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Growth of Tourism Industry in Hong Kong

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ABSTRACT

The tourism industry is one which provides hospitality to the people who visit the destination and provides them services making sure the customers' needs are met. Tourism stands as a strong support to a country affecting the economy. Varying from country to country, tourism plays a significant role in the development of a country. This industry requires a lot of regulation and a smooth working because it is not only to the in landers but also to the outlanders. Doing this is affected by a number of factors like the infrastructure, how developed a country is, the culture of the country, the safety aspect and most importantly what makes the country unique that it is a must watch. In addition to this, the work of the tourism industry is to promote the country in such a way that maximum people visit it and even encourage others to pay a sure visit to it. Tourism along with catering to the customers or the visitors, it caters to the people who need employment. This industry provides jobs to people, thus, reducing the rate of unemployment in the country. Hong Kong is a country which has a good and well established tourism industry which works in promoting, satisfying its customers by providing world class facilities and tourism attractions, and it provides employment thus adding to the GDP of the country. The tourism industry of Hong Kong is a crucial Industry and is considered one of the major pillars.

Keywords: Tourism, Strong Support, Infrastructure, Employment, GDP.

1. INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry in Hong Kong is one of the major industries existing right from the time the country shifted to a service sector model in late 1980s and early 1990s. Tourism in Hong Kong has grown over the years, offering from an amusement park to amazing sea food joints. It had about 4.9 million visitors in the year 2017. (boost to the Hong Kong tourism, n.d.) The peak time of most visitors is seen between the month is October and December because of the comfortable temperature in the city and the reasonable costs in the market. Hong Kong is a hub of shopping and has one of the best Disney lands in Asia. It is a destination to Victoria Harbour, the Peak Tower, Madame Tussaud's and many other places worth visiting. The tourism industry is administrated by the Tourism Commission which was set in 1999 in order to maintain or increase the position of Hong Kong as a destination spot. The tourism Industry also provides major employment in the country which includes jobs as guides, jobs in the hotel industry and to the travel agencies.

Present condition of Tourism Industry

The tourism industry is considered to be an essential part of the Hong Kong economy. With the population of 7.34 million and 320.9 billion GDP in 2016, Hong Kong tourism industry has shown an immense growth since 1997. In 1997, travel and tourism contributed about 9.7 per cent to the total GDP of Hong Kong which was increased to 16.8 per cent in 2016. According to the travel and tourism competitiveness index 2017 Hong Kong is ranked 11th out of 136 countries (Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index 2017 edition- Hong Kong SAR, n.d.). The city has registered 25.7 million arrivals last year. Hong Kong was successful in maintaining the top spot in the list of most visited cities in the world for the second time in a row. (Top 100 City Destinations Ranking: WTM London 2017 Edition, 2017) Due to the festival season events and pleasant weather condition in the town industry insiders have forecasted that the annual growth of the industry will vary from 2-3 per cent. Statistics revealed that in September 2017 more than 4.63 million visitors arrived in the city, out of which 77 per cent were from the mainland (Xinqi, 2017)

Factors affecting Tourism Industry in Hong Kong

A strong tourism industry counts on the development of every factor that affects its growth. Factors varying from the infrastructure of the country to the safety of its outbound tourists matters. In the process of working on each aspect separately and as a whole (with the other factors) for booming the tourists visiting the country, it is essential to tap on major factors that affect the survival of the tourism industry.

Tourism Commission

Tourism commission of Hong Kong was found in 1999 and works with the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) and other existing organisations to promote the development of the country through the increase of tourism. The commission acts as a regulatory body responsible for coordinating and formulating the activities involving the implementation of strategies, policies, and plans for the tourists visiting Hong Kong.

The responsibility of this body is to make sure the tourism runs smoothly in the country, market and promote Hong Kong as a desirable destination which requires a must visit, address to the concerns of the outlanders and enhance their experience during the trip. It always conducts a survey every few years to keep a track of the interests and level of satisfaction the visitors have after visiting Hong Kong. This helps them keep in line and meet the requirements of the people.

