

7. SHOPPING TOURISM

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Shopping is becoming an increasingly relevant component of the tourism value chain. Shopping has converted into a determinant factor affecting destination choice, an important component of the overall travel experience and, in some cases the prime travel motivation. Destinations have thus an immense opportunity to leverage this new market trend by developing authentic and unique shopping experiences that add value to their touristic offer while reinforcing, and even, defining their tourism brand and positioning. More importantly, shopping is one of the major categories of tourists' expenditure, representing a significant source of income for national economies both directly and through the many linkages to other sectors in the economy.

Over the past six decades tourism has experienced continued expansion and diversification. Many new destinations have emerged, challenging the traditional ones of Europe and North America. Despite occasional shocks, international tourist arrivals have shown virtually uninterrupted growth – from 277 million in 1980 to 528 million in 1995, and passing the 1 billion mark in December 2012. As global economic recovery took hold and departures from the emerging economies continued to show strong growth, this figure rose to 1.087 billion international arrivals in 2013.

Over 10 million international visitors per year make NYC the top international destination in the US and shopping is the single most popular activity among all types of visitors. NYC and Company, the city's official tourism marketing organization, estimates that almost 25 cents out of every dollar spent by visitors in NYC is spent on shopping. The city's visitors can be sorted into three kinds of shoppers. Each tends to look for something different and each definitely comes away with a different trophy of their shopping trips. First is the souvenir shopper, the person who wants to, or must, bring home a gift or gifts as a record of their time spent in NYC. Typically, this shopper has other more important activities to occupy their city time. As a consequence, their purchases are targeted to a few convenient locations stocked with the kinds of items they are most likely to buy. The object may be inexpensive, but almost always it is symbolic of the destination. Souvenir shops from Patagonia to the Arctic Circle sell the same merchandise with different logos and colours –bags, scarves, hats, coffee mugs, glasses, tee shirts, and more. There are also the iconic

images that unquestionably represent the city. Second is the more purpose-driven shopping visitor to New York City. Whether the goal is a new coat or a new camera, a wedding gown or baby's layette, the latest designer handbag or a vintage evening purse; the idea of a shopping trip to the city is a tradition that may be as old as New York itself. Whether it marks a rite of passage or coming of age trip or is part of a seasonal and regular activity, visiting the city to shop means making a list, setting aside time, choosing locations and particular stores, and embarking on this journey through the city's streets and neighbourhoods. This accounts for the greatest economic impact, more dollars spent on more things, in more places by more people. Finally, we can identify the visitors for whom the city itself is essential to the activity. Shopping means entertainment and experience. Regardless of trip purpose –business, family or vacation—shopping is woven into the human interactions of the visit. It is as much about exploration and discovery as it may be about the intended or surprise purchase at the end.

According to UNWTO figures, in 2012 the world's top ten destinations in terms of international arrivals were France, United States, China, Spain, Italy, Turkey, Germany, United Kingdom, Russia and Malaysia. In the last ten years, as international arrivals and visitor spending have grown, each has experienced a growing interest in shopping by visitors, both domestic and international. Some have adopted specific policies to improve the shopping experience for visitors, create new shopping tourism products and promote their own unique shopping experiences to potential visitors.

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