005): pp. 64–87, at p. 73.

practice gained significant stature from the 1830s under the influence of British mountaineers who, by using the Alps as their privileged playground, established a true model of action that, gradually, inspired mountaineers in other countries. Mountaineering corresponded to the Victorian mentality of “self help” which bourgeois elites emphasized as a means of furthering the industrial revolution and which stressed work, perseverance, self-abnegation, and precision.³¹ In fact, even if inspired by these ideas, the sport remained in British hands for only a few years. That alpine clubs were quickly established in most European countries illustrates an infatuation that spread beyond national borders and which soon exploited, little by little, all that the Alps could offer in terms of ascents. In England, the Alpine Club was created in 1857. It was followed by the Austrian Alpine Club (1862), the Swiss Alpine Club (April 1863), the Italian Alpine Club (October 1863), the German Alpine Club (1869), the French Alpine Club (1874), and the list then extended to new European countries, as well as to places outside of Europe.³² Even so, it would still be too early to speak about a globalization of mountaineering because the sport functioned primarily to express strong nationalist feeling, a fact made clear by the need to display national flags on alpine summits or by the importance assigned by national leaders to being “first” atop mountain peaks. Yet, at the same time, the fact that the sport was so quickly made an important means of national expression illustrates the widespread and important role of mountaineering.

Despite being so associated with nationalism, the institutionalization of the sport in European life assured that it was soon disseminated to a larger and larger public. The first years in which mountaineering formed into a coherent sport, between 1830 and 1860, are central to the recognition of the Alps as a generic tourism model. Generally speaking, the mountaineers’ expectations became confused with those of mountain-seeking tourists. A multimedia stage show developed by Albert Smith in 1852 and 1853 on his successful ascent of Mont Blanc is exemplary in this respect. The show enjoyed enormous success. Two hundred thousand people attended the production, which became one of London’s most popular attractions.³³ Travel guides, which appeared everywhere

³¹ Olivier Hoibian (ed.), *L’invention de l’alpinisme: La montagne et l’affirmation de la bourgeoisie cultivée (1786–1914)* (Paris: Belin, 2008), and Claudio Ambrosi, Michael Wedeking (eds), *L’invenzione di un cosmo borghese: Valori sociali e simboli culturali dell’alpinismo nei secoli XIXe et XXe* (Trento: Museo Storico, 2000).

³² Dominique Lejeune, *Les ‘Alpinistes’ en France (1875–1919)* (Paris: Éditions du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques, 1988), p. 22.

³³ Peter H. Hansen, “Albert Smith, the Alpine Club, and the Invention of Mountaineering in mid-Victorian Britain,” *Journal of British Studies* 34 (July 1995): pp. 300–324.

in Europe during the period, also fueled “alpine mania.” The proliferation of this literature stimulated curiosity, increased the desire to see specific sites/sights, and helped make alpine tourism a mass phenomenon.³⁴ Gradually, the desire to see the Alps infected a broader and broader population.

The dramatic spread of mountaineering did not stop the creation of additional behavioral models, each related both to specific actors but also to the larger practice of climbing. As ordinary tourists increasingly sought to consume alpine spaces, mountaineers, still confined to exclusive and elitist circles, continued to exercise a considerable influence on the public mind. By successive adaptation, alpinists spread a vision of a territory to be cherished, to be wandered, and to be explored through various other means and other forms. The repercussions of this process are very perceptible, even as the original mountaineering model merged into a formless mass in which mountains more or less became an ordinary consumer good.

One can easily understand why mountaineering underwent an important evolution during the last third of the nineteenth century. Bored with their old alpine playground, now overrun with an increasing number of tourists who diminished the apparent challenge of the Alps, many mountaineers sought more challenging, higher, and more technical summits. Expeditions traveled to the Pyrenees, to the Caucasus, to the Himalaya, and to the mountains of the Americas.³⁵ Yet these new destinations were explored using the same models and approaches developed in the Alps. In other words, mountaineers carried a model with them that was created in a space with which they no longer associated themselves. By utilizing other mountainous regions, these climbers felt that they could save the purity of the alpine model.

The extension of mountaineering beyond the Alps was not simply a product of climbers seeking new challenges but also reflected a growing mountaineering literature published in both mass media outlets such as newspapers and magazines as well as in more specialized alpine guidebooks and climb narratives. All of these works celebrated a very active and very cosmopolitan worldview while, at the same time, constantly referring back to the alpine matrix as a way of establishing new trends and developments. With the proliferation of climbing clubs, the development of a climbing literature perpetually reiterated recognition of the Alps as original space. In 1892, the New Zealand Alpine Club was created, modeled on the English Alpine Club. Enthusiasts created the Canadian Alpine Club in 1906. Other clubs followed around the world.

³⁴ Tissot, *Naissance d'une industrie touristique*, p. 28 et sq.

