

Research Proposal for Actual Report

Impact of tourism on the Irish Economy

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Introduction

Internationally tourism is the world's most important industry. It is an industry which has been growing steadily since 1950s.

Along with an increase in tourism numbers, there has also been an increase in tourist spending, and in the amount of employment created by the tourism industry. The most important tourism-generating regions are Europe, North America, and Japan, the world's most industrialised regions. As a result, the numbers of tourists coming to Ireland have increased, revenue has increased, and this has resulted in more employment in the industry, and more taxes for Government.

The Irish tourism industry did not begin to grow significantly until the Irish Government began to take an active role in promoting it in 1987. The numbers of tourists have grown rapidly since then.

The main sources of tourists in Ireland are:

- Britain
- Europe: Germany, France, Italy, Netherlands, the Nordic countries and Switzerland
- North America
- Australia
- New Zealand
- Japan
- Northern Ireland

Ireland's beautiful scenery has been the major attraction for tourists since the eighteenth century. Today 29% of overseas visitors come to Ireland because of the quality of scenery. They come to see varied landscape. This landscape has resulted from millions of years of geological formation, climatic change and the influence of humans. The formation of its rocks and the folding of its mountains during the Caledonian and Armorican periods have influenced Ireland's physical landscape or natural features. Weathering and the action of rivers have worn down the mountains so that now only 25% of the country is above 150 metres in height. Ireland has also been affected by glaciation and by the action of the sea. Ireland's landscape has man-made features, for example castles, canals. The combination of natural features and man-made buildings has resulted in a very beautiful and complex landscape.

Ireland's history and tourism are intertwined. Most tourists visiting Ireland visit at least one historical building or museum. They may be deeply interested in history and want to discover historical past, or they may visit these buildings because they are good wet day options. None the less, historical buildings are a very important product in the Irish tourist industry. Groups such as Dúchas, Heritage Island, Houses Castles and Gardens of Ireland, and Heritage Towns of Ireland market these historical buildings abroad. In 1998 Europeans were the biggest market visiting historical buildings, followed by British and North Americans. Most coach tours visit a range of historical buildings in the country.

Ireland has a strong literary tradition. Ireland's major writers include W.B. Yeats, George Bernard Shaw, Samuel Beckett and Seamus Heaney, all Nobel Prize winners for literature, and James Joyce, probably the world's greatest novelist. More books have been written about James Joyce than any other writer in the English Language, even Shakespeare.

The Abbey Theatre Group travels the world performing Irish plays. Irish literature and Ireland have been brought before the world audience through Irish novels and drama. This has prompted satisfied readers to discover more about Ireland, and to come here as a tourists. The majority of tourists who come to Ireland participate in some cultural activity and quite a sizeable percentage participate in literary tourism.

The arts are defined by the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* as ‘the use of skill and imagination in the creation of aesthetic objects, environments or experiences that can be shared with others’. This usually refers to the areas of arts, drama and music. Irish art does not have the same reputation as Irish literature; none the less there is a strong tradition of art in Ireland. Irish art is found not only in art galleries but also at ancient monuments, abbeys, monasteries and museums. Ireland has a strong tradition of craftwork, and craft workers are located all over the country. Arts festivals take place in a number of centres. Recent developments in the arts make Ireland a good destination for cultural students.

Irish music is popular all over the world and this attracts tourists to Ireland. Irish artists perform concerts on television and radio, produce albums, and have millions of fans. A wide range of music is played in Ireland – classical, jazz, rock, pop, country and, of course, traditional which is unique. Bord Failte research has found that approximately 70% of tourists come to Ireland because traditional music is important to them. The popularity of Riverdance has introduced millions of people to Irish dance and has been good publicity for Irish tourism. Music is presented to tourist in a range of situations, in formal concerts, at cabarets and medieval banquets, in tourist attractions and at sessions where musicians gather. The level of interest in the music and entertainment industry has resulted in major investment through the operational programmes for tourism.

