

**TOURISM AS A PERCENTAGE OF GDP- QUALITATIVE STUDY OF AUSTRALIA
AND THAILAND**

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Abstract

The tourism industry is a major source of income for a nation and helps in attracting tourists from various countries. The following paper explores tourism as a percentage of GDP for which Thailand and Australia are considered. The research paper is entirely qualitative as data is extracted from online sites and reports of WTTC (World Travel and Tourism Council). The findings explained that Thailand and Australia both serve as a tourism hub and the number of tourist activities is increasing with every passing year. In Australia; Melbourne and Sydney are main cities. However, in Thailand; Pattaya and Bangkok are the most attractive tourist destinations that mesmerize visitors with their beauty and eye-catching views. The numbers of tourists that visit these destinations bear witness to the fact that these regions have been successful in experiencing the positive economic impact of tourism on GDP.

Keywords - Economy, Tourist, GDP, Thailand, Australia

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism sector constitutes an important fragment in the economy of any country, with strong growth in both international and domestic visitor numbers (Deloitte, 2017). The sector has been growing rapidly, with a wide contribution in GDP. Also, growth in tourism acts as a driving force in generating employment opportunities and foreign income thereby, decreasing the trade deficit (Haque, et al., 2016).

The research topic is significant as it analyzes the relation between tourist activity and its contribution towards GDP. It also discusses the significance and importance of tourism in the economy of Australia and Thailand since the sector has gained constant diversification and expansion in the recent years. The spending on tourism has increased in the recent years. The importance of tourism in concern to its contribution to economy is held by its commitment

towards the GDP growth as it refers to the buying behaviour of consumers and its influence on the economy of the country (Čerović, et al., 2015).

As per the latest research published by World Council of Travel and Tourism (WTTC), despite dynamic macroeconomic factors and appreciation in Australian Dollar, the tourism sector in Australia has emerged to be the fastest growing sector and has outperformed global performances across Asia Pacific. According to Hooper & Zyl (2015), the main territories of Australia that attract tourists from across the world are Queensland, Victoria, and New South Wales. Spending on domestic tourism is majorly accounted by households who like to plan overnight holidays. However, Australians also prefer to travel overseas and the segment has gained popularity in the last decade which has affected the economy of the country to a small extent (Hooper & Zyl, 2015).

According to Royal Thai Embassy, the tourism industry of Thailand is ranked amongst the top 10 sectors for its high contribution to the economic development of the country. According to Vora-Sittha (2016), Thailand attracts tourist from across the world for its white sandy beaches, shopping, tropical forests and trekking, inexpensive luxurious accommodation and exotic cuisines. In the past, tourism has been the most significant contributor to the country's economy, as it has been ranked as the 10th highest source of income (Chulaphan & Barahona, 2017). The strategies used to upgrade Thailand's tourism sector for producing income for the Thai economy is mainly; infrastructure, niche diversification, favourable government policy and a luminous hotel industry.

The objectives of this research are to analyze the significance of tourism sector in the economy, also highlighting the contribution of tourism activities in the GDP by reviewing the reports published by WTTC. The vital effect of tourism has also been signified with the help of Butler's Tourist Area Life Cycle (TALC), along with the discussion of pros and cons of tourism activities. The research paper also throws some light on the tourism industry of Australia and Thailand by reviewing some research papers published in the past.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Overview of Importance of Tourism in GDP of a Country

Tourism has emerged as one of the most important activities in various countries of the world. The industry has continued to generate both direct and indirect impact on the income generation of the world economy as it helps in supporting the economic well being of the population of the country by creating more employment opportunities (Wallace & Riley, 2015). With the increase in jobs in a country, the domestic income of households increases, thereby resulting in an increase in expenditure and circulation of money in the market.

Since tourism can be inbound and outbound, physical and monetary impact of tourism is long lasting and helps in bringing sustainability to the local and national economies to preserve the socio-cultural base. Different areas that generate positive returns to the GDP of any country are traveling, cultural heritage of a country, employment, infrastructure and accommodation facilities (Ardahaey, 2013). All these areas prove to be essential catalysts in the economic development of worldwide economy. Tourism impacts the social, political and financial development of the country, this in turn contributes to the overall economic development that helps serve the economic welfare of the country's population.

