

Critically evaluate the
contribution of
heritage to the uk
tourism



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In the growth of an economy there are those activities that contribute a lot to the growth; they act as the backbone of the economy. According to Boyd & Timothy (2003) The UK has diversified such activities and tourism has contributed to huge earnings in the country that has gone ahead of other economic earning activities. Investing in heritage tourism has proved to pay dividends to the UK economy and has not disappointing since its inception. This paper critically evaluates the contribution of heritage to the UK tourism industry outlining the benefits that has come with it. Billions of pounds have been earned as income to the UK economy contributing a lot to the gross domestic products. It tackles the historical context of heritage, the value and role of heritage to tourism, the supply and demand of heritage and gives facts and figures on the issues.

As explained by Davies & Prentice (1995) numerous visitors have flocked to visitors the heritage sites such as museums to experience a taste of what UK has to offer. Heritage on the other hand consists of various types of tourism; these include events and festivals focused on heritage and traditions; physical attractions for instance museums and heritage centers; destinations that are associated with renowned people; holiday based packages e. g. tours to ancient sites; routes and journeys aligned to heritage place; themes in heritage; historic events; and traditional functions.

The benefits that come along with tourism firstly include direct benefits such as businesses issuance of tourism products and services. According to the Deloitte Report (2008) there current contribution to the economy for direct benefits amount to £52 billion which constitute 3. 7% of the GDP. This figure has incorporated value addition to the tourism related products. There were

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also 1. 36 million jobs in 2007 supported directly by tourism. These figures have risen to £ 85 billion and £86 billion in 2005 to 2007 (Deloitte Report, 2008). Secondly, is the contribution there is indirect benefits that include support given to tourism businesses. Thirdly there are spill over benefits that include retail, manufacturing and health and life services (Deloitte Report, 2008).

In focus to the heritage tourism every tourist has his or her taste; this calls for various activities to tap every tourist to enjoy. The destinations, museums, tour operators have customized the heritage tourism to different levels which makes it possible for every tourist to be attracted in one way or the other. As stated in Light (1996) in " Heritage Tourism and Historic Towns" the development of tourist holidays where they are related to an aspect of tourism e. g. art history or historic railway development and touring heritage sites where tourists are guided to.

Heritage tourism has been segmented in to three where the first are individuals who travel independently; groups who travel on shared heritage interests; and groups who travel together without a common interest in heritage (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2009). Developing ways to get attractions for these segments has played a significant role in the development of tourism since there are customized products developed to target each segment.

Heritage has brought about various benefits and is very important to the economy of UK. Heritage tourism is a major attraction for tourists from other countries which provide jobs and earnings to locals (Nuryanti, 1996). It is

also a major source of foreign currency. In addition it provides revenue that is used for various beneficial purposes such as conservation. It also enhances the image of the country making it a major tourist attraction for levelers.

Heritage tourism is concentrated in London, historical sites such as the York, Lincoln, and Edinburgh; the Stratford-upon-Avon Shakespeare and Wordsworth Grasmere and other famous people; and famous sites e. g. Stonehenge (Davies, & Prentice, 1995).

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has been involved in the development and investment of tourism in the UK. According to the HLF report released in 2010 heritage tourism had contributed to a massive £20. 6 billion in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (The Heritage Lottery Fund report, 2009). This was higher than any other product or services industry such as advertising, filming, and car manufacturing in the UK. This highlights the need for increased investment so that there can be huge and better returns. It has also contributed to 195, 000 full time equivalent jobs that has originated from historic buildings, the country side, parks, and museums (The Heritage Lottery Fund report, 2009). This means that the potential of heritage can be exploited to ensure the country grows and develops immensely from the earnings.

Figure 1: heritage based visitor economy (Source: The Heritage Lottery Fund report, 2009)

To critically analyze the earnings and activities in the industry there were more than 10 million trips made by tourists from foreign countries to the UK annually where 4 out of every 10 citing heritage as the key motivation <https://assignbuster.com/critically-evaluate-the-contribution-of-heritage-to-the-uk-tourism/>

behind the visits; this was more than any other single factor contributing to the trips. In addition, heritage tourism is worth £12.4 billion annually which is spent by the attracted visitors in heritage sites (The Heritage Lottery Fund report, 2009). This includes money spent in entrance fees to the heritage sites; and other purchases that are done connected to heritage products and motivation e. g. buying at curio shops, or restaurants and accommodation expenses for the tourists.

Domestic tourism also known as staycation is also another source of income and part of the £12.4 billion earned (The Deloitte Report, 2008). An estimated 60% is obtained from domestic tourism where residents have supported their country growth through daily visits to such sites (The Deloitte Report, 2008). A whopping £7.3 billion has been spent in expenditure in the heritage industry where most of the money has gone to building, renovations and maintenances of heritage attractions, parks and museums. The GDP of the country has continued to benefit a lot from this investment where an estimated at £7.4 billion annually has been earned as salaries and wages, profits, and income by the tourism business community including hotels, curio shops, restaurants, and also the heritage sites included (The Deloitte Report, 2008). The addition of economic multipliers to the earnings such as proceeds earned by suppliers to the tourism dealings the annual total GDP contributed by heritage tourism hits highs of £20.6 billion annually.

