TRAVEL & TOURISM
BENCHMARKING RESEARCH TRENDS 2019
HOW DOES TRAVEL & TOURISM COMPARE TO OTHER SECTORS?
HIGHLIGHTS

• Accounting for 10.4% (US$ 8.8 trillion) of the total global GDP in 2018, Travel & Tourism’s contribution was 1.7 times higher than Mining, 1.5 times higher than Banking and Automotive manufacturing, and 1.4 times higher than Agriculture.

• Travel & Tourism sustained a total of 319 million direct, indirect, and induced jobs (10% of all jobs) across the world in 2018. This exceeds the impacts of Financial services, Health, Banking, Automotive manufacturing, and Mining.

• Travel & Tourism was the fastest-growing sector in the world in 2018, expanding by 3.9%, ahead of Automotive manufacturing (3.7%) and Health (3.3%), and at a rate higher than that of the global economy for the eighth consecutive year.

• In Asia-Pacific, Travel & Tourism is the fifth largest sector in terms of contribution to GDP (9.9%) and employment (9.3%). Across countries, Travel & Tourism is the largest sector in the Philippines and Thailand while it is the fourth largest in China.

• In Europe, Travel & Tourism was the fastest-growing sector in 2018 (3.1%), ahead of Construction (2.8%) and Banking (2.6%), and above the overall economy growth rate of 2.0%.

• Travel & Tourism was the second fastest-growing sector in Africa (5.6%) in 2018, only behind Automotive manufacturing (7.1%), and in part driven by North Africa’s rebound from security crises as well as the implementation of policies that promote travel facilitation.

• Travel & Tourism is the sixth largest sector in terms of GDP contribution and employment in the Americas. It supports 44 million jobs (9.7% of all jobs), more than double the Banking contribution.

• In the Middle East, Travel & Tourism ranked fourth (at 8.7% of total GDP) in 2018 in terms of GDP contribution, ahead of Health (8.0%), Retail (5.7%) and Banking (5.5%). Mining (at 39.4% of GDP) is by far the most dominant sector in the region, 2.4 times larger than Construction in second place.
Travel & Tourism plays an important role in job creation and economic development throughout the world. Among the nine sectors analysed, Travel & Tourism took the fifth position in terms of GDP contribution. Accounting for 10.4% (US$ 8.8 trillion) of the total global GDP in 2018, Travel & Tourism’s contribution was 1.7 times higher than Mining, 1.5 times higher than Banking and Automotive manufacturing, and 1.4 times higher than Agriculture.

In terms of employment contribution, Travel & Tourism came fourth, supporting 319 million jobs (10.0% of all jobs) – ahead of Financial services (9.1% contribution) and Health (7.4% contribution).

Chart 1: World – GDP and employment shares by sector, 2018

Travel & Tourism was the fastest growing sector in 2018. It expanded by 3.9%, ahead of Automotive manufacturing (3.7%) and Health (3.3%), and at a rate higher than that of the global economy for the eighth consecutive year. Strong growth in Travel & Tourism is driven by the continued rise in the number of middle-class households, solid growth in global consumer spending, low unemployment rates, continued rebound from security threats, currency depreciation and visa relaxation in several countries around the world.

Chart 2: GDP impact of US$1 million in Travel & Tourism spending across countries. Travel & Tourism’s impact on GDP is strongest in Saudi Arabia, Indonesia and China while it is the weakest in the UAE, Germany and South Korea.

Chart 3: World – sector GDP growth rates, 2018
By growing on average 4.4% pa, Travel & Tourism was the second fastest-growing sector in terms of GDP contribution during 2010-18, supported by a significant increase in international arrivals (from 952 million people crossing borders in 2010 to 1.4 billion in 2018). It was only surpassed by Automotive manufacturing which grew by 4.9% pa. In the Automotive sector, technology, changing customer preferences and stricter regulation (i.e. rules on car emissions) drive strong demand for new products.

In most sectors, employment growth during 2010-18 did not match GDP growth. This is particularly evident in Agriculture and Mining, but also in Travel & Tourism. While Travel & Tourism GDP grew by 4.4% pa, employment in the sector only expanded by 2.1% due to productivity improvements arising from automation, digitisation and capital investment. Agriculture and Mining saw employment decline during 2010-18, as machines and robots continue to displace the work of humans.

