

SPAIN PLANS TO BECOME THE LEADER IN SHOPPING TOURISM



For 2015, Spain has set its target to become a leader in shopping tourism, a booming segment that attracts visitors to the big cities. This will help to diversify the offer and attract tourists with a higher than average purchasing power.

In response to this challenge, **the government has launched a Shopping Tourism Plan 2015, with a public budget of EUR 2.82 million**, to promote and position Spain in the minds of shoppers next year.

The main Spanish fashion associations have welcomed the new plan optimistically. Pepa Bueno, executive director of the Spanish Association of Fashion Designers (ACME), believes that "fashion and design are another tourist attraction that must be promoted".

Madrid and Barcelona are the leaders in shopping tourism in Europe, as two of the best European cities for satisfying the needs of the visitors. They are surpassed only by London which leads in the rankings, according to the Globe Shopper Index which analyzes 33 European cities.

"Everything having to do with the proposal and development of initiatives to promote shopping tourism seems fine to us. We support proposals that include 'shopping' as a key part of the tourism offer," said Borja Oria, president of the Business Association of Textile Trade and Accessories (Acotex).

Both ACME and Acotex agree that this sales campaign will be the best in the last seven years, since the start of the crisis. The Acotex president predicts an increase in sales of between 3% and 4%.

At Neinver they also expect to close the year with "growth of between 5% and 10% in shopping centers," says Eduardo Ceballos, Country Head of Neinver in Spain. "We have noted the positive effect in Madrid too, where sales recorded in the first half of the year showed an increase of 6.7% compared to the same period last year," Ceballos further explained. In his opinion, "much is left to be done" in this area in terms of visa facilitation and more air connections with emerging markets.

"The international tourist spends seven times more than a local buyer," says Global Blue, operators of IVA which is based in Sweden and which has focused on the Chinese market, after the "significant decline" among the Russian public, both in terms of influx and of money spent on shopping.

In this regard, Global Blue's marketing manager, Paloma Lucas, said that although the Shopping Tourism Plan is "a big step," much work is needed "to deal with the obstacles that these visitors face with the issuing of visas and the lack of direct flight connections with China and other Asian countries."

"The fact that Asians come into Spain with visas from other countries means a loss of selling opportunities for our businesses, since it is in the country of entry and exit that most spending takes place," he lamented.

"Shopping tourism has the effect of boosting the local market with the arrival of upper-middle income tourists from Russia, China or the United States, which means an increase in average spending at the destination and profitability for the market", according to Neinver, the company that introduced the 'outlet' concept in Spain.

At Value Retail, which has been in Spain for over 20 years, and which manages Las Rozas Village in Madrid and La Roca Village in Barcelona, they point to Russia, China and Brazil as the most strategic markets. However, Value Retail emphasizes "the increase in the number of visitors to Madrid from countries such as Korea, Kuwait and Singapore, and to Barcelona from Russia, China, Southeast Asia and the Middle East".

This plan represents the first step towards positioning Spain among the top shopping tourism destinations, and as a complete destination offering 'sun and beach', mountains and nature, history, cuisine, culture, folklore, with the current addition of 'shopping '.

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