³⁵ Compare with Peter Hansen, “Confetti of Empire: The Conquest of Everest in Nepal, India, Britain and New Zealand,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42/3 (2000): pp. 307–32.

Along these lines, professional mountain guides played one of the most important roles in disseminating the alpine model. Guides (especially those from Switzerland and Austria) were significant in several mountainous regions, clearly showing the strength of the alpine matrix in the sensibilities of mountaineers. While the history of these guides is relatively well known, grey areas remain in the study of their influence on the internationalization of the Alps.³⁶ The extension of mountaineering territories was largely made with the cooperation of alpine mountain guides. Great mountain guides such as Peter Taugwalder worked in other regions and provided developers in these areas with expertise. Canada, especially the Rocky Mountains and the Selkirks, is an excellent example. The opening of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1885 first drew attention to these mountains and generated the first significant tourist promotion of the area. Very quickly, tourism developers published advertising leaflets and other travel guidebooks that were nearly identical to those written about the Alps.³⁷ To further promote the Rockies and the Selkirks, the Canadian Pacific Railway Company invited two mountain guides from Interlaken in Switzerland. The guides were a hit, strolling around in traditional costumes and posing for photographers. John Marsh estimates that they played an invaluable role in creating a “desire for the mountain” in Canada.³⁸ Over the next 30 years, the arrival of additional Swiss guides continued to strengthen the influence of the alpine model on the conquest of the Rockies—a trend further solidified by the continuing professionalization of the tour guiding profession in Switzerland. The arrival of Swiss guides, even if only for short periods, assured that a whole “alpine science” was imposed on areas that might otherwise have developed their own approach to the utilization of mountain resources and tourism development. A similar process is apparent in the Rocky Mountains of the United States.³⁹

Further systematic research of the role played by mountain guides in the global spread of alpine tourism would be fruitful. However, the alpinization of tourism cannot solely be explained by the efforts of far-traveling Swiss guides, the process took place at other levels as well.

³⁶ Among a few titles, Thomas Antoniotti, *Bauern, Bergführer, Hoteliers: Fremdenverkehr und Bauernkultur: Zermatt und Aletsch 1850–1950* (Baden: Hier + Jetzt, 2002) and Bellwald Werner, *Ins Feld und Firn: Bergführer und Bergsteiger in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Kippel: Lötschentaler Museum, 1994).

³⁷ E.J. Hart, *The Selling of Canada: The CPR and the Beginning of Canadian Tourism* (Banff: Altitude Publications, 1983).

³⁸ John Marsh, “The Rocky and Selkirk Mountains and the Swiss Connection 1885–1914,” *Annals of Tourism Research* 12/4 (1985): pp. 417–33.

³⁹ “Mountain Vacations in North America West,” *Expedia.com*. Available online at: <http://www.expedia.com/daily/vacations/mountain/west.asp> [accessed September 13, 2009].

Tourism promoters, in the broad sense of the term, also facilitated the spread of the Swiss model. In commercial terms, the Swiss model was imitated in an effort by mountain areas to better compete with one another. A careful study of the introduction of winter tourism in France at the end of the nineteenth century shows that tourism developers made constant reference to Swiss efforts in terms of transport, hospitality, lodging, and leisure activities.⁴⁰ In the Pyrenees, Jean-Raoul Paul, the director of the Compagnie du Midi, which handled the development of winter sports, declared the need to “Swissify” the Pyrenees.⁴¹ Efforts in Chile follow a similar path. During the 1920s, the Chilean National Railways undertook a promotional program that celebrated the “Chilean Alps.”⁴² In Argentina, the process was the same.⁴³

The “alpinization” of tourism is also perceptible in terms of architecture. Ever since the National Exhibition held in Geneva in 1896, at which visitors were filled with admiration for the “Swiss Village” which was the high point of the event, the chalet has represented an important symbolic element of the Swiss identity.⁴⁴ The Swiss chalet had a long history before it became a ubiquitous Helvetic trademark. This type of structure took hold during the nineteenth century and continues to be built in mountain centers around the world; some entrepreneurs even advocated chalet construction as an aesthetically pleasing addition to any garden. Ultimately, the worldwide proliferation of

⁴⁰ Bertrand Larique, “L'économie du tourisme en France des années 1890 à la veille de la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Organisation et développement d'un secteur socio-économique” (Ph.D. diss., Université de Bordeaux, 2006), p. 208 et sq.

⁴¹ Christophe Bouneau, “La construction et les mutations de l'économie touristique pyrénéenne du milieu du 19^{ème} siècle au second conflit mondial,” in Laurent Tissot (ed.), *Development of a Tourist Industry in the 19th and 20th Centuries: International Perspectives* (Neuchâtel: Editions Alphil, 2003), pp. 127–44, p. 140 and “La politique touristique de la Compagnie du Midi entre 1852 et 1937,” *Midi. Revue de sciences humaines et de littérature de la France du Sud* 3 (June 1987): pp. 77–87.

