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Introduction

It is evident that Moscow and St. Petersburg are among popular destinations for tourists in the world. Millions of visitors are attracted by the beauty and historical wealth of the two cities coming from all over the world. According to the World Atlas (2017), Russia is among the top ten most visited countries in the world hosting about twenty-three World Heritage Sites. Apart from that, Russia is a politically stable country though conservative politics against Western democracies are still dominant. However, this has not dampened the number of local and foreign tourists visiting the two major cities. Using a comparative approach, this piece of work explores cultural and historical differences between the two cities and how they fare against each other regarding tourism. Further, the benefit of tourism in the national economy is looked at in-depth.

Moscow and Saint-Petersburg's differences regarding culture and history

Moscow and St. Petersburg are the two largest cities in Russia that are well known and similar in some ways. Geographically, both cities are located on the banks of major rivers, that is, Neva and Moskva river (Guthrie, 2014). In addition to that, both have served as the capital for the country for periods of its history. The two cities serve as cultural centers endowed with museums and theatres, for example, St. Petersburg's Mariinsky Theater and Bolshoi in Moscow (). However, visitors that have managed to travel to the two cities can point out some marked differences. It seems there is a rivalry in terms of attraction to tourists. Considering their historical periods, Moscow has emerged as metropolis city with modern structures of steel, glass, and concrete. It was almost run-down by Napoleon's army in the early 19th century (Aune, 2013). The city is endowed with many iconic church structures that have onion-shaped domes. Moscow is renowned as the center of the Russian Orthodox Church. On the political front,

Moscow is considered a symbolic military power center for the Kremlin and Red Square (Bennetts, 2017). Kremlin and Red Square are symbolic because annual events like the Victory Parade where tanks, the military, and troops are showed off therein. Economically, the city is a commercial hub with vast infrastructure including subway lines and bustling streets.

On the other hand, St. Petersburg, referred to as the Venice of the North, is architecturally captivating with canals and bridges sprawling the city. The buildings have an ancient impression, neo-classical and flamboyant. Distinctively, St. Petersburg has quiet streets compared to Moscow with very few skyscrapers in sight. Notably, visitors feel the ambiance of imperial history considering the presence of State Hermitage Museum, Peterhof, and Tsarskoe Selo estates. This city was considered as the cultural and political capital during the golden years era of Peter I and Catherine II (Aune, 2013). It is worth noting that UNESCO has named St. Petersburg as a world heritage site. Comparatively, the city is quieter than Moscow citing a smaller population (about half) besides people being friendly and slack. Similarly, the railway infrastructure is less half the size that of Moscow.

The aspect of westernization seems to be dominant in the Moscow city looking at its education, economic, and social trend. Moscow seems to be a nerve center for international students and investors hence its massive infrastructure to serve the surging population. People in Moscow are flashier compared to St. Petersburg residents. There is a marked difference between the way people conduct their daily life activities in the two cities. Life in Moscow is somewhat fast-paced and pushy. Conversely, the St. Petersburg's ambiance denotes a slow paced environment where people do not attend to tasks urgently. They can slow down and do menial tasks like smelling flowers on the streets.

Which city is more popular for tourists and why?

The tourist boom in Russia was witnessed in the year 2002 to 2008 due to a rise in the in the standards of living among the locals. During this period the hotel industry has been on the rise with world hotel chains setting their foot in large cities like Moscow. Additionally, the city has grown in the entertainment industry hence attracting more international visitors (Ovcharov, Vasiljev and Shirin, 2015). On the other hand, St. Petersburg is deemed to be an attractive city especially with its rich culture and history and recognized as a world heritage site. The rich history, culture, and geographical features like canals and rivers located in the same city attract visitors even more. However, Moscow competes fairly considering some elements like entertainment, architecture, and religion. One of the pulling factors in St. Petersburg is its rich history such as the Hermitage Museum and Mariinsky Theatre. Since Moscow is endowed with quite some unique structures that attract many visitors in addition to an expanded service and entertainment industry, the tourism numbers are much more. It is a modern city though with historical elements, and this gives it an edge.

Effects of tourism on the economy

Countries that have invested heavily in the tourism industry are bound to benefit from an expanded economy courtesy of foreign direct investments and creation of jobs to the local citizens. Particularly, tourism bolsters foreign exchange earnings since foreign tourists use foreign currencies. In the last two decades, Russia has experienced exponential growth in the tourism sector amidst political upheavals. According to Ovcharov, Vasiljeva, and Shirin (2015), “The second stage (2002-2008) can be defined as “tourist boom” on the market of tourist services, which was related to overcoming crisis phenomena in the Russian economy and rising of living standards” (p. 153). The same authors argue that the Russian tourism market has been promoted by the presence of independent and world hotel chains such as Kempinski, Hilton,

Radisson, Park Inn, Novotel etcetera. With the notable presence of such entertainment and hotel facilities, employment opportunities are increased. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council report of 2015, the direct contribution of tourism and travel to Russia's GDP in 2014 was 1.5% which is approximately \$17.87 billion; that revenue was generated by about 29.8 million tourists. This is further supported by the World Atlas (2017) figures which indicate that approximately 28.4 million tourists visited Russia in 2013 generating a revenue estimated to be \$11.2 billion. However, the forecast for 2015 was a little bit lower. In actual sense, that contribution primarily reflects revenue generating activities like hotel industry, airlines, travel agents, commuter services, restaurant and leisure services. The table shows the direct contribution of travel and tourism to Russia's GDP.

