

RUNNING HEAD: BROOKLYN'S TOURIST CRUX

Brooklyn's Tourist Crux:

The Advantages and Disadvantages to a Tourism Influx

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### Abstract

In the past few years, New York City has seen an increasing amount of tourism. Brooklyn, in particular, has received a curious amount of attention. An important issue arises from this recent influx of visitors; is this increase in tourism beneficial or detrimental to the quality of life and overall preservation of the local culture? This issue is examined from a hospitality perspective, as well as a local perspective, and will attempt to substantiate that heavy tourism if left unchecked, could be more pernicious than advantageous in its particular area of concentration.

### Brooklyn's Tourist Crux:

#### The Advantages and Disadvantages to a Tourism Influx

Even though increased tourism can provide better employment opportunities and increased revenue for local businesses, too much can destroy quality of life for locals on account of higher noise levels, a myriad of pedestrian traffic, and possible dilution of local culture. Quality-of-life, in this context, is defined as your personal satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) with the cultural or intellectual conditions under which you live (as distinct from material comfort). As with anything in our society, too much of something can be detrimental to the benefits it provides. This paper will examine whether or not the benefits outweigh the drawbacks in reference to:

1. Can a major city be too noisy for comfort?
2. Are the sidewalks becoming too crowded?
3. Tourist traffic and local small businesses
4. Is there a viable solution?

#### **Literature Review**

In the course of research on this subject, one of the first issues that emerged was the lack of information for the narrow scope of what was being examined; the negative impacts of tourism. Much of the research in the field of tourism to urban destinations and its impact on those destinations deals with the positives, which are almost innumerable. One work covers urban tourism from a perspective of regulation theory and describes the socioeconomic viewpoint as well as other ideas. (Hoffman et al., 2003) Reaching beyond the economic impacts of urban tourism in established cities, there are also the cognitive effects of how visitors and residents interact with each other and share the spaces they must use. (Dumitru, 2012) After examining these fundamental works, the transition into how to approach this delicate subject was more apparent; it cannot be ignored.

#### **Tourism numbers**

The amount of international and domestic tourists to New York City has steadily increased over the years. According to the graph pictured, there has consistently been a steady stream of visitors.

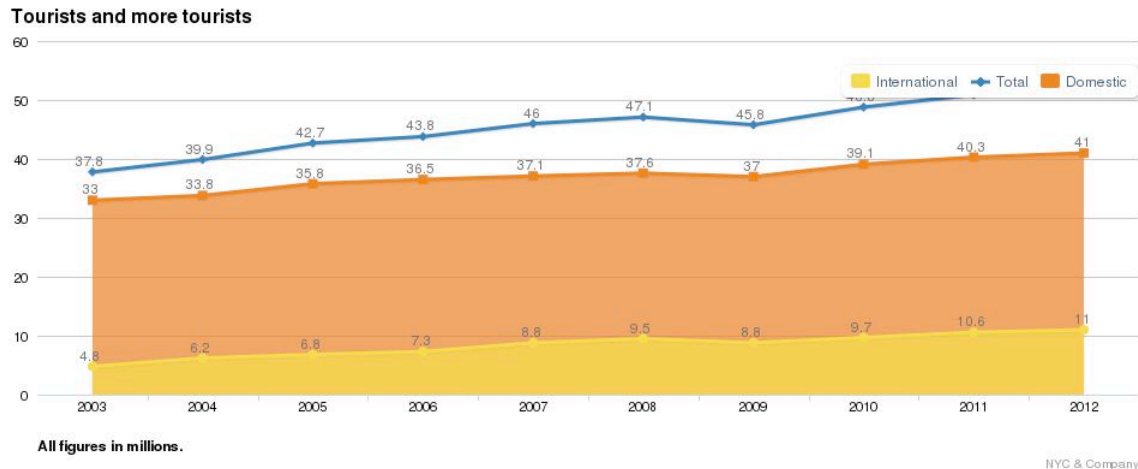


Figure 1. Visitors to New York City (<http://mycrains.crainsnewyork.com/stats-and-the-city/2013/tourism/tourists-and-more-tourists>)

Everything in our society has its limitations and a major city is no exception. Take for example an elevator, which has a maximum weight limit in order to function properly and safely. Apply the same principle to public spaces and it is quite obvious that overcrowding can lead to malfunctions to the point of safety issues and general annoyances.