1.2. Contribution of Tourism Activities Towards GDP

Income generated by the consumption of goods and services by international & domestic tourists increases the government revenue of any geography. Tourism contributes significantly towards GDP as the increase in demand of goods attracts foreign spending in the form of international visitors (Haque, et al., 2016). According to the statistics published by WTTC, in 2016, global travel and tourism outpaced other international economic sectors. The tourism sector, witnessing a growth of 3.1%, stood second after information and communication (4.2%) in contribution towards GDP for the world economy, as evident from the following graph:

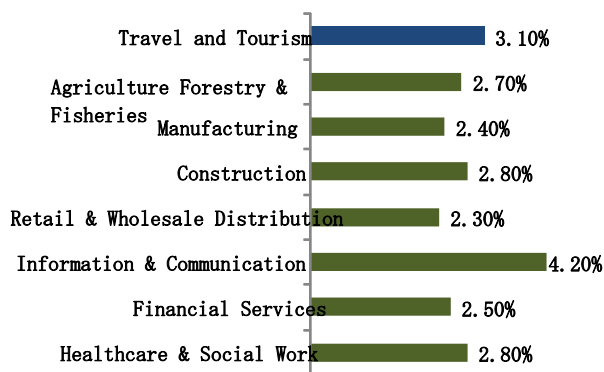


Figure 1: World Industry GDP Growth

(Source: WTTC, 2017)

Due to tremendous contribution of the tourism sector in GDP, employment increased by 1.8% creating over 109 million jobs across the globe in 2016. For the next 10 years, the sector is expected to contribute at a CAGR (Compounded Annual Growth Rate) of 3.9% towards the GDP (WTTC, 2017). Such outstanding performance of the sector has urged many researchers to measure the impact of tourism on GDP. Chou (2013) and Morissette (2013) researched; hike in household income due to tourism growth causes multiplier effect, thereby increasing the balance of payments and government revenues, thus positively contributing towards the global GDP growth.

1.3. Butler's Tourist Area Life Cycle (TALC)

Tourist Area Life Cycle (TALC) was invented by Butler in 1980 and signifies that tourist destinations undergo various stages of life cycle, witnessing massive development and boom until stagnation occurs (Pornphol & McGrath, 2012).

In case of Australia, during 1979-89, the tourism sector experienced a decline, reached consolidation in 1993 – 1997, followed by stagnation in 1997 – 1998. It entered the rejuvenation stage as it eventually became positive after 1999 and witnessed a growth rate of 11.7% during 1999-2009. Since 2009, the tourism industry of Australia has been growing (Pornphol & McGrath, 2012).

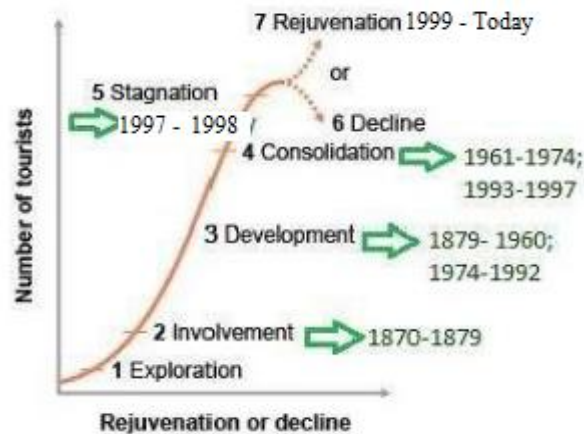


Figure 2: Butler's Tourist Area Life Cycle for Australia (Source: Pornphol & McGrath, 2012)

In case of Thailand, the tourism industry was explored by international tourists in 1960 and witnessed significant growth during 1960-70. With the announcement of National Development Plan in 1970, the tourism sector entered the “development stage”, attributed to the growth in the sex industry and evolvement of National Parks in the country’s map (Pongajarn, 2010). In 1980, the country marked a milestone by launching its first tourism campaign and attracted 2 million tourists. Industry continued to flourish till 1995 when the country was hit by the Asian crisis in 1997 and stagnation occurred. Once more in 2003, the country faced many challenges; however, in 2006 the industry rejuvenated attracting 13.8 million tourists (TAT, 2017).