Chart 4: World – sector GDP and employment growth rates, 2010-18 (% pa)

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1. UNWTO, May 2019, World Tourism Barometer
In Asia-Pacific, Travel & Tourism is the fifth largest sector in terms of contribution to GDP and employment. In 2018, Travel & Tourism’s GDP (9.9% of economy GDP) was ahead of Retail (9.5%) and Health (9.0%). Meanwhile, Construction, which accounted for 24.2% of total GDP, is the largest sector. Across countries, Travel & Tourism is the largest sector in the Philippines and Thailand while it is the fourth largest in China.

Travel & Tourism employment (180 million jobs, 9.3% of all jobs) was ahead of Banking (5.6% contribution) and Health (4.6% contribution). Despite experiencing -2.3% pa decline in employment during 2010-18, Agriculture has remained the largest employer in the region, accounting for 42.6% of all jobs.

Chart 5: Asia-Pacific – GDP and employment shares by sector, 2018

In Asia-Pacific, Travel & Tourism was the fastest-growing sector (6.4%) in 2018, ahead of Health (5.7%) and Financial services (4.3%). Travel & Tourism grew at a remarkable rate in 2018 across several countries in Asia-Pacific including China (7.3%), Indonesia (7.8%), the Philippines (8.9%) and South Korea (5.8%) on the back of an expanding middle class, greater connectivity and improved infrastructure. At 3.6%, Travel & Tourism was the fastest-growing sector in Japan in 2018, ahead of Construction (2.0%), and significantly above the overall economy growth rate (0.8%). In Japan, robust growth has been brought about by a continued relaxation of visa requirements. This, combined with a depreciation of the yen, has made travel to Japan more affordable and has driven international spending.

In Asia-Pacific, Travel & Tourism was also the fastest-growing sector in Asia-Pacific during 2010-18 (7.7% pa), ahead of Financial services (6.5%), and above the overall economy growth rate (5.0%). This means that Travel & Tourism’s relative importance compared with other sectors has increased over the last nine years. This contrasts with Agriculture which was the slowest-growing sector and has been losing its relative share compared with other sectors. Agricultural production cannot keep up with Asia’s large and growing population. In the region, the sector struggles with limited arable land, inadequate water supply, low farm yields and environmental and soil degradation.

In Africa, Travel & Tourism occupies the sixth position in terms of GDP contribution (8.5% of total GDP) and fourth in terms of employment (24.3 million jobs, 6.7% of all employment). Unsurprisingly, Agriculture is the largest sector in GDP contribution (21.5%) while it also supports the most jobs (136 million jobs, 37.8% of all employment); more than twice as many as Retail in second place.

Travel & Tourism is the third largest sector in Egypt in terms of GDP contribution (11.9%), ahead of Mining (7.3%), but surpassed by Construction (16.8%) and Agriculture (15.3%). After being the dominant sector in 2010, when it accounted for 16.7% of GDP, Travel & Tourism dropped from first position during 2011-16 as a result of security threats. However, by 2018, the sector was the fastest growing of those in the study – a remarkable 16.5%. This was ahead of Automotive manufacturing (9.6%) and Construction (9.2%), and more than triple the overall economy growth rate (5.3%) – a result of continued safety and security improvements.

Across Europe, Travel & Tourism occupied the fifth position in both GDP (9.7% of total GDP) and employment contribution (37 million jobs, 9.7% of all employment). Travel & Tourism’s GDP was 1.6 times higher than Automotive manufacturing and Banking – each contributing 5.9% to total economy GDP. Accounting for 13.6% of GDP, Construction maintained the first position in terms of GDP contribution, despite slow growth over recent years.

Travel & Tourism occupies a strong position across many Mediterranean countries, including Spain, Italy and Turkey. For instance, in Spain, strong growth during 2010-18 – driven in particular by international spending, led the sector to overtake Construction to become the largest in terms of GDP contribution. Meanwhile, Travel & Tourism occupies second place in Italy and Turkey.

Travel & Tourism’s employment in Europe was 1.5 times higher than Financial services and more than three times higher than Banking and Automotive manufacturing. Accounting for 15.9% of all jobs, Health came first in terms of employment contribution.

In Europe, Travel & Tourism was the fastest-growing sector in 2018 (3.1%), ahead of Construction (2.8%) and Banking (2.6%), and above the overall economy growth rate of 2.0%. Travel & Tourism was the strongest performing sector in Italy and Turkey. In Italy, which has been struggling with economic problems (including the government’s worsening budget deficit), the sector grew by 3.2% in 2018 (vs. overall economy growth rate of 0.9%), driven mainly by international spending. In Turkey, Travel & Tourism expanded by 15.0%, driven by safety improvements and depreciation of its currency; this was the fastest growth of all nine sectors, and significantly ahead of Health in second place (7.9%).
Travel & Tourism is the sixth largest sector in terms of GDP contribution and employment in the Americas. Accounting for 8.3% of all GDP, Travel & Tourism was ahead of Mining (5.4%) and Automotive manufacturing (4.6%). Travel & Tourism supports 44 million jobs (9.7% of all jobs), more than double the contribution from Banking and more than triple the number of jobs in Mining.

