

Development of tourism in the the uk: 1945-1989



British Tourism Growth and Development: 1945 – 1989

Introduction

The growth and development of British tourism industry has played an important role in the UK economy over the last century, contributing around 3.6% of GDP by 1999 (Research paper 00/66 2000). However, the most dramatic changes to the industry occurred during the period between the end of the Second World War and 1989. This paper studies six of the factors that influenced this situation during those years, ranging from the cultural and political to the technological.

Key Growth and Development Factors

Tourism, like most other industries is to a certain extent consumer driven. However, a number of other factors have influenced the change in tourist consumer demand and expectation, particularly within the forty-five year period being studied in this paper.

From the consumer viewpoint, the foundation for the post WWII growth and development of British tourism began in 1939 with the introduction of the Holiday With Pay Act (Susan Barton 2000, p. 135). Before then, the populace had neither the leisure time, nor the financial means to be take holidays or visit places of interest. However, it was only after the war that the British public were able to take advantage and fully utilise paid leisure time. As wages in those early years were still relatively low, initially consumer demands focused on cheap, localised holidays, such as self-catering and bed and breakfast (Susan Barton 2000, p. 170).

In the decade 1945 to 1955, the tourism mass-market growth was mainly concentrated on the “ sun, sea and fun packages” and it was during this time that British coastal resorts began to enjoy economic growth. By 1955 tourism holiday demand was expanding rapidly (Middleton and Likorish 2005, p. 6) as the standard two week holiday became commonplace. However, at the same time a number of other evolving factors were developing, which would lead to a continuous change in the character of the tourist consumer’s demands.

Transport development was a key factor in the growth of British tourism. As public transport facilities, such as rail, coach and bus travel, grew, so the tourist was able to expand their holiday horizons, travelling further distances for holidays. In addition, it opened up the day travel market, bring additional revenue to popular resorts (Middleton and Likorish 2005, p. 27).

As consumer wealth and living standards improved, so did access to individual transport, such as cars, motorcycles and bicycles. The use of these allowed the tourist consumer to be more selective in their destinations, as they no longer needed to be close to railways stations and ports. This led to increasing tourism demands in inland areas of the country and gave birth to the start of the heritage type holiday venues, as numerous inland destinations sought to attract a share of this new phenomena (Susan Barton 2005, p. 168).

Transport development was also instrumental in the development of cross border holidaying, particularly within Europe (Middleton and Likorish 2005, p. 27). During the 1960’s, this cross border demand, inbound and outbound, was met by the use of ferries, trains and car. However, it was still at that

stage only affordable by a select segment of the population. It was the development of the cheap air package tour by entrepreneurs such as Vladimir Raitz that had the most influential impact on the growth and development of British cross border tourism (Bray and Raitz 2000). As increasingly numbers of UK tourists began to seek more exotic holiday destinations, particularly in Europe, the British tourist industry had to develop new strategies to not only offer attractive options to these travellers, but also to encourage inbound tourism from other countries. In effect, they had to sell the British tourism destination brand internationally.

The advent of cinema, radio, television and other media had a significant impact upon tourist consumer demand in Britain, altering their lives and expectations (Middleton and Likorish 2005, p. 16). This occurred in two distinct ways. Firstly, television programmes were opening up the world to the consumer. Whereas in the past, other countries portrayed in paper form seemed distant and unapproachable, these new medias were bringing them into the family home. Tourist began to demand to experience these places for themselves.

The second aspect of the new media was its importance to the providers in the tourism industry. Marketers were given a completely new range of media tools, through which they could market and promote their destinations and holiday packages on a mass-market scale. In addition, they were able to developed segmentation strategies, enabling them to match the product with the target audience (Likorish and Jenkins 2006, p. 161). This development not only led to the expansion of the package tour at home and abroad, it also fuelled and increased the demands of the more discerning

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holidaymaker in areas such as culture and history. It also resulted in an increase in the demand for activity holidays.

As was seen at the commencement of this paper, politics played an important role in opening up the British Tourism industry with the introduction of the Holiday Pay Act. Throughout the period being studied, the political environment and influence has continued to impact upon the industry. In the 1950's and 1960's, the industrial unions political campaigning for better worker conditions, pay and leisure time fed the expansion of the mass tourism market (Susan Barton 2005, p. 221) and to a lesser extent this continued through to 1989.

The role the government has played in British tourism has also changed. As overseas travel and destinations continued to entice British tourists away from holidays within their own borders, successive UK governments, understanding the impact of this on the economy, began to develop strategies to assist the industry to promote the UK tourism brand, both at home and overseas. To this end it has set up NGO's such as the British Tourist Authority (Research 00/66 2006) to act as a vehicle for arranging tourism trade shows internationally.

The changing face of the political structure of Europe also affected British tourism, particularly after Britain joined the EU in 1973 and cross border relationships and regulations began to develop and border restriction began to ease. As European cooperation began to develop, it produced a growth of interest in tourism within the region, from which the British tourism industry benefited due to the increase of inbound tourists. In addition, the EU began

to develop European-wide strategies for tourism (Likorish and Jenkins 2006, p. 48). This included the provision of EU funding for the development of destination areas of special cultural and historic interest.

Globalisation has been developing for centuries. However, the most significant growth period for the globalisation of commercial trade occurred between the end of the Second World War and the 1990's.

This has had two effects on British Tourism. Firstly, it has enabled the promotion of the destination to a much larger marketplace internationally (Berhoff, Harvie, Korte and Schneider 2002, p. 124), giving it the opportunity to increase the numbers of inbound tourists. Secondly, it has opened the British tourist market to global corporations, such as hotel groups, travel operators and other organisation. RCI, the time-share experts, are a classic example of the influence that the global market has had, with offices in many countries (Middleton and Likorish 2005, p. 124).

Throughout the period 1945 to 1989, the one factor that has probably been most influential in the growth and development of British Tourism, and both driving and meeting the demands and expectation of the tourist consumer, is the advances in technology. Without this, most of the other factors would not have developed so rapidly.

Advanced technology, by producing cost and price reductions, has brought more destinations into the affordable choice of consumers (Likorish and Jenkins 2006, p. 216). Through its adaptability, technological developments have also enabled the British Tourism industry to provider a wider range of

destination productions, which addresses the demands of both the mass market and individual tourist consumer requirements.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that although the British Tourism is there as a provider, its development has been partially consumer driven. However, none of the consumer demands could have been successfully met, or in some areas encouraged, were it not for the other factors studied in this paper. In my opinion, the most influential of these factors would be the technological and globalisation advances.

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