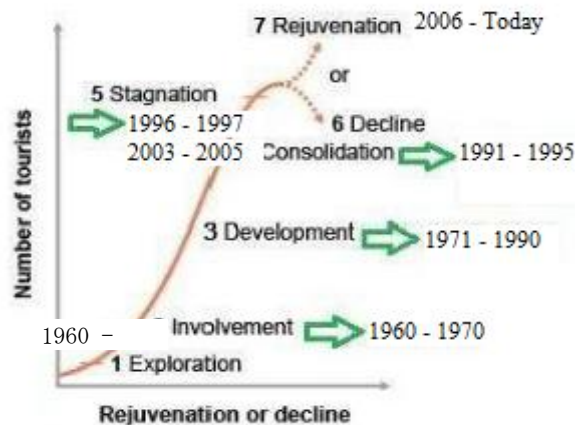


Figure 3: Butler's Tourist Area Life Cycle for Thailand (Source: TAT, 2017)

1.4. Pros and Cons of Tourist Activities

Many researchers, such as Jyothis (2015), Goodman (2017) and Morissette (2013) have highlighted the pros and cons of tourist activities in the past. According to Jyothis (2015), the main advantage of tourism is that it brings foreign currency to the country which forms a significant portion of country’s national income. In the research published by Goodman (2017), employment opportunities created for the residents is the main benefit derived from tourist activities. For example, in 2016, total jobs generated by tourism sector in Australia and Thailand amounted to 1,495,000 and 5,739,000 respectively. The development is further witnessed in the hospitality,

transportation and leisure sector. Also, the sector gives a chance to the country to show its cultural and natural heritage to gain popularity. The government focuses on the infrastructural development of the country and invests in healthcare services. Technological advancement also takes place in a country undergoing tourism growth as the country invests in high technological consumer goods to facilitate tourists. According to Morissette (2013), the country which has an extremely flourishing tourism sector gets the opportunity to develop international links on a long-term basis.

There are some disadvantages of tourist activities that cause problems for the local population of the country. The number of tourists arriving at the destination can cause destruction to the culture and natural heritage of the country. Some environmental destruction is also expected to take place as the increase in travel through land, air and sea can cause noise, water, and air pollution. Further, there is no job security as the employment is seasonal, for instance, the peak season for Thailand is between November and February, while it is December to February and June to August in case of Australia (Agyeiwaah, et al., 2014). According to Tuhin & Majumder (2013), tourism activities sometimes lack respect for the local population, as the tourists are treated with utmost respect and their nuisance is tolerated in a foreign country. For example, using rude language and getting drunk in public are some signs of common behavior observed in Thailand. Further, growth in tourism also gives rise to illegal activities such as marketing of drugs and endangered species, to lure the tourists.

1.5. Australian and Thailand Tourism Industry

The growth in Australian tourism sector is attributed to the increase in a number of visitors from developing and emerging economies such as China and Asia. Increase in international tourism in Australia depends upon various factors such as uniqueness of destination, leisure facilities offered and beneficial exchange rates (Bob & Potgieter, 2015). On the other hand, domestic tourism in the country has shown growth due to the increase in leisure facilities and attraction to beautiful destinations such as Cairns and Hobart Tourist Park. Further, night visitors' growth in Southern and Western Australia has experienced almost a double-digit growth and is expected to rise further. Overall the most populous places in Australia that attract visitors are Tasmania, Hobart, Gold Coast, Perth, Tropical North Queensland and Brisbane (Ruhanen & Shakeela, 2013).

Thailand is famous for its beautiful beaches, hospitality, less expensive accommodation, historical places and multi-cuisine restaurants. The country faces high competition from Myanmar and Vietnam, despite this, its capital city Bangkok, attracts a wide range of tourists from India, China, Middle East and the USA. Other famous destinations in Thailand are Chiang Mai, Pattaya and Phuket (Chulaphan & Barahona, 2017). The Thai government has also contributed to a great extent to increase the number of tourists visiting the country. For instance, a 6-month multi-entry visa has been introduced for Indian and Chinese tourists. It has also launched a scheme that allows tourists from 52 countries including Netherlands to reside for up to 30 days. Besides this, it has waived the visa fees for visitors from 19 countries. Such leniency in visa procedures will help the country's tourism sector to grow tremendously in long term. Another contributing factor to growth is the high-quality of infrastructure and easy availability of Skytrain, riverboat services, and MRT rail stations that make it easier for tourists to explore (Menkveld, 2017).