This has provided new venues, for example, singing pubs entertainment in historic buildings, festivals, and tourism products such as the Rock and Stroll Guide, the Dublin Musical Pub Crawl, The Hot Press Irish Music Hall of Fame.

Literature Review

Tourism

Tourism is most simply defined as the travel and associated activity of persons away from their usual home environment (Smith, 1994). It is also a collective term for businesses catering to the needs of those persons, which Medlik and Middleton (1973) describe as a bundle of activities, services and benefits. Tourism enterprises are many and diverse, which makes sectoral definition difficult (Cooper, 2008). As tourism can be considered from a wide range of perspectives many researchers have adopted a reductionist approach by analysing it through its parts (Ryan, 2000; Page, 2007). Tourism is a major element of contemporary life and influences the economy, social and cultural foundation of almost every country worldwide (O'Connor and Cronin, 1993). Tourism for many countries, including Ireland, represents a major income generator accounting for approximately six per cent of world GDP (Holloway and Taylor, 2006; Binkhorst and Den Dekker, 2009).

Tourists are defined as *mora tan* just holidaymakers. Leisure visitors and business visitors are all defined as tourists because they are customers of the tourism product. They stay in hotels, eat in restaurants and drink in pubs. Tourist can combine business with pleasure.

The World Tourism Organization (WTO) is the lead agency responsible for the development of standardized tourism definitions. This agency states that tourism is defined by “the set of activities of a person traveling to a place outside his or her usual environment for at least one night, but less than a year, and whose main purpose of travel is other than the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited”. The phrase “usual environment” excludes trips within the person’s community of residence and routine commuting trips. The phrase “exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited” excludes migration for temporary work paid by an economic agent resident in the place visited. This, however, does not apply to a business related travel such as sales calls, installation of equipment, or conventions where the traveller’s employer is located elsewhere than the place visited.

The tourism industry is often defined as those enterprises and organizations involved in facilitating travel and activity away from one’s usual environment. One challenge in this approach to defining tourism is, of course, the fact that many enterprises which produce commodities for tourists also serve non-tourist (Nelson, 1993).

The latest trend in the tourism industry is called “ecotourism”, which refers to travel that combines preserving the natural world and sustaining well-being of the human cultures that inhabit it (Mowforth and Munt, 2003).

Tourism as an important aspect of the Irish economy

While the growth rates of European tourism are evident for most years during the 1990s, not all countries benefited equally from this process (Walsh, 1996). Walsh (1996: 3) quotes from a report undertaken by Tansey, Webster & Associates (1995) who note that ‘Ireland achieved the fastest growth in earnings from international tourism amongst fifteen prime European destinations in the period 1980-1992’.

Walsh goes on to explain that 'Ireland's relative performance cannot be attributed solely to external factors, but probably to a combination of factors' (1996:3). Included in these factors are; 'the expansion of the Irish tourist product base, more effective marketing, improved access transport and an international trend to move away from sun holidays coinciding with the image of Ireland as a 'green' destination' (Walsh, 1996: 3). Ireland has benefited from its image as a green, nuclear-free and relatively nonindustrial country (O'Maolain 2000). Its early recognition of the importance of migration/genealogical tourism, image tourism, and heritage tourism led to increased funding of the local tourism product and during the 1975-1988 period Ireland was the only country to adopt this tourism strategy, a strategy that 'has assisted in tripling the number of tourists visiting Ireland between 1988 and 1999' (Volkman & Guydosy, 2001: 7).

The Irish tourism products main attributes are the beautiful Irish landscape and the Irish people. The environment is a crucial aspect of Ireland's attractiveness as a tourist destination even from tourism. (O'Hagan, 303) Pollution poses a huge problem to the attractiveness of Ireland. Rivers are a major attribute to the tourist product as so many tourists are attracted to Ireland for angling. If fishing is no longer a part of the product Ireland will lose a large share of its market. The islands attractiveness is also under threat environmentally from tourists themselves. This is caused by a failure to change the seasonality and region concentration of tourists (O'Hagan year: 303).