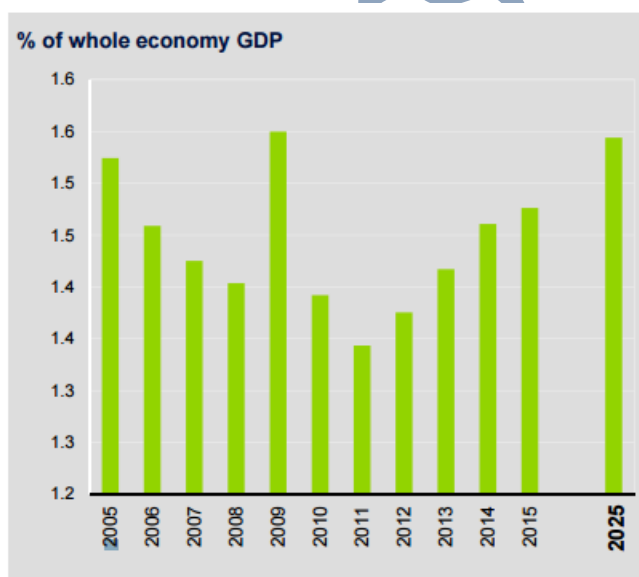
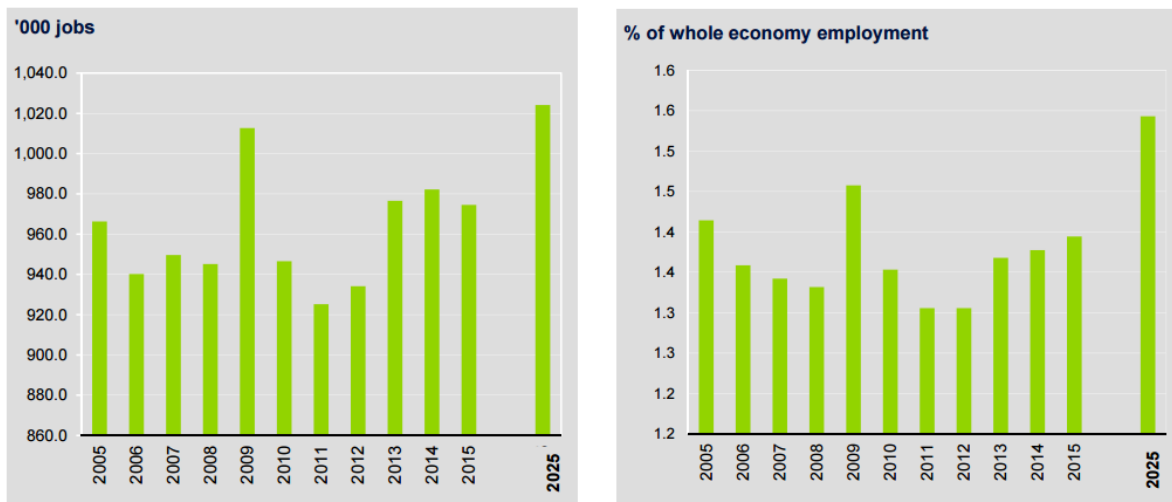


Fig 1. Shows tourism and travel contribution to the country's GDP, source; WTTC, 2015.

Other than the direct injection to the economy, there is an indirect effect which includes induced revenue impacts, investments, and supply chain. For instance, its contribution to the country's GDP was approximately \$73.41 billion in 2014 (about 6% of the GDP). Statistics from the same report indicated that the tourism and travel sector generated almost a million jobs in

2014 accounting for about 1.4% of the country's employment. Employees offer services in the areas mentioned above. A graphical representation below shows the percentage contribution of the tourism sector to employment between 2005 and 2015. When indirect employment opportunities are considered due to investment and supply chain ventures, about 4 million jobs are created.

RUSSIAN FEDERATION: DIRECT CONTRIBUTION OF TRAVEL & TOURISM TO EMPLOYMENT



Tourism and travel generate revenue referred to as visitor exports and investment (WTTC, 2017). This is the money foreigners spend in a country during their visit. For instance, the Russian Federation recorded revenue of about \$12.39 billion. Concisely, the capital investment attracted during the same period was about \$6.67 billion. Statistics show that Russia was 16th in country rankings of direct contribution to GDP. Therefore, every country desires to have a robust tourism sector which provides many benefits to the country's economy and the citizens at large.

Conclusion

Russia is a country privileged with heritage sites besides political stability that enables tourists to visit the country. Tourism has experienced a great improvement in the country because of good government regulations, investment in the sector and presence of the said world

heritage sites. For instance, the two major cities have (Moscow and St. Petersburg) have been major tourist sites because iconic architectural works that have been maintained and preserves since ancient times. Moscow city is populated with onion-shaped dome churches, and it is the center of Russia's Orthodox Church. More so, the city has grown on the service, education, and entertainment frontier which provides an opportunity for foreigners to visit the city. St. Petersburg is a quiet city that has attractive and neo-classical ancient structures and flamboyant streets. There are exquisite geographical features like rivers and canals that are considered as major tourist attraction sites. Therefore, a combination of those factors has enabled Russia to be among the top 10 most visited countries in the world. In return, millions of jobs have been created directly or indirectly. Further, the economy has benefited from billions of dollars generated from visitors export and local tourists' revenue. There is a projection that revenues from travel and tourism will increase in the next one decade.

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