Attractions and facilities

One of the main reasons for tourism in a country is the curiosity and the want to explore and experience something new which they have not seen before or something which is exclusive about that country. The attractions and facilities provided make the experience of the tourists an extraordinary one. With this different experience, the destination is recommended and the rating of the country increases. This, thus, increases the number of people visiting the destination repeated number of times. The tourism commission prevailing in the country is making good efforts to develop the tourism attractions in order to enhance the overall attractiveness of the tour people get when they come to Hong Kong. As the Master Redevelopment Plan finished, Ocean Park is one destination which has become a world-class marine theme park with more than 80 attractions in it. In February 2016, Ocean Park had announced one of the most Proponent hotels, namely The Fullerton.

Apart from the Ocean Park of the most visited places in Hong Kong is the Hong Kong Disneyland Resort (HKDL). The resort is one exuberating experience for everyone. An exclusive destination for kids, Disneyland amusement park is a great way of reliving the childhood with all Disney characters and the adventurous rides. After the launch of their 10th anniversary Celebration in 2015, they started a new stage show, "The Mickey Mouse and The Wondrous Book", new fireworks show "Disney in The Stars", new attraction "The Fairy Tale Forest" (Government of Hong Kong, n.d.) And many more. The Walt Disney and the Government of Hong Kong are discussing the further development of the Disneyland Resort. The other attractions of the country such as the Peak tower, Madame Tussaud's, Victoria Harbour and others which are a must go to places.

Public transport

A country one doesn't reside in, the only means of travel is the public transport or renting a vehicle. Hong Kong's public transport is one which can surely satisfy the needs of the tourists. The most used road and rail transport are taxis, MTR, tramways, buses, and minibuses. Ferries are also used to make paid trips to the area of the Island and to go across the Victoria Harbour. The Hong Kong Island or the Kowloon can be visited on foot or for convenience on the MTR. But the Ocean Park, Repulse bay, and the Jumbo kingdom need a bus or a taxi for transport.

MTR

Hong Kong has a well-connected MTR system for travelling to different places. It is one of the most popular public transport and a very convenient way of travelling in the country. There are 10 MTR lines in the system, with more than 70 stations connecting the various islands. The trains run every 2-4 minutes from 6'o clock in the morning to 1'o clock in the night. The stations located in the strategic places where there is maximum population requiring commutation. It also has fares starting from HK\$ 3.2 increasing at very short intervals according to the distance, which is quite an affordable rate.

Taxi

Taxi is also a very convenient, easily available and inexpensive way of travel throughout the city. Conversing with the drivers is not an issue because almost all drivers are able to speak English. There exist 3 types of taxis in Hong Kong- Red taxis (Urban areas), Green taxis (New Territories) and Blue Taxis (Lantau Island). Most drivers are very friendly with the customers and especially tourists, and always run the taxis on the meter. (public Transport in Hong Kong, n.d.)

Buses and Minibuses

Buses are more useful and popular for the residents. The buses have routes which cover almost all areas of Hong Kong which can be reached by road. Buses and minibuses are essential for travelling to the southern side of Hong Kong Island because the MTR covers only the northern part of the island. Again, buses start early in the mornings until midnight at a good frequency. For tours with the tourists, double decker buses are used and most buses are air conditioned which are to be paid for by cash or the octopus card. Minibuses are of mainly two types: green and red top. They are considered faster than normal buses but cost a little higher.

Peak Tram and Tramway

The tramline in Hong Kong started in 1904 and operates only in the northern side of the Island. Tram is considered one of the oldest modes of transport in Hong Kong. The double decker trams also work well and only have special routes. The fare is very cheap and costs only HK\$ 2.3 and HK\$ 1.2 for adults and children respectively. (public Transport in Hong Kong, n.d.). Peak tram is a cable tram going up to Victoria Peak from Central district.

Star Ferry

Star ferry operating in Hong Kong is a cheap and good mode of transportation which began in 1898. It provides a panorama view of the Victoria harbour and the Hong Kong skyscrapers. Most ferries have 2 decks, with the upper deck of higher cost with fresh air and the view while the lower deck is cheaper mostly used by people who travel very frequently.