The friendliness of the Irish people is also an attractive attribute to tourists to visit Ireland. But do tourists come into contact with many Irish people? With the labour shortage most of the employees in the service industry are immigrants or foreign students. This has an effect on tourism, as one of the greatest attributes is the Irish people.

If tourists are dealing with foreign employees they won't have the opportunity of meeting Irish people – one of the main reasons they go to Ireland. Service quality may suffer as CERT have predicted that a further 105,000 people will be needed in the hotel and restaurant sector by 2005. Foreign employees may be the only option, which will damage the industry's attractiveness. (O'Hagan, year :303)

Overseas visitors to Ireland

'Now, in the first decade of the new millennium, tourism has become a crucial component in the Irish economy and an integral part of Irish life' (Furlong, 2009: 4). Tourism is now Ireland's most important indigenous industry, accounting for almost 4% of GNP annually (Fáilte Ireland, 2008). The complexity of the tourist industry and the multiplicity of influences to which it is subject ensure that no simple explanation for its development is adequate (Gillmor, 1994a). Its growth can be attributed to a range of factors, including government policy, capital investment by the private sector, the state and the EU in providing funding to improve accessibility, infrastructure and product. In addition, expansion of the industry has been related to those influences that have contributed to the development of international tourism in general including; greater affluence, more leisure time, improved transport, increased population and urbanisation, stronger desires to travel, and greater tourism organisation and promotion (Gillmor, 1994b). Tourism development in Ireland reflects influences from both a global and national level; fashion, affluence, transport, finance, promotion, publicity, and product development have all played a key role in its development. In addition, Ireland's approach to product development, its success in developing heritage tourism and promotion of Ireland as a 'green' destination has underpinned its success as a tourism destination.

Through its focus on heritage and culture it has constructed a place image that attracts tourists, harnessing global opportunities to create its uniqueness in a way that is similar to that described by Sum and So (2004) when discussing the development of tourism in Hong Kong. This provided Ireland with a place-based competitive advantage that allowed it to maximise local advantages in a similar way to that suggested by Robertson (1990). Ireland's response to the opportunities afforded by its membership of the EU as well as the general increase in world travel in the 1980s allowed it to reposition itself as, what Bauman (1998) referred to as a 'must see' tourist attraction. Its ability to niche market, and to focus on its individuality as identified by Thrift and Glennie (1993) allowed Ireland to develop its tourism potential and position itself within the global tourism industry. The stronger economic climate of recent years has attracted international branded hotels into the Irish market, which has traditionally comprised of smaller, family run businesses (Horwarth Bastow Charlton, 2008). The majority of these are in the four and five star category and they have contributed to the increased quality of the hotel infrastructure, introducing international standards of professionalism (Melia, 2009; figure 3.1).

Irish economic sector

From a national perspective tourism is the largest indigenous sector of Irish enterprise contributing 1.3 billion euro to the exchequer in 2009 (Failte Ireland, 2008; ITIC, 2009). Irish tourism practitioners experienced rapid growth and development in the period from the mid-nineties to 2008, driven for the most part by economic prosperity coupled with government funding and improved access to air travel (ITIC, 2009). The economic environment has radically changed in recent times and the sector has witnessed a significant loss in competitiveness with practitioners currently operating in a highly unstable climate.

A recession which began in 2008, greatly affected the tourism sector in Ireland, as consumers demonstrated increased anxiety over their personal finances (Euromonitor, 2009).

Cultural tourism

Cultural tourism, once considered a niche market, is increasingly recognised as mainstream element of contemporary tourism, taking in a diversity of activities and resources (Graham et al., 2000; McManus, 1997). Internationally, cultural tourism represents about on third of all tourism business and is one of the key drivers of destination attractiveness and competitiveness (OECD, 2009). According to Failte Ireland (2009:59) “Ireland’s cultural and historical heritage is one of the strong magnets for tourists coming to Ireland”. While definitional simplicity is appealing, the vastness of the cultural tourism sector makes it difficult to define succinctly.