⁴² I would like to thank Rodrigo Booth for forwarding his not-yet-published article to me: “Turismo y representación del paisaje. Una mirada a la invención del sur de Chile en la *Guía del Veraneante* (1932–1962).”

⁴³ Some aspects of the development of “Argentina’s Little Switzerland” are developed in the work of Anahí Ballent and Adrián Gorelik, “País urbano o país rural: La modernización territorial y su crisis,” in Alejandro Cattaruzza (ed.), *Crisis económica, avance del Estado e incertidumbre política (1930–1943)*, Tomo VII de la Nueva Historia Argentina (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2001), pp. 143–200.

⁴⁴ Bernard Crettaz, *Ab Dieu! Que la Suisse est jolie!* (Lausanne: École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, Département d'Architecture, Commission d'Information, 1997) and Jacques Gubler, “Le chalet à bâtons rompus: Conversation avec Serge Desarnaulds, poète,” in Jacques Gubler, *Motions, émotions: Thèmes d'histoire et d'architecture* (Gollion: Infolio, 2003), pp. 130–48.

chalets represents a global marketing of Switzerland at home, a place of refuge for everyone.⁴⁵ To resume discussion of the Canadian Pacific Railway, the company constructed its flagship hotel, the Glacier House Hotel, in 1887, in an architectural style featuring design elements associated with Swiss chalets.⁴⁶ The company went even further to “Swissify” the Canadian mountains by recreating a Swiss village called Edelweiss in every detail. Built to welcome the Swiss mountain guides, the village consisted of six houses and was ready to receive occupants in 1911.⁴⁷ A similar effort to “Swissify” territory is found in Latvia where a whole tourist dynamic known as “Livonian Switzerland” was developed at the end of the nineteenth century in the current province of Vidzeme, formerly the south part of Livonia.⁴⁸ Although the space does little to remind one of the harshness of the Alps, travel guidebooks to the region celebrate the area’s beautiful hills and valleys, suggesting that a difference in altitude, however small, still indicates alpine influence. The construction of several Swiss chalets adds to this identification.

To a great extent, the alpine seizure of this type of tourism originates in the spread of hotel management models. One can undoubtedly assert that the advent of hotel science largely originated from experiences realized within the framework of the alpine model. Great hotel chains such as Seiler, Badrapp, and Ritz quickly imposed themselves as model hotels, providing patrons with a higher quality gastronomic, but also architectural experience. With the institutionalization of education, the experience gained in these hotels found its way into textbooks that were, in turn, translated into several languages. Certain educators and popularizers of tourism, men such as Albert Junod and Jules Klopfenstein, helped to establish an approach to hotel training that was soon widespread. The *École Hôtelière de Lausanne*, established in 1893, was the first of its kind and it rests at the heart of this system. The school truly demonstrates international recognition of a “Swiss school” of hotel management.

⁴⁵ Compare with Michel Vernes, “Le chalet infidèle ou les dérives d’une architecture vertueuse et de son paysage de rêve,” *Revue d’histoire du XIXe siècle* 32 (2006): pp. 111–36. This article is available online at: <http://rh19.revucs.org/index1099.html> [accessed September 13, 2009].

⁴⁶ John Marsh, *A History of Glacier House and Nakimu Caves: Glacier National Park British Columbia* (Peterborough: Canadian Recreation Services, 1979).

⁴⁷ Roxroy West, “Swiss Guides and the Village of Edelweiss,” *The Beaver* 310/1 (Summer 1979): pp. 50–53.

⁴⁸ C. Schulz, *Livlandische Schweiz* (ca. 1880).

Conclusion

With the invention of the Alps at the end of the eighteenth century, tourism was able to become a truly large-scale phenomenon that in turn prompted unexpected results. Although rooted in a specific geographic region and political territory, various actors and developments transformed alpine tourism into a globally recognized model that permeated activities using altitude as a development principle. The alpine model was easily applied in other places and could readily be used to promote successful economic and technical exploitation of mountainous areas. It simultaneously associates a mental construction gathering together political, philosophic, as well as cultural elements whose convergence amplifies the scope of alpine tourism. If the enjoyment of spectacular scenery remains the foundation of tourism in alpine areas, further study will better demonstrate how the various factors described in this article combined to create the Swiss character of mountain tourism. The simple outline provided here already offers a variety of avenues for future study. Although tourism is generally understood in terms of national identities and identification with specifically promoted places, the alpine model contributed dramatically to an internationalization and universal character of tourist forms. By becoming commonplace through access to a greater segment of the population, by showcasing technical expertise, by assuring the perpetual invention of new practices, by creating new jobs and professions, Swiss-style alpine tourism took hold far from its place of origin. Understanding the grammar of alpine tourism demands consideration of overlapping factors and uses that are, in turn, linked together by sometimes-contradictory logic.