Overall, the tourism sector in both Thailand and Australia is equally competitive because of their inherent cultural and historical heritage, good infrastructure, leisure facilities and sandy beaches.

According to WTTC, in 2016, both the countries attained a position in top 20 in terms of economic growth through tourism activity (WTTC, 2017).

1.6. Research Gap

Even though many types of research have highlighted the significant role played by the tourism sector in contributing towards GDP, no study measures the history of tourist activities witnessed in Australia and Thailand through Butlers' TALC which has been covered in this research paper. As researched by Wallace & Riley (2015), the tourism sector impacts; directly and indirectly, the GDP of any country, thereby economically and financially influencing the population of that country. Also, according to Morissette (2013), tourism sector not only contributes to the GDP growth but also develops international links and enforces technological and infrastructural development. Besides focusing on all the aspects of the tourism sector, this research also highlights TALC model with respect to Australia and Thailand, giving a brief description of all the stages of the tourism industry in both the countries. It has also been concluded that industry is expected to rejuvenate in future.

III. METHODOLOGY

This research paper uses qualitative methodology to estimate the economic impact of tourism sector towards its contribution in GDP by reviewing research papers, journal articles, and reports. It has been researched that majority of the tourists come for leisure purpose on a global scale instead of business and corporate purposes (Ardahaey, 2013). In 2016, leisure expenditure accounted for 76.8% in global travel and tourism GDP and surpassed all other expenditures (business and corporate). The total contribution of tourism in GDP is expected to rise by 3.9% by 2027 (WTTC, 2017).

The Australian tourism industry has outperformed the global performance in the recent years, thus witnessing the fastest growth rate (Hooper & Zyl, 2015). Australian tourism sector contributed 2.9% of the GDP, generating AUD 49.7 billion in 2016 and is expected to increase at a CAGR of 2.6% per annum during 2017-27, reaching AUD 66.6 billion by 2027 (WTTC, 2017).

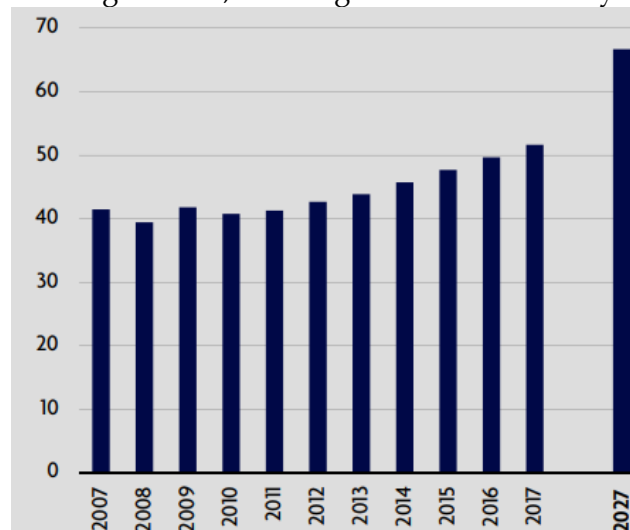


Figure 4: Contribution of Australian Tourism sector to GDP in AUD (2007-2027) (Source: WTTC,

2017)

By 2027, Australian tourism sector is expected to contribute 3% of the total GDP growth, as shown below:

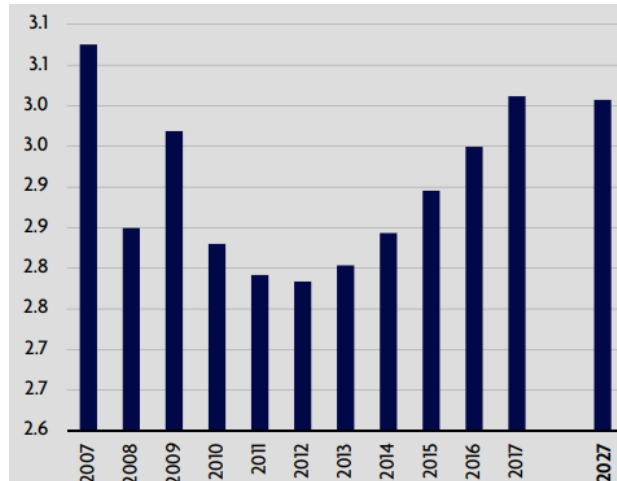


Figure 5: Contribution of Australian Tourism sector to GDP in % (2007-2027) (Source: WTTC, 2017)
Thailand tourism industry is amongst the most developed sectors in entire Asia, which attracts tourists majorly from the Asia Pacific region (Menkveld, 2017). Thailand tourism sector contributed 9.2% of the GDP, generating THB 1,292.5 billion in 2016 and is expected to increase at a CAGR of 6.7% per annum during 2017-27, reaching THB 2,708.0 billion by 2027 (WTTC, 2017).

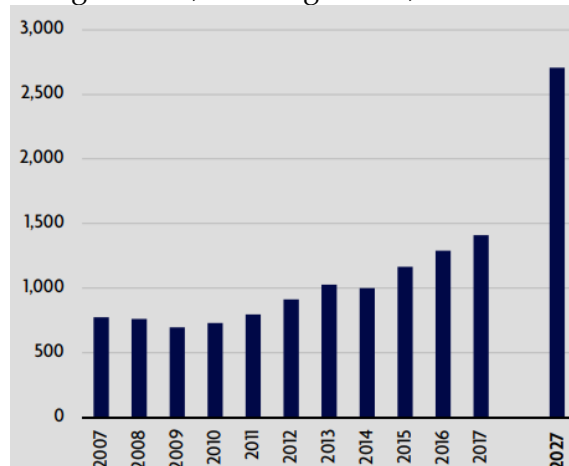


Figure 6: Contribution of Thailand Tourism sector to GDP in THB (2007-2027) (WTTC, 2017)
By 2027, Thailand tourism sector is expected to contribute 14.3% of the total GDP growth (WTTC, 2017), as shown below:

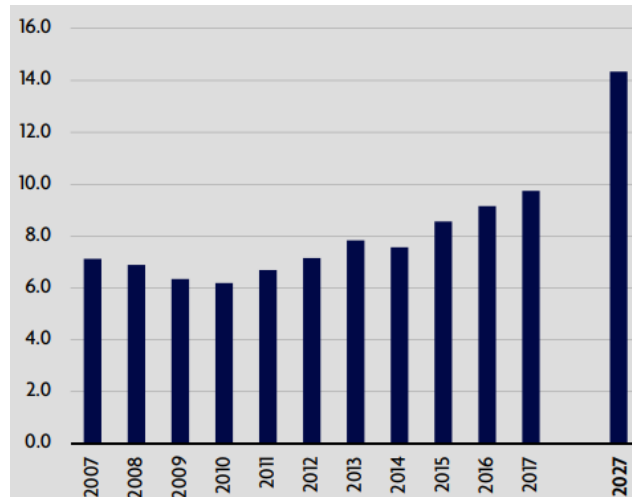


Figure 7: Contribution of Thailand Tourism sector to GDP in % (2007-2027) (Source: WTTC, 2017)

IV. RESULTS

The following section presents the data analysis that is recovered by research studies done on the tourism sector in the past calculated on the basis of % contribution towards the GDP of Australia and Thailand. According to Čerović, et al., (2015), tourism contributes to the gross domestic product of the nation as evident from the case of Thailand and Australia. Both the regions are famous for tourist activities. As stated by the pie chart below, domestic travel spending has increased to 78% by travel and tourism which directly contributes to the GDP in 2016. However, in the same year, the international tourism receipts have increased to 22%. It is also found that domestic travel spending has increased in 2017 to 3.5% to AUD100.1 billion. Moreover, by 2027, it is expected to rise to AUD125.9 billion (WTTC, (2017).