According to Failte Ireland (2009) cultural tourism embraces the full range of experiences visitors can undertake to learn what makes a nation distinctive such as, its lifestyle, its heritage, its arts and its people. The demand for cultural tourism experiences continues to grow worldwide (Hannabuss, 1999) and it is estimated that this form of tourism currently achieves average growth rate of fifteen percent – three times the overall growth rate of other forms of tourism (Failte Ireland, 2007). Reflecting on tourism form a postmodernist perspective Hannabuss (1999) argues that cultural tourism practitioners face a number of challenges amongst which the increasing emphasis on ‘experience’ is to the fore. The ITIC (2006:55) assert, “*The core goal of Irish tourism is to develop and deliver distinctive, authentic and memorable experiences that stimulate increased visits, longer dwell time and higher expenditure....The quality of the experience is the key*”.

Cultural attractions are a very important part of Irish tourism product but need greater product development, innovation and integration in the area of experiences (ITIC, 2009). However, if Ireland is to profit from the growth in the cultural tourism it is clear that this cannot be achieved without a concerted effort to design better tourism experiences.

Research Methodology

The main purpose of the research is to evaluate or create exiting understanding, review and investigate existing situation or problems, find out the appropriate solutions to the problems as well explain new idea and generate scope of further research. Research on the issues on tourism sector is to focus on problems of the specified sector and find out appropriate solution of research.

Tourism is now a global industry connecting hundred millions of people worldwide; which been recognised as a fastest rising sectors.

In this research, we are going to examine the problems and significant prospects of tourism sector in Ireland. The tourism industry is a major player in Ireland's economy and has contributed much to the economic success. Although the industry faced many challenges, it must learn to overcome all obstacles that are put in its way. It is only way that the industry can continue to create jobs and earn foreign revenue. Some of the tourism businesses failed to realise their full potential, and have closed or moved to better locations. In a more competitive world tourism businesses will have to improve the delivery of their products in order to survive and grow.

Different nationalities behave in different ways; they expect different things from their holidays. Europeans like Ireland because of its unpolluted countryside, little traffic in the roads, good seafood, clean comfortable accommodation and its cultural heritage and entertainment, while Americans look for good quality hotel accommodation, good transport facilities, city tours, Irish souvenir shops, and the forty shades of green. Irish domestic holidaymakers look for self-catering accommodation that is reasonably priced, activities for children, good entertainment at night, cheap restaurants or take-away food outlets, and baby-sitting facilities. Overseas tourists of Irish descent are often interested in tracing their family roots, and this is why many Australians and Americans come to Ireland.

The Irish tourism product has changed over the years to meet the demands of tourists. These changes have occurred in the areas of accommodation, where it is now the norm to have ensuite bathrooms even in guesthouses. Heritage centres have been developed to cope with the demands of ethnic tourists. Leisure centres are attached to hotels to provide for the increasing demands of more health-conscious tourists. The success of Irish culture abroad, with such groups as the Chieftains and Riverdance, means that there is a demand for traditional music entertainment.

Ireland's beautiful scenery has been a major attraction for tourists. Today overseas visitors come to Ireland to see varied landscape. This landscape has resulted from millions of years of geological formations, climatic change and the influence of humans.

Ireland has a cool, temperate, oceanic climate. This is influenced by location north of the equator, which puts us in the cool temperate zone. Ireland is also affected by the Atlantic Ocean, which brings many rain-bearing clouds on westerly winds. The ocean ensures that annual temperature-range is low: we do not have very cold winters or very warm summers.

