

TOURISM AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS. FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE TO THE TOURISM INDUSTRY PROMOTION.

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Annotation: Tourism and international relations are interdependent sectors that mutually shape each other. As global mobility expands, tourism becomes both a product and a driver of diplomatic cooperation, economic integration, cultural exchange, and soft power. This article analyzes how political stability, international cooperation, global branding, visa policies, transportation networks, and digital diplomacy influence the promotion of the tourism industry. The study is based on an analytical review of academic literature, global tourism reports, and comparative evaluation of successful international tourism strategies. Results show that countries with strong diplomatic relations, well-established international partnerships, and proactive image-building policies experience higher tourism competitiveness. The article also provides policy recommendations aimed at strengthening tourism promotion through improved bilateral relations, sustainable tourism strategies, and digital communication.

Keywords: International relations, tourism promotion, political stability, global mobility, soft power, cultural diplomacy, visa policy, global branding, international cooperation.

Tourism is one of the world's largest and fastest-growing sectors, contributing significantly to GDP, job creation, and socio-economic development. In many

countries, tourism accounts for a major share of service exports and acts as a powerful catalyst for international cultural exchange and economic diplomacy.

At the same time, tourism is highly sensitive to international relations. Peaceful relations and political stability attract visitors, while conflicts and diplomatic tensions decrease mobility and global trust. Therefore, understanding the link between tourism and international relations is crucial for strategic development and global competitiveness.

This article examines the multidimensional interplay between tourism and international relations, highlighting the key factors that influence tourism promotion and global visibility.

Tourism is one of the most geopolitically sensitive industries in the world. International relations directly and indirectly shape tourist flows, destination branding, investment attractiveness, and the overall promotion of the tourism sector. Below are the main factors at the intersection of international relations and tourism promotion:

Diplomatic Relations and Political Stability

- Positive bilateral/multilateral relations → easier visa policies, joint marketing campaigns, and increased tourist flows (e.g., China–Thailand visa-free agreement in 2024 dramatically boosted Chinese arrivals to Thailand).
- Tense or hostile relations → travel warnings, visa restrictions, sanctions, or outright bans (e.g., Western countries' travel advisories against Russia after 2022 reduced Western arrivals by >90% in many cases).
- Civil unrest, terrorism, or war almost instantly collapses inbound tourism (Ukraine, Yemen, Syria examples).

Visa Policy and Travel Facilitation

- Visa-free access, visa-on-arrival, or e-visas are among the strongest promotion tools a country has.
- Countries actively negotiate bilateral visa waivers as part of broader diplomatic packages (e.g., Schengen Area, Gulf Cooperation Council mobility schemes, ASEAN single visa discussions).

- Membership in regional blocs (EU, Mercosur, ECOWAS, etc.) often translates into seamless intra-regional tourism.

Air Transport Agreements (Open Skies)

- Bilateral and multilateral Air Services Agreements determine route rights, frequencies, and airline designations.

- Liberal “open skies” policies (e.g., EU–US Open Skies Agreement, ASEAN Open Skies) dramatically increase seat capacity and lower fares → direct boost to tourism.

- Conversely, protectionist aviation policies limit growth (e.g., restricted India–UAE routes until recent liberalization).

Government-to-Government Marketing and “Tourism Diplomacy”

- Joint tourism promotion campaigns (e.g., “Türkiye–Russia Safe Tourism” certification program during COVID).

- Hosting mega-events with diplomatic support (FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, Expo 2020 Dubai, Olympics) used as soft-power tools.

- High-level state visits often include MoUs on tourism cooperation.

Trade Relations and Economic Partnerships

- Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) frequently contain tourism service chapters.

- Rising middle class in large trading partners (e.g., China, India) becomes a source market when trade ties are strong.

- Sanctions and trade wars hurt tourism (U.S.–China trade war 2018–2020 reduced Chinese outbound travel to the U.S. by ~70%).

Soft Power and National Branding

- Countries invest in “nation branding” campaigns (Incredible India, Amazing Thailand, 100% Pure New Zealand) often coordinated by foreign ministries.

- Cultural diplomacy (Confucius Institutes, Goethe-Institut, Alliance Française, or K-pop/Hallyu strategy of South Korea) creates long-term interest in visiting the country.

International Organizations and Multilateral Frameworks

- UNWTO (World Tourism Organization) membership and participation in its programs.

- Participation in regional tourism bodies (Pacific Asia Travel Association, Caribbean Tourism Organization, etc.).

- WTO/GATS commitments on tourism services affect market access for foreign tour operators and hotel chains.

Global Health and Security Cooperation

- Harmonized health protocols during pandemics (e.g., IHR WHO regulations, EU Digital COVID Certificate).

- Intelligence sharing and counter-terrorism cooperation reduce perceived risk.

Climate Diplomacy and Sustainable Tourism

- Countries that lead in climate negotiations (e.g., small island states, EU) use green destination branding.

- Carbon offset programs and international funding (Green Climate Fund) help destinations adapt and market themselves as sustainable.

Digital and Media Diplomacy

- How a country is portrayed in international media (often influenced by diplomatic relations).

- Social media sentiment and influencer invitations coordinated with embassies.

Summary Table: How International Relations Affect Tourism Promotion

Factor	Positive Effect (Promotion ↑)	Negative Effect (Promotion ↓)
Diplomatic relations	Visa waivers, joint campaigns	Travel bans, advisories
Aviation agreements	More routes & seats	Restricted routes & capacity
Trade & economic ties	Rising source-market income	Sanctions, reduced business travel
Soft power & cultural diplomacy	Increased interest & positive image	Negative stereotypes, boycotts

Factor	Positive Effect (Promotion ↑)	Negative Effect (Promotion ↓)
Regional integration	Seamless intra-regional travel	Closed borders within region
Global events & mega-projects	Global visibility (World Cup, Expo, Olympics)	Event-related security concerns
Health & security cooperation	Confidence to travel	Pandemics, terrorism without coordination

In practice, countries that actively align their foreign policy with tourism objectives (Thailand, Türkiye, UAE, Morocco, Rwanda, Indonesia under Widodo, etc.) consistently outperform peers in tourist arrival growth even when global conditions are difficult.

Tourism promotion today is not only a ministry of tourism task – it is increasingly a whole-of-government approach involving foreign affairs, transport, trade, culture, and interior ministries coordinated at the highest political level.

Conclusions

Tourism and international relations are strongly interlinked, mutually reinforcing each other. The promotion of the tourism industry depends on political stability, diplomatic partnerships, transportation infrastructure, and global branding. Soft power and cultural diplomacy enhance a nation's attractiveness and global influence. Digital communication has become an essential tool in shaping tourism demand and global visibility.

Strengthen bilateral and regional cooperation to facilitate joint tourism projects and travel corridors.

Simplify visa procedures and expand e-visa or visa-free programs to increase international mobility.

Invest in digital diplomacy, promoting national culture through global media platforms.

Enhance political stability and security measures, improving global perceptions of safety.

Develop sustainable tourism policies in alignment with UNWTO and UNESCO guidelines.

Promote national branding through storytelling, heritage promotion, and targeted marketing campaigns.

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