

just who is a tourist. Some agencies define tourists as individuals who travel more than 50 miles away from home, whereas other agencies may use 100 or even 200 miles. Some require that the person stay overnight at his or her destination, whereas others do not. So, when you see statistics like those cited in Tables 11.1 and 11.2 realize that other numbers might be quoted from other sources of information, with the difference in the numbers depending on the different methods and definitions used.

Looking to Tourism for Economic Growth and Vitality

The people of every country around the world survive or thrive on the income-producing possibilities of the country's resources. Citizens all over the world need income to provide the necessities of life for themselves and their families. Income options may range from subsistence farming to investment banking. More and more countries are finding that the development of tourism offers an effective means of increasing economic well-being. Debate over the appropriate level of tourism development for an area often results in political action by individuals, special-interest groups, and governing officials and bodies. In this chapter, we begin by discussing why and how tourism activities affect the economic vitality of a region. Then, we will look at some of the many ways that politics comes into play to affect and shape the tourism industry.

Economics is the “social science that seeks to understand the choices people make in using their scarce resources to meet their wants” (p. 27).⁸ For tourists, these scarce resources are money, available time, and the physical energy to travel. A small amount of any of these three resources will decrease tourists' ability to travel, whereas a large amount of these three resources will increase tourists' ability to travel. Scarce resources for promoters and suppliers of tourism businesses are human resources (the availability and quality of tourism service employees) and **financial resources** (the amount of money that the developer can raise by borrowing money or by selling stock). Scarce resources for communities or countries are the amount and variety of their natural resources and the pool of human resources available at differing skill levels. Scarce resources for governments are primarily tax revenues that can be used (1) to develop natural and human resources productively and (2) to pay for the many services that governments can provide their citizens.

Comparative Advantage

Many towns and cities, states/provinces, even entire nations, have determined that development of their visitor-inducing resources can add to the economic well-being of local residents. Economic decisions are often based on a concept called **comparative advantage**. Tourism can be said to have a comparative advantage over other industries if it yields a better return from the region's human and natural resource inputs than another industry would. Leaders of many communities believe this comparative advantage exists because of the many economic, social, and environmental benefits tourism offers. Let's take a closer look at how comparative advantage might favor tourism development.

FYI NEW ORLEANS

City officials in New Orleans use an unusual measure to determine the success of the annual Mardi Gras

festival. They look at the additional tons of garbage collected during the

weeklong festivities to estimate the number of visitors to the city!