Primary Research & Analysis

Initially, I want to find out how Sunway deal with the customers through interviewing a manager of this company. From a small travel agency in Blackrock, Co Dublin to the country's largest Irish owned tour operator. Today the Sunway Travel Group employs over 110 staff and features over 70 destinations worldwide (more than any other tour operator in Ireland), from some of the finest 5 star hotels in the world to self-catering apartments in countries across the Caribbean and Asia to the best resorts in Europe.

I asked manager following questions:

Which types of accommodation that Sunway travel agency can offer for their clients?

There are so many different types of accommodation available in Ireland and the range is truly amazing. We only use approved accommodations that offer good value and service and are not tied to any particular accommodations. This flexibility allows you the client the choice to pick and mix to make that perfect vacation.

B&B's:

The most cost efficient type of accommodation after hostels. B&B's are generally family style homes that offer a warm welcome and the host or hostess can offer help and advice on further traveling and local attractions. B&B's range from 3-5 star.

Guesthouse:

This is somewhat of a combination, bigger than a B&B and smaller than a hotel, they are warm and welcoming on a more personal style. All rooms have private bath and the guesthouses are graded also from 3 - 4*.

Self-Catering:

From that cottages to modern homes, in locations all over the world from apartments to homes with spectacular views offering a peaceful retreat. The properties are 3* - 4* generally and are from two to three Bedrooms, sleeping 4 - 6 people. They offer all the facilities of a home for your use. You can take them for 4 or 5 nights but you have to pay for the week which can be a draw back if you wish to tour more.

Hotels:

One of the most widely used types of accommodation in the world.

Located all over the country again they range from large to small and personal, from city to country with spectacular views. There are 4 grades of hotel. They are graded in a star rating by the tourist authorities. They are 2*,3*,4* & 5*. Grade 3* would be the most commonly used and offer a good rate, 4* are now very popular as they offer maybe a little extra space or facility.

What are the most popular destinations for Irish people to visit when travelling abroad?

Here's the list, ranked in order of popularity, and it's no surprise to see London and New York in the top two spots.

- London
- New York
- Paris
- Rome
- Lanzarote
- Berlin
- Barcelona
- Amsterdam
- Edinburgh
- Las Vegas

Why summer is the best season to visit Ireland?

There is no such thing as a perfect time to visit Ireland. The warmest months and busy season, June - August, get about 18 hours of daylight and it gets dark only after 11pm.

The summer months are considered high season for visitors. They come for long sunny evenings, parks in full bloom and eating in cafes. And of course in summer, there are festivals around every corner.

The manager of the company told me that people have many choices of accommodation that

Then, I got a chance to interview the sales assistant of the Tourist Information Desk, to get information about the number of tourists coming to Ireland nowadays, whether the customer's market is increasing or decreasing.

could suit them, such as hotels, guesthouse, bed and breakfast, camping, self-catering, friends and others. He also gave me information about the length of the holidays that people are taking, and there is a trend of people choosing short-term holidays from 1 to 3 night, whereas the long holidays are more than 4 nights. The most important information that was given to me is that the season tourist prefer to visit Ireland is summer.

Tourist numbers who coming to Ireland increasing or decreasing?

The number of overseas visits to Ireland rose again in the first three months of 2015, and tourists are spending more money according to new figures.

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) has said more than 1.5 million trips were made to Ireland between January and March this year, a 14.1 per cent increase for the same period in 2014.

The number of visits to Ireland has increased from 6.5 million in 2012 to 7.6 million last year.

2015 has been a tremendous year for Irish tourism. All markets showed healthy growth and with increases in air access facilitating record numbers from the US and a return to increased visitors from Britain and continental Europe. The substantial increase in revenue from tourism has ensured that the sector has more than played its part in boosting economic recovery. The 5,000 extra tourism jobs created, together with the extra taxation revenue on spending by visitors, represents a major boost to the Irish economy.

Where did Ireland's tourists come from?

Sales assistant give me real numbers of tourist that visited Ireland in 2015. She explained me how they get this numbers. “When the people come to Tourist Information Desk, they need fill up form where they need give information about their nationality.”

