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24. Space tourism

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Introduction. Tourism is travel for recreational, leisure, or business purposes. The World Tourism Organization defines tourists as people traveling to study and stay in places outside their usual environment for not more than one year for leisure, business and other purposes.

Tourism has become a popular global leisure activity. Tourism is important and, in some cases, vital for many countries. The travel and tourism industry has grown and developed into one of the largest businesses in the world. This is due to the advancements in a series of industry sectors linked with the common aim of serving the travel needs of people around the world. The fields include: transport and infrastructure and ease of access to improved information systems, product development and innovation, changing consumer demands, expectations and fashion. The developments in technology and transport infrastructure have made many types of tourism more affordable.

One of the most interesting types of traveling is space tourism.

Space tourism is a natural extension of today's worldwide tourism industry. Instead of traveling around the world, tourists go to space. Anyone will be able to buy a ticket. No astronaut training is needed. This has not happened yet, but a lot of activities are taking place in the world today to make it come true. Space tourism may be the missing link of space travel that we have been trying to discover for so many years. With the help of space tourism, we can build an infrastructure in space and radically decrease the launch costs. There can be hundreds of thousands of space tourists flying each year, creating a giant market. Through this infrastructure, other commercial ventures will also be possible. Space will finally be opened up for business.

My thesis has two objectives. The first objective is to try to discern what importance space tourism may have for space commercialization. The second objective is to provide a detailed overview of the space tourism field. In order to fulfill the objectives, extensive

research was conducted on space tourism. This was done through material available at the host institution as well as what could be found in the Internet. Interviews were also conducted with leading people in the space tourism community.

There is a great yearning among the public to travel in space. All market surveys point to this. People are prepared to pay a relatively substantial amount to do it. Several organizations have been formed to promote the space tourism industry, including the Space Tourism Society, Space Future, and HobbySpace. UniGalactic Space Travel Magazine is a bi-monthly educational publication covering space tourism and space exploration developments in companies like SpaceX, Orbital Sciences, Virgin Galactic and organizations like NASA. Classes in space tourism are currently taught at the Rochester Institute of Technology in New York, and Keio University in Japan.

A report from the Federal Aviation Administration cites studies done by Futron, an aerospace and technology-consulting firm, which predict that space tourism could become a billion-dollar market within 20 years. In addition, in the decade since Dennis Tito journeyed to the International Space Station, eight private citizens have paid the \$20 million fee to travel to space. Space Adventures suggests that this number could increase fifteen-fold by 2020. These figures do not include other private space agencies such as Virgin Galactic, which as of 2012 has sold 500 tickets worth \$200,000 dollars each. Its ticket sales are expected to increase by the year 2013, when Virgin Galactic expects to begin flights.

Space tourism is the only activity that can support a high number of flights, which is essential to bringing costs down. There is practically no saturation limit to tourism, just look at the growth of theme parks and cruise lines all over the world.

Chances are good that within the next 25 years a remarkable sequence of events will take place in space. We will witness the birth of a completely new industry. An infrastructure between Earth and space will be constructed. There will be regular passenger tours to space and back, carrying mainly tourists. As soon as the infrastructure is in place, a number of orbital facilities will rapidly be constructed. Because the new launch vehicles will be carrying passengers on regular trips, they will be much safer and quicker to handle than the launch vehicles of today. All commercial space activities are tied to the cost of going to orbit. Space tourism is a way to bring down the current high costs. Thanks to the infrastructure established to do space tourism, other commercial space ventures will also have an improved chance of getting going. Space tourism will be the main market driver for this. The industry will become more aware of space as a place to do business because of space tourism. New thoughts and ideas will come up on how to use space.

Conclusions. Space exploration plays a big part in our day to day life whether we know it or not. Yes, there are dangers and disadvantages, but if we continue to explore space, test technologies, and take some risks, I am sure that most of the problems will be and can be fixed. Of course, nothing about space exploration will ever be perfect, but nothing is ever completely risk free. In the past, space exploration has proven its self to be extremely beneficial and will continue to do so in the future just so long as we continue to work hard to make it better.

References

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