

The Importance of City Tourism: Forecasts and Problems

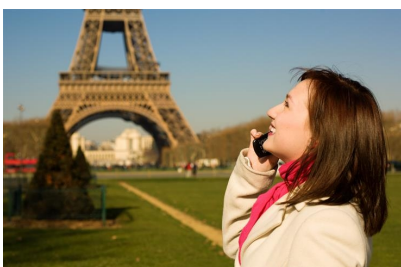
The past six decades saw the burgeoning expansion and diversification of the tourism industry, unarguably, one of the world's primary economic drivers in recent times. New exotic destinations are constantly popping up, even dwarfing the usual tourist magnets in both North America and Europe. The industry seems to have been blessed with the gift of longevity, and the numbers themselves showcase the fact.



From a mere 277 million international tourists in 1980, to 528 million in 1995, and to 983 million, the tourists keep on coming in droves and increasing exponentially by the year despite economic setbacks. According to an assessment by the UNWTO titled "Tourism Towards 2030," the number of international tourists is expected to increase by at least 3.3% every year (a figure that is equivalent to 43 million tourist arrivals annually) from 2010 to 2030.

Based on pertinent information from countries with available data, inbound tourism accounts for 30% of the world's commercial services exports, generating at least \$1.2 trillion in income per year or \$3.4 billion a day on average (as per official data in 2011). It is also estimated that the tourism industry is responsible for 5% of the world's GDP and as such, provides a major contribution to employment worldwide (the figure is pegged at 6% to 7% of the total of all jobs in all countries).

This also makes tourism rank fourth below chemicals, food, and fuels as a major income-generating export among countries with an active tourism scene (10% of countries list tourism as a major economic pillar) – and which is also especially true among smaller countries and islands, whose income from tourism can reach almost up to a high of 25% of their total annual GDP.



More than half of the world's population lives in cities or in similar areas within an urban environment.

The importance of these urban spaces cannot be stressed enough; these cities are where most people choose to live in, and as such, is the lifeblood of most countries in the world.

A study conducted by the UN forecasts the growth of the world's urban population at 61% by 2030 (or 5 billion more persons living in cities in the next fifteen years). Interest in urban tourism is expected to rise in the coming years, which would make it an important stimulus in building economies and hastening urban development.

It is said that economic impact is superior to social or political impact. With the financial benefits that urban tourism would bring, this could bid well for a lot of nations that are trying to maximize the benefits that they can receive from a well-oiled tourism industry. As cities continue to grow and adapt to an ever changing social and economic landscape, more and more people are demanding new tourism experiences and products.

Globalization also plays a huge part in this phenomenon; people want things that are familiar to them, wherever they are in the world. Whether it is in Japan or England, they want the same kind of hotel rooms, and the same kind of connections, just within the context of a new environment. This high demand can cause cities to invest more in infrastructure, training, conservation, and promotion, which in turn, would result into a greater good for whole communities at large. It's a win-win situation for all.



Tourism brings more than just financial benefits to the cities it blesses. It revitalizes and invigorates communities. It connects people; from strangers to friends to family. It is a platform for learning. It is a vehicle for adventure. It teaches people how to live with diversity, how to form connections with people whose culture is vastly different from your own. Tourism is more than just an economic driver; it is a way of life. One that can provide inherent benefits for all that is involved.

But the discussion continues. It is clear that the tourism industry is still a youngling, and still has lots of areas that need improvement. Cities are also confronted with a number of challenges: they need to provide a consistent image to new tourists, develop new attractions, promote their unique destinations etc.

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