Octopus Card

Octopus card system is one comfortable way for transport. It can be used by tourists who come for a longer duration of stay on the Island. It is a prepaid electronic card system which can be used in most of the public transports such as MTR, buses, Star ferry, and trams. This card can also be used for the payment of goods in shops like 7-eleven.

Infrastructure

Infrastructure is important in attracting tourist to a place. Infrastructure includes how well the airports are built, how the resources are used in making the city better, the flyovers and the underpasses which manage the traffic well. All these affect the number of visitors to Hong Kong. The Government has taken up projects for improving the airports, roads, MTR routes, ports for ferries and ships, adding up for trams in the service. A few of them are the Route8, Castle Peak road extension, Route 5, the Western corridor, etc. a few more projects to list are-

Transportation Infrastructure

1. West Island Line and South Island Line
2. Sha Tin to Central Link
3. Tuen Mun Western Bypass & Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link

Cross-boundary Infrastructure Projects

4. Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link
5. HK-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge
6. HK-Shenzhen Airport Co-operation
7. HK-Shenzhen Joint Development of Lok Ma Chau Loop New Urban Development Areas
8. West Kowloon Cultural District
9. Kai Tak Development Plan
10. New Development Areas (10 infrastructure Projects of Hong Kong, 2007)

2. SAFETY AND HEALTH CONCERNS

The health and safety standards of Hong Kong are very advanced. Hong Kong government is very particular about the health of its citizen and would not want health issues in their country. At the Hong Kong International Airport, there are automatic sensors which take the temperature of the person and if it is considered high, the authorities would want the person to participate in the quick health check.

Hong Kong also has a world class healthcare industry which hospitals providing outstanding facilities. Visitors who got involved in an accident can seek help at a public hospital where they will always be treated even if the payment is not made immediately. And communication is not a problem because all professionals speak English.

Hong Kong is very safe for all the visitors both during the day and night. There is regular patrolling by the police in most of the areas and anyone can ask for help at any time. With all the external support and safety it is still recommended that the tourists take care of their belongings and beware of any doubtful activities if any take place around them. (discover hong Kong , n.d.)

3. THE EFFECT OF TOURISM INDUSTRY ON THE HONG KONG ECONOMY

Tourism has outpaced logistics, finance, and professional services as the most rapidly growing sector and biggest job creator among the four so-called pillar industries (Chung, 2015). Tourism is considered to be one of the significant industries in Hong Kong. It has affected the economy of Hong Kong in various ways. Tourism has helped in generating jobs for the citizens of Hong Kong. In Hong Kong 8.6% employment is generated from the tourism industry which constitutes to about 3, 27,967 jobs in the economy (travel and tourism competitiveness index 2017, n.d.) The unemployment rate in Hong Kong has stayed near full employment level of 3.1% to 3.5%. The unemployment rate stayed low at 3.2% between March and May 2017 (Hong Kong economy strengthens in 2017, 2017). The boom of the tourism industry has led to increase in people's standard of living. Hong Kong is one of the world's finest destination places has directly contributed to its infrastructure as well. In the infrastructure sub index, it has been ranked 8th under which Air transport infrastructure has been ranked on the 5th ground and port infrastructure is placed 1st and tourist service infrastructure is 60th. These ranking are out of 136 countries (travel and tourism competitiveness index 2017, n.d.). The tourism industry does not need any special skills or rigorous professional training to get a job in this sector. A mere knowledge about the trends and the cultural history of the place is enough to land a person with a job in the tourism sector. Owing to the same belief and fact, the tourism sector in Hong Kong has been flourishing due to its lack of specialised skills. Unemployed people prefer to be a part of this industry due to their lack of technical skills and it's a two way process where the industry accepts people from all walks of life. The current administration of Hong Kong believes that Innovation and Technology are the future development trend and focus. Innovation and Technology can help Hong Kong economy diversify and move towards the high value-added economic structure, as well as facilitate young people to move up the value chain. Therefore tourism industry can one of the media which can help the government to frame policy and initiate various plans as they will have which will help the development of Innovation and technology in the country.

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