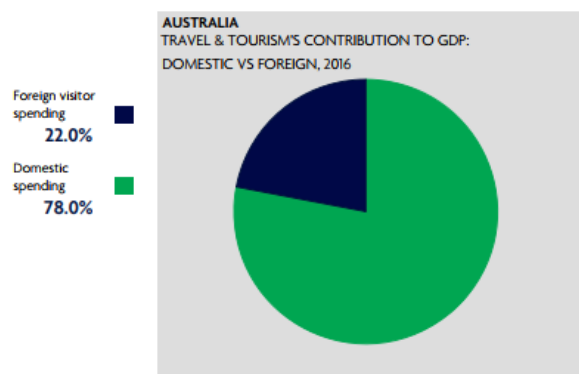


Figure 8: Travel and Tourism Contribution to GDP – Australia (Source: WTTC, (2017)

On the other hand, when it comes to direct contribution of Travel and Tourism to GDP, Australia is ranked 12th with a contribution of 36.9 USD (US Dollars) to its GDP in 2016 and Thailand at the same time was ranked 13th with a contribution to GDP of 36.7 USD (WTTC, (2017).

TRAVEL & TOURISM'S DIRECT CONTRIBUTION TO GDP		2016 (US\$bn)
1	United States	503.7
2	China	275.2
6	United Kingdom	89.8
12	Australia	36.9
13	Thailand	36.7
15	Canada	27.9
World Average		19.1
22	Indonesia	17.0
29	Malaysia	14.0
37	New Zealand	9.5
Oceania Average		5.8
164	Vanuatu	0.1

Figure 9: Travel and Tourism Contribution to GDP – Australia (Source: WTTC, (2017))

Similar to this, the graph below explains that the international visitors visiting Australia are increasing, amounting to a rise of 1½ % since the past decade. A steady growth has been observed in the international visitors' nights within Australia. For reflection, it is observed that in 2010, Australia was ranked the World's 8th largest tourism exporter by attracting 3.3% of international visitors (Hooper and Zyl, 2010).

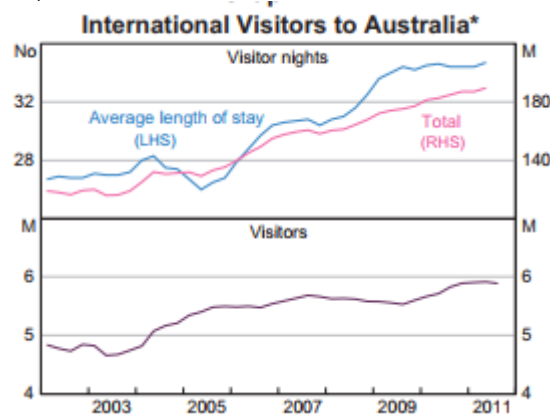


Figure 10: International Visitors to Australia (Source: Hooper and Zyl, 2010)

In contrast to this, as depicted in the graph below, the tourism activities to Melbourne and Sydney were most which involves visits from China and Japan, thus resulting in an increase in the GDP of 2010-11 (Hooper and Zyl, 2010).

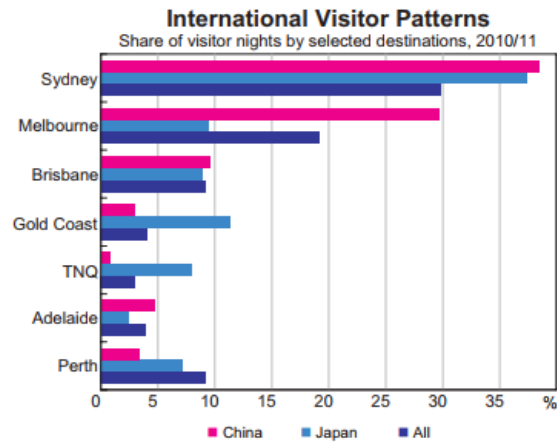


Figure 11: Main Tourism Hub in Australia (Source: TRA (2016))

Table below highlights the contribution of tourism to GDP in Australia since 2006 – 2016. It is analysed that tourism to Australian GDP is increasing since passing years which is a good sign for the progress of the country (TRA (2016)). As indicated by the data from TRA (Tourism Research Australia), Australia has 77 tourism regions which attracts tourist and thus affects the GDP of nation.

