

The potential worries of individual visit scheme

[Economics](#), [Tax](#)



Recently, Individual Visit Scheme (IVS) has become a controversial topic in Hong Kong. Online forums, newspapers and magazines are weighing the pros and cons of the scheme every day. Undoubtedly, it boosts the Hong Kong tourism. However, it has led to several drawbacks to Hong Kong in resource allocation, cultural differentiation and livelihood. To commence with, for resource allocation, IVS greatly makes the distribution of resources in Hong Kong become chaotic.

After the implementation of IVS, more and more Mainland visitors go to Hong Kong and cause disorder of resources in medical services, local products and housing prices. According to delivery statistics of non-local pregnant women from Hong Kong Hospital Authority, the number of non-eligible persons admitted via Accident and Emergency Department increases from 796 in 2010 to 888 in 2012 January to September, which means the workload of front-line medical consultants is increasing.

Since the supply of medical consultants has been in shortage already, the medical services in Hong Kong are not enough and in severe burden to afford. In addition, many local newspapers like Mingpao and Appledaily report that a number of Mainland tourists spend lots of money purchasing daily products during their visit. For example, in Sheung Shui, Mainland parallel traders make use of IVS and “One Issuance Multiple Entries Visa” to buy tins of milk powder, tissues and wines, which led to the deficiency of daily supplies in North District.

In other words, citizens in North District cannot enjoy the use of local products as the resource allocation is inadequate. Aside from local products, resource allotment of housing is also troublesome. Based on a study

conducted by Hong Kong Research Association, it reveals that with 1080 interviewees, 84 per cent of them think that through IVS, Mainland people in Hong Kong have raised the cost of building. It explains that buildings built by either the Government or property development companies cannot ease the housing problem for local citizens, which, however, benefits people from Mainland.

This shows that the resources are not used by the local, but by Mainlanders including tourists in IVS. Secondly, implementing IVS increases conflicts between Hongkongers and Mainlanders due to cultural difference. For example, Mainland parents allow their children to foul everywhere. Netizens in many Internet forums like hkgolden discussed such incidents. They commented this behavior critically and caused conflicts between people in Hong Kong and Mainland due to different cultural levels.

Besides, in April, to attract Mainland visitors and become more customer-friendly, agnes b. in Tseung Kwan O, whose news was reported by SCMP, used simplified Chinese words instead of traditional words in its menus. Treating that as an invasion of Hong Kong culture, Hong Kong citizens were furious of seeing the simplified Chinese words appearing in Hong Kong and tried to boycott it. Moreover, in January, SCMP reported that there was a rally over 'photoban' about retailer Dolce & Gabbana, which was a human rights and cultural unfairness between Mainlanders and Hong Kong people.

These incidents have further worsened the relationship between Mainland tourists through IVS and local citizens because of cultural differentiation. Apart from consequences caused by culture difference, IVS produces various living problems to local citizens which make disturbance to their living. Some

politicians may think that IVS can improve the Hong Kong economy and hence increase the living standards of local citizens, especially the underprivileged. It is, however, a wrong prediction. Scholar Francis T.

Lui (2009) accounts for this statement: Hong Kong should pay for the consequence of IVS. For example, the European and American brands, milk powder and other products are not made in Hong Kong, so that Hong Kong can be assigned limited profits. For the Mainland visitors going shopping in Hong Kong, it also increases rents and prices of goods, which deteriorates the living standards of the local people. Furthermore, the owner of “Subculture” Pang Chi Ming adds his opinion about the consequences that IVS has brought: The consuming ability of Mainland visitors makes Hong Kong lose her local style.

For example, shops in Mongkok are occupied by pharmacies, jewelry stores, electronics stores and cosmetics shops which welcome Mainland tourists. It also makes local citizens lose a place for recreational use. Increased crimes also lower the lifestyle in Hong Kong. According to the Hong Kong Police crime figures of Comparison of 2012 and 2011 Crime Situation, from January to October in 2012, the total number of crimes committed by Mainland visitors increases 9. 7% compared with the same period in 2011.

In the past, such criminals were mostly illegal immigrants, but now they do not take risks to go to Hong Kong illegally. They can go to Hong Kong by IVS, then commit crimes and cause troubles to our living. Such results and shocking statistics have deprived Hongkongers of the way of life. To conclude, IVS causes different disadvantages to Hong Kong in allocating resources, cultural relationship with China and the living standards. It is

hoped that the Hong Kong Government should and must pay attention to and deal with these potential worries for the sake of the plight of local people.