Figure 2: showing the sector contribution to the UK GDP (Source: The Heritage Lottery Fund report, 2009)

It is with no doubt that these earnings can be increased to higher figures in future through tapping in to the high potential in heritage tourism. This means that the government in collaboration with the tourism departments must come up with more attractive policies that will ensure funding to tourism so that it has the framework that will support it have the best earnings (Nuryanti, 1996). In view of the fact that tourism is a fast growing industry and it can contribute maximally to those who invest in it; the unique part of heritage tourism should be advanced in the UK so that it becomes the leading figure in it. With such measures the country's tourism sector will remain vibrant and sustainable presently and in future (The British Tourism Review, 2009).

Heritage tourism is the 5th largest industry in the UK; this is contributed by the fact that the UK has a rich and vibrant heritage and very important not only to the numerous visitors who flock the country but also for the local, regional and national economies (Nuryanti, 1996). It has been revealed that a huge percentage of the visitors to the UK do so on the grounds of heritage, pageantry, history and culture. In tapping more to the potential of tourism through effective tourism weeks, marketing of the tourist sites and attractive holiday destinations the country stands to reap maximum benefits (The British Tourism Review, 2009). The HLF should enhance adaptability, welcome, place making, choice of goods and services, skills, quality, access, and information provision so as to ensure a successful industry (Nuryanti, 1996).

The HLF should be driven by the fact that tourists spend on the basis of relative cost/bilateral exchange rates, destination attractiveness, overall <https://assignbuster.com/critically-evaluate-the-contribution-of-heritage-to-the-uk-tourism/>

Gross Domestic Product (GDP), consumer expenditure, and investment.

There should also be effective management of factors such as security/safety, alternatives (availability/relative cost), taxation, globalization, incomes and inflation so that the visitors can have confidence in the trips to the country (VisitBritain, 2009).

Security is a major concern especially with the development of terrorism and many terror threats coming from terror groups that act as militia. Security may come as a threat in view of the London bombings and suicide bombings occurring globally targeted at developed countries. There must be more segmentation of tourist products to enable all people of different income levels are able to visit the sites; while taxation needs to be checked to ensure the participants in the heritage tourism industry are not affected negatively in their business. The HLF cannot do this alone but needs the help of all the stakeholders who must contribute to ensure an efficient tourism industry majoring on heritage as an asset.

According to the Heritage Lottery Fund report, (2009) the HLF has the mandate to make this dream a reality because it remains very vicious and is achievable through proper mechanism. The most recent has been the investment of £4. 4 billion since 1994. The funding involved eight of the most attraction in England, twenty one of UK's world heritage sites and 14 national parks (The Heritage Lottery Fund report, 2009). Over the years there have been extensive studies on the progress of the investment where visitor surveys and economic impact studies.

In the studies it has been found out that typical increase in the number of visitors by more than 50%; “ 88% of visitors rate the value for money of HLF’s investment as either ‘ good’ or ‘ excellent’; an estimated 32, 000 jobs have been sustained in the tourism sector as a direct result of HLF funding; and every £1million of HLF funding leads to an increase in tourism revenues for regional economies of £4. 2million over 10 years” (The Heritage Lottery Fund report, 2009).

The HLF focuses on enhancing heritage tourism through exploiting the potential in the strengths of the country which include natural/historical/cultural assets; the English language; accommodation; food and drink; and international connections (history and transport) (Boyd, & Timothy, 2003). With these advantages on their side they are able to build a strong empire that contributes to vibrant growth in the economy and development of other vital sectors.

There are weaknesses that make this exploitation a challenge which according to the The British Tourism Review, 2009 in the article “ Achieving The Full Potential Of The Visitor Economy” include “ transport infrastructure; expense of visit – not ‘ value for money’ (e. g. visitors pay the second highest amount of tax in the world); logistics (e. g. Visas) are expensive and complicated to attain compared with other countries; ‘ welcome’ and skills of people in the industry; and short summer seasons”.

In the Heritage Lottery Fund report (2009) it is estimated that 53% of people who make trips annually do so to experience what historic towns and cities have to offer; 42% make visits to the museums and galleries, translating to

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40 million people annually visiting museums and galleries. 10 million trips are made to the historic parks, 1.2 billion visit the country side, 38 million visit historic buildings cathedrals and castles and an estimated 250 million visit the Britain's inland natural features such as canals and waterways.

Putting into consideration the high potential in the tourism sector can grow explicitly if developed; as cited by the HLF report "Investing in success" the tourism economy is estimated to grow by 2.6% annually between the years 2009 and 2018; this is a much higher estimate than the 0.8% estimated growth in retailing, manufacturing and construction sectors (The Heritage Lottery Fund report, 2009).

In conclusion the potential in the heritage industry is immense and with the numerous gains there is need to ensure they are safeguarded from any destruction. More efforts are needed to make sure the full potential is achieved so that the economy can grow sustainably. Sustainable management should be key issues in the maintenance so that visitors can be encouraged to visit not just one time but numerous so as to increase income. The HLF has the challenge to make better policies that will ensure all the potential is exploited and also sustainable use of the resources. The UK government through HLF should make sure should develop policies that maximize on both volume and value; enhance adaptability, and support long term sustainable economic growth. A more efficient and effective heritage tourism industry should not only be the goal of the HLF and the government but also all stakeholders that benefit either directly or indirectly. There should also be very tactical measures that ensure improved domestic

heritage tourism which will not only make earnings but also teach the locals about their traditions and heritage.