Date	Value	Change, %
2016	10.9	1.32 %
2015	10.7	1.58 %
2014	10.6	-0.95 %
2013	10.7	-1.15 %
2012	10.8	-0.21 %
2011	10.8	-5.65 %
2010	11.5	0.94 %
2009	11.4	5.39 %
2008	10.8	-7.93 %
2007	11.7	-9.64 %
2006	12.9	-9.82 %
2005	14.4	

Figure 12: GDP Growth- Australia (Source Knoema, (2016))

From the graph and table below, it is demonstrated that tourism activities in Thailand is increasing with the passing years. Since 2005 to 2016, the contribution of GDP is increasing, this shows good progress overall (Knoema, (2016)).

Date	Value	Change, %
2016	20.6	6.95 %
2015	19.3	12.56 %
2014	17.1	-3.22 %
2013	17.7	8.46 %
2012	16.3	6.66 %
2011	15.3	7.27 %
2010	14.2	-10.28 %
2009	15.9	-6.67 %
2008	17.0	-3.88 %
2007	17.7	5.17 %
2006	16.8	6.15 %
2005	15.9	

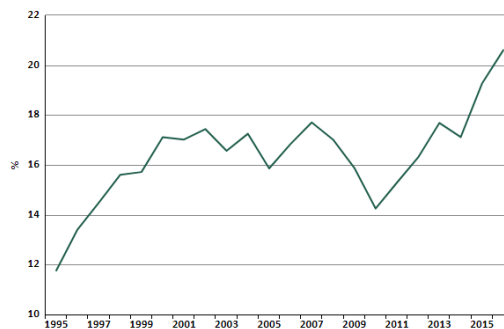


Figure 13: GDP Growth- Thailand (Source: Knoema, (2016))

As per the data of World Bank (2016), growth in tourism activities in Thailand has been strong in 2016 which is backed by a sufficient percentage increase in arrival of tourists mostly from China, thus leading to an increase of 3.1 % in 3rd quarter. In addition to it, the report of WTTC (World Travel and Tourism Council) tourism activities contributed to around 36.7 US dollars to Thai economy in 2016 that was equal to 9.2% of GDP. At that time, it was forecasted to be increased in 2017. As per the data, Thailand experienced a massive growth in Tourism activities in 2017 (WTTC, 2017). As per the reports, Thailand was ranked number 4th in World in terms of tourist activities in 2016. It was recorded that in total, the tourist activities amounted to 53.7 USD in 2016.

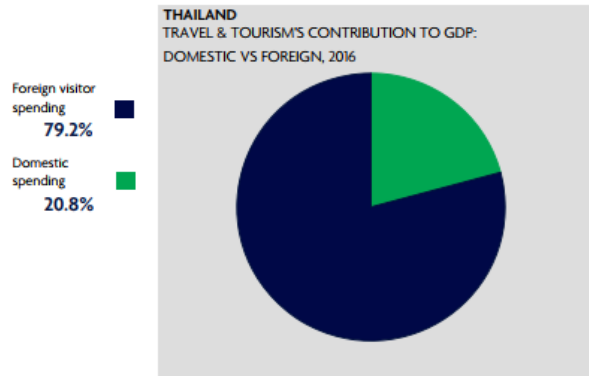


Figure 14: Domestic vs. Foreign Tourists' ratio -Thailand (Source: WTTC, 2017)

The aforementioned pie chart is the explanation of the domestic vs. foreign Travel and Tourism activities in 2016 as reported by WTTC. Domestic tourism spending contributed 20.8% to the GDP and from the end of international visitors in Thailand, the contribution accounted for 79.2% in 2016. Moreover, the foreign visitors spending have grown to 10.3% in 2017 which makes THB2085.9 Billion and is predicted to increase to THB4210.2 Billion by 2027 (WTTC, 2017).