Many tourist come from:

➤ **Britain 3,007**

Mainland Europe 2,490

➤ France

➤ Germany

➤ Italy

➤ Spain

➤ Netherlands

➤ Belgium

➤ Denmark

➤ Sweden

- Switzerland
- Austria
- Norway
- Poland
- All other Europe

North America 1,146

- USA
- Canada

Rest of world 462

- Australia, New Zealand & Other Oceania
- Other areas

In the Tourist Information Desk they gave me a clear picture of an increasing number of tourist. Part of this, it is because Failte Ireland is developing an agenda that is aimed at specific target segments, which have been identified as Ireland's best prospects for growing tourism in its main overseas markets, such as, Social Engergisers where travellers with a passion for new experiences and are looking for fun and excitement, Culturally Curious where independent thinkers with a craving for culture and history and Great Escapers where adventurous and committed to spending quality time in a breath taking place.

Failte Ireland is one of “twenty agencies and support bodies that provide financial, training, mentoring and other supports to tourism business in Ireland.” This company “provides strategic and practical support to develop and sustain Ireland as a high-quality and competitive tourist destination. We work with the tourism industry in areas including business support, or enterprise development ...”, as the company is defining itself on the website, in 2009.

Manager of Guinness Storehouse provides me information about numbers of tourists that visited Guinness Storehouse in 2015, if they were satisfied visiting Ireland and what the reasons of their satisfaction is. He told me factors that tourists share with him that are important in considering Ireland for holidays.

I also interviewed manager of Guinness Storehouse. Guinness Storehouse is Ireland’s most popular tourist attraction. It’s the home of the Black Stuff, the heart of Dublin and an unforgettable start to explore Ireland.

What are Holidaymaker Segments?

Part of Failte Ireland’s development agenda is aimed at specific target segments, which have been identified as Ireland’s best prospects for growing tourism in its main overseas markets.

The three priority segments:

Social Energisers

- Travellers with passion for new “wow” experiences, who are seeking fun and excitement, immersing themselves in the destination.

Culturally Curious

- Independent thinkers with a craving for culture and history. They are out to broaden their minds and expand their experiences by exploring new landscapes, history and culture.

Great Escapes

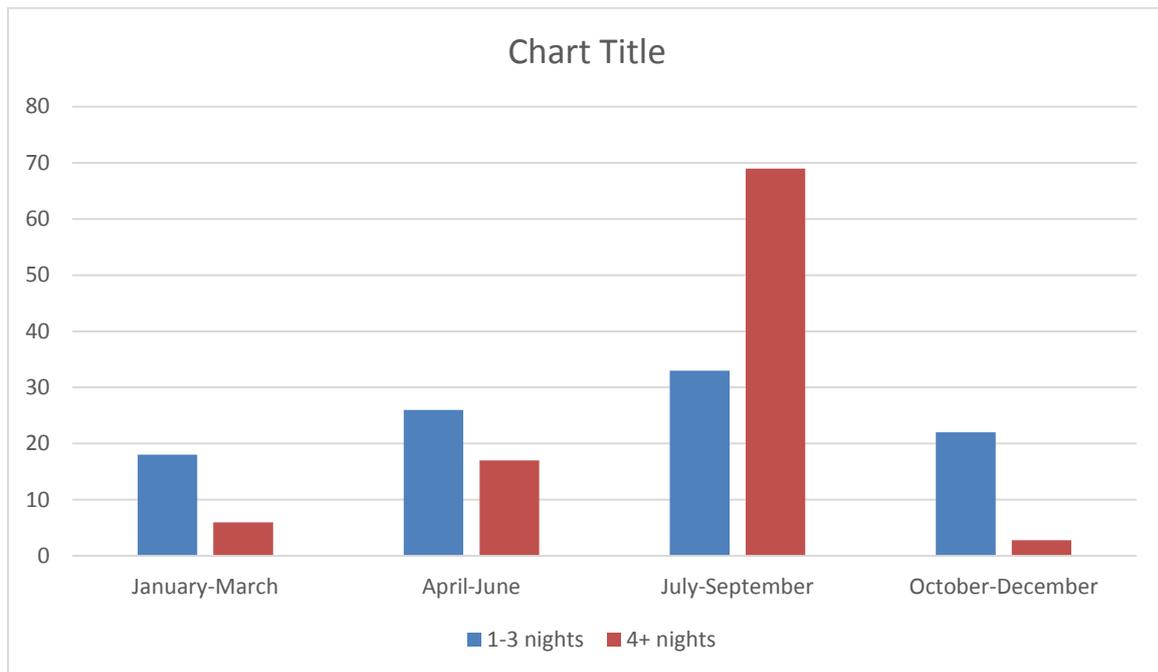
- Adventurous and committed to spending quality time in a breath-taking place. They are on holiday to take time out, get physical with nature and reconnect with their partner.