### **Can a major city be too noisy for comfort?**

In some aspects, it seems almost absurd to indicate New York City is too loud. Of course it's loud; as is any other large city. The main culprits in the case of noise complaints, in this instance, are helicopters and construction. Take for example the following:

Brooklyn residents living along the waterfront in neighborhoods such Brooklyn Heights and Red Hook have complained about the noise generated by the tourist helicopters. When Brooklyn Bridge Park opened last year, the complaints increased. Velazquez, who joined other elected officials last month to protest the noise and

stop the tour rides, wrote Bloomberg that the 'the largely unregulated flights that disturb the peace in Manhattan and Brooklyn neighborhoods must stop.'

(Durkin, 2011)

In other instances, more tourists mean more construction to cater to increasing needs and in effect more noise as a result of that construction. One man's wife in the Brooklyn Heights section of the city went so far as staying with a friend to get away from the noise of construction which hindered her focus at work. Between helicopter tours and construction, locals are becoming miffed with increased noise levels. (Buckley, 2013)

### **Are The Sidewalks Becoming Too Crowded?**

Overcrowded sidewalks may not seem like a big concern for the average U.S. resident, but for New Yorkers sidewalks are a mode of transportation.(Deacon, 2013) Crowded sidewalks could be a legitimate concern for anyone who may have to try to fight through a crowd of tourists just trying to get down to the corner deli on a lunch break. Aside from crowded sidewalks being an overall inconvenience, this can also pose a safety hazard as more local residents take to the streets literally; choosing not to use the sidewalk just to get around a crowd. (Blau, 2013)

One person mentioned about the area around the Barclays Center, "If you go to other arenas you can see how people react when sidewalks aren't big enough, they go into the street," resident David Goldstein said. "That's a safety issue." ("Some Residents Fear," 2012)

Foot traffic in particular areas is measured at different points during the year and the report is called the Pedestrian Volume Index. According to an article in the New York Times,

Since the city began keeping score at 50 of the busiest intersections five years ago, its 'pedestrian volume index' has climbed steadily, except for one year, from 2008 to 2009, perhaps because of the recession. Fixing the volume in 2007 at a base of 100,

the index rose by more than 10 percent, to 113.2, last May. (Roberts, 2011)

### **Tourist Traffic And Local Small Businesses**

Another impact of the tourism increase on the local urban environment would be small business patronage. Upon examining the correlation of these two factors, one would not be readily able to find any negative aspects. What small business wouldn't enjoy more customers? According to an article in the New York Daily News, "Business around Barclays Center are reaping record profits from a bonanza of customers flooding to the popular new arena." [sic] (Blau, 2013) One business owner even said, "We've definitely felt some positive effects." (Blau, 2013) After such claims one would think that the future for those businesses looks bright, but there is a flip side as with anything else.

From the article:

Landlords near the arena are eager to bring in franchise restaurants and stores who can pay more. 'Over the next few years, I believe you will see a wholesale change in the immediate area,' said Chris Havens, the director of [aptsandlofts.com](http://aptsandlofts.com), a real estate brokerage site.

The rent for spots right near the arena is double the price store owners are being asked to pay for locations slightly further away, Havens said. 'Rents have gone through the roof,' said City Councilwoman Letitia James (D-Prospect Heights), who has been a big critic of the

arena. 'It's displacing mom-and-pop shops, which are the backbone of our economy.' (Blau, 2013)

According to the preceding information, things do not bode well for small business owners in the midst of this tourist influx and New York City's quest to become the top tourist destination.

### **Is There A Viable Solution?**

Tourism can provide numerous benefits to both sides involved, but the issue at hand here is if it can have an effect on quality of life. Yes, more tourists can mean more jobs, especially for those entering the field of hospitality, but those jobs are would be no good if the people working them might possibly not be able afford to frequent the same places as those whom they serve. It could become a problem if one can no longer afford to live in his or her home city.

It is not possible to just cancel tourism. One cannot simply regulate tourism to the effect of placing a quantifying limit on visitors. The quality of life issue is a delicate subject. It would be bad for the city's tourism campaign to seem rude by letting tourists know they get in the way. One possible solution is to start a tourism courtesy campaign. Some examples would include: billboards around the city citing "sidewalk etiquette", tourism ambassadors greeting tourists, etc. As for the noise, the helicopter issue will be an ongoing debate, but it seems to be the biggest concern.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, upon examining the sources found, heavy tourist traffic does have an impact on the quality of life for local residents in New York City and Brooklyn as does higher noise levels. Cities can be noisy, but none of the city's residents want added unnecessary noise. On the subject of sidewalk crowding, it would be outrageous to try and police sidewalk space and offensive to create sidewalk lanes, so the best option would be to educate people on the importance of a smooth flowing sidewalk. Finally, it is apparent that small businesses feel the impacts as well. Increased property rents and possible customer loss to larger chains is a real issue. Some possible ways to mitigate such problems could be noise level regulations to reduce the amount and

