

#1 – TOURISM: UNWRAPPING THE GIFT

At the heart of governments across the globe is the desire to unite people behind a shared sense of identity and purpose as a prelude to the creation of a stronger, safer, more secure and more rewarding future for generations to come.

For a nation to come together with a common desire for growth, prosperity and harmony and as true believers in the promise and potential of their country, an immensely powerful vision is required. This vision must be able to touch people of all ages, beliefs and backgrounds. And it must offer a sustainable source of focus, inspiration and motivation for all.

Since the turn of the century, there has been no greater force for achievement of these aspirations than Tourism. Ranked the #1 growth sector by the UNWTO in terms of revenues, tourism has become one of the most powerful forces of international understanding, accessibility and unity ever known.

Today travel and tourism continues to generate unprecedented levels of excitement, activity and wealth for nations. Newly liberated nations have begun to explore places, cultures, ideologies and opportunities beyond their borders. Holiday makers are seeking out discovery of more intriguing and story-inspiring roads less traveled. Global business centres are excitedly shifting from west to east. And advances in aviation are enabling people to be anywhere they wish with higher frequency and lower price,

Each and every day over 7 million people travel internationally, crossing borders and flight paths, journeying between countries and cultures. Over 70 million people travel each day within their own borders. Collectively, in 2007 alone, the UNWTO estimated that almost 900 million people traveled on holiday, a staggering movement of people from one point on the map to another.

Without a doubt Tourism has become the golden child of global industry. By marketing and promoting a nation's God-given natural beauty, its history, its lifestyle, its culture and the spirit and hospitality of its people, governments of

small, newly established countries are able to establish a name and place on the international tourism map right alongside the world's largest, longest established, leading tourism destinations.

Tourism, unlike any other sector, unlocks the opportunity for a nation, region, or locale, whichever the case may be, to look good, feel good and create good.

Tourism acts as the *Giftwrapping of a Destination* ©, showcasing the destination's most stylish, compelling and inspiring aspects and putting forward a confident, caring invitation to travellers to come visit for work and/or play.

However, unwrap the giftwrapping and the real gift of Tourism is revealed.

Tourism, once viewed as an industry based on play, pleasure, and passionate patriotism, has finally established profile, respect and credibility around the globe as a powerful driver of the economic engine of nations. The numbers speak for themselves. Generating over US\$ 1 Trillion per annum in direct earnings (indirect earnings being as high as three-fold those of direct earnings) Tourism provides nations with a proven, solid source of revenue. No other industry can yield such high levels of income with so little initial capital investment requirement.

And, importantly, Tourism attracts high levels of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Investors sharing the vision for the destination with the home government confidently inject significant levels of key resources into tourism and general infrastructure development projects, enabling the destination to proactively engineer their future.

Critically, the people of the nation have the opportunity to play a part in the growth and development of their home. From bead artists creating handcrafted souvenirs for today's tourists to Tourism Authority Board members creating a Masterplan for the destination of tomorrow, people of all walks of life are able to participate in the Tourism industry. Each and every individual has the ability to touch, and be touched, by Tourism. Globally there is no faster growing sector of employment. At present the Tourism employs 10% of the people of the world, unlocking hope and opportunities for the future for the people who call the destination 'home'.

Tourism provides nations large and small with a platform for wealth creation and nation building.

But the rewards of Tourism go far beyond revenue calculations and ROIs. The real richness of Tourism is in what is unseen. Tourism creates a magnetic bond of identity, pride, confidence and promise between people of a destination. And in so doing, Tourism strengthens the social fabric of the destination. Harmony, appreciation, respect, co-operation, productivity and shared success all create a spirit and sense of identity for the destination which, for the traveler, strengthens their understanding of the destination. The traveler is able to go beyond what there is to see to discover what there is to be felt.

At a societal level, governments are reassured that their people are working, together, towards a more prosperous, promising future for themselves and their families built on a solid past and sense of the present.

The shiny image which a destination projects in its advertising and marketing, and experiences which a destination promises to travellers, magically and meaningfully gift wraps the economic operations of the destination.

And as with all gifts, the joy is not just for the traveller receiving all that the destination has to offer. The joy is also felt by the people of the destination who proudly sharing their special part of the world with its visitors, knowing they are playing an important role in the growth and development of their home through Tourism.

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