Travel & Tourism was the second largest sector in Mexico in both GDP contribution (17.2%) and employment (17.8%). In the USA, Travel & Tourism’s contribution to GDP at 7.8% places the sector ahead of Automotive manufacturing (4.9% contribution), Mining (3.2% contribution) and Agriculture (2.3% contribution).

Travel & Tourism was the second fastest-growing sector in the Americas during 2010-18 (3.1% pa), ahead of Mining (2.6% pa) and Retail (2.4% pa), and only surpassed by Automotive manufacturing which grew by 4.6% pa. Robust growth in Travel & Tourism comes on the back of falling currencies (e.g. Argentina), visa relaxation in many countries, and post-hurricane recovery in the Caribbean region.

In the Middle East, Travel & Tourism ranked fourth (at 8.7% of total GDP) in 2018 in terms of GDP contribution, ahead of Health (8.0%), Retail (5.7%), Banking (5.3%), Agriculture (3.5%) and Automotive manufacturing (0.4%). Mining (at 39.4% of GDP) is by far the most dominant sector in the region, 2.4 times larger than Construction in second place.

By supporting 5.4 million jobs (7.2% of all employment), Travel & Tourism ranks fifth, ahead of Financial services (3.6 million jobs, 4.7% of all employment). Despite its low relative contribution to GDP, Agriculture supports the most jobs (17.9 million), followed by Construction (14.4 million jobs).

Our forecasts show that contribution from Mining to economies in the Middle East is likely to decrease as many countries including the UAE and Saudi Arabia diversify their economies away from a single main income source towards a growing range of sectors including Travel & Tourism.
The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) has spearheaded global analysis of the economic importance of the sector for over 25 years. This research has established the contribution of Travel & Tourism on an ongoing basis to 185 countries in absolute size, share of the economy, and growth. Around the world, WTTC research is referenced as the authoritative source of the role of Travel & Tourism in generating GDP, employment, exports, and investment. This research compares the role that Travel & Tourism plays in the world economy with other economic sectors. The results of these comparisons provide new perspectives on the relative significance of Travel & Tourism, as well as some of its unique advantages in driving current and future global economic growth.

This updated WTTC research benchmarks Travel & Tourism against an assortment of other sectors for 26 countries and for each world region. The following sectors have been analysed in comparison to Travel & Tourism. They were selected as having a similar breadth and global presence as Travel & Tourism:

AGRICULTURE: agriculture, forestry, and fishing
AUTOMOTIVE MANUFACTURING: motor vehicles and parts & accessories
BANKING: all banking activities and related services
CONSTRUCTION: those primarily engaged in the construction of buildings (both residential and non-residential), engineering projects or specialty trade contractors. Construction work done may include new work, additions, alterations, or maintenance and repairs.
FINANCIAL SERVICES: all financial related activities including banking, investment services, and insurance
HEALTH: provision of health and social work activities
MINING: the extraction of oil, natural gas, coal, metals, and related services
RETAIL (WITHOUT WHOLESALE): all retail trade (i.e. retail trade, except of motor vehicles & retail codes to motor vehicles and motorcycles)

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The analysis examines the economic value of industries on three levels:

DIRECT: This includes only direct GDP and employment impacts for the relevant sector. In the case of Travel & Tourism, we only count the value added of the accommodation, recreation, transportation, and other related sectors.

INDIRECT: This measures the supply chain impact (also called inter-industry linkages) for each sector. For benchmark sectors (e.g. agriculture, automotive manufacturing etc.) indirect impacts relate solely to domestic supply chain impacts. Travel & Tourism capital investment and government collective spending are also included when calculating the indirect impact for Travel & Tourism as this is consistent with the UNWTO TSA: RMF 2008 and WTTC annual economic impact analysis. On average across the 26 benchmark countries, this increases Travel & Tourism’s indirect impact by around 35% compared to the narrower definition used for other sectors.

INDUCED: This measures the impacts of incomes earned directly and indirectly as they are spent in the local economy.

The sum of direct, indirect, and induced impacts equals the total economic impact of a sector.

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