International Travel: Economic Effects of Government Intervention

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Health epidemics within the past ten years have substantially affected governmental responses towards international travel in the increasingly globalized world. The outbreak of SARS in 2003 and the H1N1 pandemic in 2009 caused countries to react to SARS and the Swine Flu by implementing various travel restrictions and bans to certain areas. An official statement dated April 9, 2003 from Malaysia’s Department of Health imposed a temporary travel restriction to six countries affected by SARS and the Swine Flu was a painful reminder of the potential economic repercussions if travel restrictions were implemented. These restrictions have been shown to be detrimental to the tourism industry. In the case of the 1970s, the World Health Organization reported that for every dollar invested in SARS prevention, the tourism losses were estimated to be $100. In 2009, the number of Chinese tourists visiting four South American countries dropped by 61.6%, from 20,346,000 to 8,962,000. In May, the number of flights declined by a further 65% in the number of tourists from Hong Kong dropping by 95%. This demonstrates the need for governments to communicate their responses to the public. A study conducted in the post-SARS tour arrival recovery patterns. With decreased tourism came the decrease in tourism income, which accounted for 47.3% of GDP in this region, with Malaysia, Thailand, and China being hardest hit inside developed nations. By January 2004, news reports showed that governments were giving tourism officials the push to promote their nations as the tourist destinations, and doing so to offset the economic effects of the Swine Flu. In April 2009, various groups and governments from different countries debated whether there should be travel restrictions, or even warnings for travelers during the Swine Flu outbreak to avoid the Mexico and the certain areas within the United States. The European Union’s health commissioner advised travelers to avoid Mexico and the United States, her statement was parallel to the CDC’s statement that, “recommends] that U.S. travelers avoid all nonessential travel to Mexico.” Since the SARS and Swine Flu outbreak, governments adopted a new strategy in their tourism promotion actions, either promoting or discouraging travel, had an effect on international travel.

### When Disaster Strikes

On December 12, 2010 Haiti was struck by an earthquake that reduced the capital, port-au-prince to rubble. Government buildings collapsed along with schools, hospitals, and parking, leaving the country in a state of great societal shock. With a long history of unstable governments often overthrown by military coups and civilians, it is difficult to say if the current Haitian government will stay intact and enable Haiti to rise to a state of economic stability or if government will once again be left in shambles. Haiti has struggled for decades dealing with corruption. In the Journal of Democracy we learn more of this: in 1991, military leaders ousted Raoul Cédras and Michel Franois to bring Multinational operations to the Haitian Nation. It was in 1994 that United States military force restored the democratically elected government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide. However it wouldn’t take long before corruption would again come knocking. In 1996 Rene Preval was elected as the President of the country by democratic vote. He served until 2001 and was reelected in 2006 and is the current President of Haiti. He has struggled since being elected with getting programs to pass Parliament and has been reported to the Journal of Democracy. “The judiciary is a sham of a court and police are 95 percent corrupt.” Despite these problems, Haiti has been able to recover and rebuild. In 2010, with the Haiti and France aid and economic assistance the government was able to purchase aid to ensure that aid does not cease to come to his country. He is requesting seeds for crops, rebuilding infrastructure, and aid for education. It has been reported that President Preval met Rene Preval and shared over the attacks and Haiti’s recovery and reconstruction must endure and will endure,” he said. “This pledge is one that I made at the beginning of this crisis, and I intend for America to keep our pledge. America will be your partner in the recovery and countries to continue to aid the recovery of Haiti to help Haiti to recover these words must hold true. Haiti can not ever rebuild until the United States holds true to its word. Tourism also needs to continue to flow Haiti even in this difficult time as a catalyst towards economic recovery. It is important for other nations to see Haiti’s tourism infrastructure is maintained and security to rebuild. If so of the most important that the United States does for Haiti is to aid the recovery of Haiti and continue to support the current Haitian government. The United States military in order to minimum risk, support government, rebuild infrastructure, boost jobs, and rebuild Haiti as a major tourist destination. Haitian government has always been weak, and will continue to fail unless the United States government establishes a long term plan along with Preval to help strengthen Haitian government.

### Beijing Olympics

Beijing Olympics China has always held a certain mystery to the world. For twenty-five years, between 1949 and 1974, the People’s Republic of China was closed almost completely to foreign visitors. In the late 1970s, the leadership realized they could use this mystery to promote tourism. In 1980, China’s Olympic bid was successful and the famous 1980 Summer Olympic Games were held. DIck Pound, the first time traveling to China as part of the Olympic Evaluation Commission, was trained to show visitors the wonders of China. Then, in 2001, Beijing won the bid for the 2008 Summer Olympic Games, and China began to publicly announce their biggest tourist haul they had ever received. Thirty-one new venues were built, six venues constructed of Beijing were renovated, and fifty-nine training centers were erected. The airport in Beijing added the world’s largest airport terminal and the subway doubled in size. Due to the month China held, as well as the controversies related to the Olympics, the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing were viewed, both with live reports of over 8.5 billion tickets being sold, making the Beijing Olympics the first Olympics to be sold out, and on television with 4.7 billion viewers. However, long term effects of the Olympics are still being determined.

A problem involved with researching the Beijing Olympic Games deals with a lack of sources coming out of China that may or may not be accurate. Although reliable sources were available, the worldwide of the 2008 Games, the tickets to the Games were sold out, although viewers watching from home could see the thousands of empty seats. Additionally, the declaration of the first President of the Olympic Research Association, Mr. Chen Jinhua, stated that the Games were successfully propelled by the hosting of the Olympic Games and that most importantly, the investments made in creating the Olympic spirit will continue to pay off after the Games finished. However, according to The Economist, China has yet to be able to determine what economic effects the Olympics had on the games were economically beneficial. While some areas profited because of the arrival of tourists, other areas lost revenue because the travel agencies were not able to perform.

The Beijing Olympics held certain controversies, such as the quality of air, China’s violation of allowing open media access, and proposed boycotts due to China’s continued support of repressive regimes. That being said, they were able to perform without much trouble. The games were a great success. Beijing Olympic China had been holding for years and spark an interest in the country. That was what Chinese officials had hoped for since opening the country to foreign tourists.