frequency of nuisance sounds, more wayfinding signs for the tourists with a written reminder for them to be courteous to those around them, and a coalition for small neighborhood businesses to come to a middle ground so as not to be swallowed up by larger corporations with more money. Due to the difficulty in finding relevant information on the topic of tourism impacting quality of life for city residents, there should be much more effort expended for future research in this field.



## References

Blau, R. (2013, September 22). Local Brooklyn Businesses Feel Barclays Boom. *New York Daily News*, p. 21.

This is an article about how some local business owners were pleased with some increased business from tourists and visitors to the Barclays Center. It pertains to one of the arguments in my outline.

Buckley, C. (2013, July 12). Behind City's Painful Din, Culprits High and Low. *New York Times*, p. A1.

This article covers noise in New York City and some of the causes behind it. It also examines the mood changes it causes within the people the noises affect.

Deacon, L. (2013). PLANNING SIDEWALKS: THE IMPLICATIONS OF REGULATING SIDEWALK SPACE IN THE EAST VILLAGE

This paper is a master's thesis examining sidewalks, the use of them, and how potential implications can be mitigated.

Dumitru, T. (2012). THE IMPACT OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT ON URBAN ENVIRONMENT.. *Studies in Business & Economics*, 7(3), 160-164.

Durkin, E., & Pearson, J. (2011, June 2). Mayor Bloomberg denies tourist helicopter ban over residential areas. *NY Daily News*. Retrieved November 20, 2013, from <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/brooklyn/mayor-bloomberg-denies-tourist-helicopter-ban-residential-areas-article-1.127063>

The news article covers some of the opposition city residents have toward helicopter tours and the noise created by these tours. The noise mostly affects Brooklyn residents and those along waterfronts.

Hoffman, L. M., Fainstein, S. S., & Judd, D. R. (2003). *Cities and visitors: regulating people*,

*markets, and city space*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub..

This book discusses urban tourism and takes on a mostly economic perspective. The authors approach the topic from the regulation school of thought.

Horowitz, A. (2012, December 15). Walk Like a Fish. *New York Times*, p. SR5.

A very interesting piece in the Times in which the author compares the way residents and visitors walk, and should walk, to that of the fluidity of creatures in nature; the slipstream of fish

Johnson, S., & McCabe, S. (2013). THE HAPPINESS FACTOR IN TOURISM: SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING AND SOCIAL TOURISM. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 41, 42-65.

This research paper focuses mostly on social tourism in which some people were given financial support to take a vacation, which the author refers to as SWB or social well-being (McCabe)

Phillips, W., & Jang, S. (2010). Destination Image Differences Between Visitors And Non-visitors: A Case Of New York City. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 12(5), 642-645.

This is an interesting read about the conscious mental evaluation visitors have of their experiences. This fits with my topic by being able to use this to compare to how it affects natives.

Residents Fear Sidewalks. (2012, April 27). *CBS New York*. Retrieved November 20, 2013, from <http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2012/04/27/some-residents-fear-sidewalks-wont-be-able-to-handle-crowds-from-barclays-center/>

An interesting article about how some people feel about the expected new crowds the Barclays Center would bring and the fear that sidewalks won't be able to handle the

increased pedestrian traffic.

Roberts, S. (2011, December 7). Rising Foot Traffic Redefines 'Crowded'. *New York Times*, p. Metro.

Author Sam Roberts examines the aspects of increased foot traffic and explains what the city's pedestrian volume index is and how it has grown over the years as more people travel on foot around the city.

Schofield, P. (2011). City resident attitudes to proposed tourism development and its impacts on the community. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 13(3), 218-233.

Although this article is focused on England, it may be compared and contrasted with New York City. The main point the author tries to get across is that traditionally, tourism impacting small areas is examined and most people ignore how it may affect major cities.

Stokes, R., & Fainstein, S. (1998). Spaces for Play: The Impacts of Entertainment Development on New York City. *Economic Development Quarterly*, 12(2), 150-165.

The article is somewhat related to my topic. Major tourist entertainment venues are discussed. The effect this has on local populations, negative and positive, can be explored.