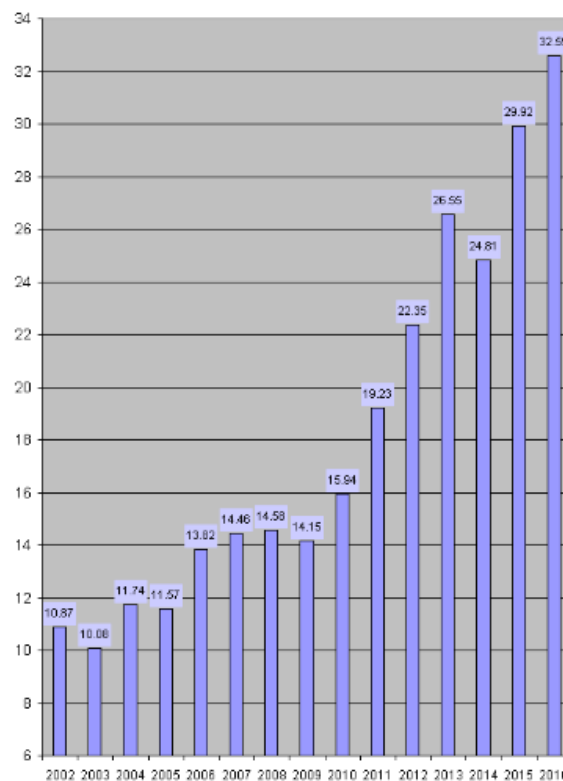


Figure 15: Tourism Statistics- Thailand (Source: Thai Websites (2017)

The graph above is the illustration of Yearly tourist arrivals to Thailand since 2002 to 2016. From the beginning it is observed that tourism activities were increasing in Thailand, the situation

varied between an increase in some years and a decrease in the following. However, it is recorded that in 2013, Thailand experienced the highest number of arrivals which eventually decreased in 2014 to 24.81 million (Thai Websites, 2017). However, a massive increase was seen in 2015. As stated by the gathered data, Thailand experiences an increase every year in its tourist activities. Thailand is amongst the top 20 most visited nations in the world (Ross, 2017).

In contrast to this, Financial Times reported that the number of visitors to Thailand is expected to increase by 60 million every year by 2030. Since the past 10 years, a large number of Europeans are visiting Thailand. In 2016, an approximate of 1 million Brits visited the Land of Smiles. Due to an increase in the Tourism activities, the industry serves as the best source of employment which has provided 5.73 million jobs (directly or indirectly) amounting to a credible 15.1% of the total employment in Thailand (WTTC, 2017).

V. DISCUSSION

Thailand and Australia serve as a hub for the tourism activities which contributes to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the countries. The findings in the above section explain that the tourist activities in both the regions are increasing at a faster pace because more people are willing to explore the beauty of the two regions. Moreover, it is also observed that in Australia; Sydney and Melbourne are two important regions where Chinese and Japanese tourists throng. Similarly, in Thailand, the Europeans and their visits have also increased. The international tourism receipts are increasing with every passing year, thus imposing a positive impact on the GDP of the nation. The international arrivals are taking place in both the nations, thus positively impacting the overall tourism industry and contributing to its growth. On the other hand, Australian tourism industry will boost by AUD125.9 billion. However, the ups and downs are being experienced by both the countries due to prevailing uncertain political and legal conditions which restrict tourists from visiting Thailand and Australia.

VI. CONCLUSION

For concluding the overall research paper, the importance of tourism has been analyzed. It is thus, proven that tourism makes up a sizeable percentage of the GDP and contributes to the wealth of the nation. Thailand is experiencing a steady increase in almost every year as the numbers of tourists are increasing and are expected to increase. On the other hand, Australia is also experiencing a significant growth in tourist activities as evident from the GDP increase from 2015 to 2016.

With the help of this, tourism as a percentage of GDP has been proven because it does affect the economic growth as international visits from other nations affects the overall industry. Similar to this, the objective of the study has been accomplished because it is proved with the help of sufficient data that GDP's do receive a significant contribution from the tourism industry of a particular nation.

VII. STUDY LIMITATIONS

The limitations of the study allow the future researchers to consider the uncovered aspects in their studies if they planned to base their study on the same topic or the one similar to it. The research paper relied entirely on the accumulation of qualitative data for accomplishing the set propositions; however, the future researchers can consider the collection of data from the tourists that will be primary in nature. In contrast to this, it is also mentioned that study was based on evaluating tourism industries of Australia and Thailand so the study results cannot be generalized. The future researchers can evaluate other tourists' hub as well including Malaysia, Turkey, and Switzerland etc.

VIII. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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