Which segments came to Ireland in 2015?

% of overseas holidaymakers by market

	Social Energisers	Culturally Curious	Great Escapes
USA	45%	12%	3%
Britain	23%	18%	4%
Germany	34%	18%	8%
France	13%	19%	9%

Seasonality of holidaymakers (%) 2015 by length of stay



Attendance at top five popular visitor attractions in Ireland 2015

- Guinness Storehouse – Dublin – 1,269,371
- Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience – Clare – 1,080,501
- Dublin Zoo – Dublin – 1,076, 876
- National Aquatic Centre – Dublin – 931,074
- Book of Kells – Dublin – 650,476

Factors that are IMPORTANT in considering Ireland for a holiday

- Holidaymakers consider friendly, hospitable people to be the most important factor when choosing Ireland as a holiday destination. This is important for all of the markets with over nine out of ten claiming this is key.
- A secure and safe destination is important for a considerable majority, particularly for holidaymakers from Britain and all our long haul markets.
- Beautiful scenery remains a very important factor along with a good range of natural attractions. A natural unspoilt environment and attractive cities and towns are seen as very important to holidaymakers and this is called out in particular by the French.
- Holidaymakers want to have plenty of things to do and see along with interesting history and culture.
- A relaxed and easy pace of life is important to the British, French and Germans.

Satisfaction with aspects of Ireland - SATISFIED

- Almost all respondents expressed satisfaction with the hospitality and friendliness of the people, particularly those from North America and Germany
- Over nine in ten holidaymakers are happy that Ireland a safe and secure destination.
- More than nine out of ten enjoyed the beautiful scenery and natural, unspoilt surroundings. Similar levels of satisfaction are expressed for our range of natural attractions and attractive cities and towns.
- Nine out of ten are satisfied with the easy and relaxed pace of life.
- Our history and culture reaches high levels of satisfaction and one in eight are satisfied that Ireland is suitable for touring.

Conclusion

This research study will draw attention to the core problems and investigate key reasons for downwards trends of tourism industry in Ireland. In spite of the recognized problems how tourism will flourish towards its development. In the literature review we have got a clear scenario of the problems of tourism sector in Ireland as well we focused a few noteworthy attractions prospects to utilize and develop the future trends of tourism. In this case work, we find how the political influences effect the destination tourism growths. Without calm and tourist friendly environment none of the tourist destination in the world can expand their tourism sectors. We can take learning from a few Asian tourists destinations that are enormously affected by their internal political chaos and how it destroyed their tourism prospects and as well how the destination recovered their destination image in the international tourism. It is impossible to predict the future as far as any aspect of the economy is concerned; all Governments can do is put plans in place that will help the tourism industry to expand. The tourism industry also impacts on society in many ways, both beneficial and negative. The Irish tourism industry did not begin to grow significantly until the Irish Government began to take an active role in promoting it. Ireland has holding a huge international attraction as well prospects on its tourism sector to contribute countries economy.

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