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INNOVATING ART, DESIGN, AND TOURISM: A COMPARATIVE JOURNEY OF ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN MALAYSIA AND FRANCE

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Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving global economy, the fusion of art, design, and tourism is proving to be a powerful force for economic growth. Countries across the globe are increasingly recognizing the economic potential of creative industries, harnessing their rich cultural heritage and innovative design to attract tourists and stimulate local economies. France, with its world-renowned art, fashion, and design sectors, has long been a leader in this space, while Malaysia, with its rich cultural diversity and emerging creative industries, is making strides to carve out its own unique identity in the tourism market.

This article explores how France and Malaysia are using innovation in art and design to enhance their tourism sectors, focusing on how they empower their respective economies. By examining the strategies of these two countries, we aim to uncover valuable insights that

Malaysia can apply to further develop its creative economy and attract a broader, more global audience.

As the world becomes more interconnected, the creative industries are playing a critical role in shaping the future of tourism. From digital transformations and virtual experiences to immersive cultural tourism, the sector is evolving rapidly. In this context, both France and Malaysia are navigating new opportunities, embracing technology, and combining their cultural heritage with modern innovation. By analyzing their approaches, we can better understand the potential of art, design, and tourism to drive sustainable economic growth in the coming years.

France: The fusion of art, design, and fashion in tourism

France has long built its tourism sector around its rich

history of art, design, and fashion. The country's well-established reputation in these areas has been a major factor in its continued success as a global tourism powerhouse. France's innovative approach to blending art, culture, and tourism has created an environment that thrives on creative industries, generating billions in revenue for the nation.

a. Cultural landmarks and museums

France is home to some of the world's most iconic museums and galleries, such as the Louvre, Musée d'Orsay, and Centre Pompidou. These institutions not only preserve the country's artistic heritage but also attract millions of visitors each year, creating a symbiotic relationship between tourism and art. The integration of culture into tourism has encouraged the growth of local businesses,

from art workshops and cultural tours to hospitality, making art a driving force of the economy.

b. Fashion as a tourism magnet

Paris, often dubbed the fashion capital of the world, uses its legacy of haute couture and high-end design to attract tourists from across the globe. Fashion events, such as Paris Fashion Week, have become major tourism draws, combining art, culture, and business in a dynamic way that promotes both economic growth and international cultural exchange.

The fashion industry, which thrives on creativity and innovation, continues to be a major driver of tourism, contributing to the country's robust economy.

c. Culinary arts and design

Beyond visual arts and fashion, the culinary scene in France has become an integral part of its tourism industry. With Michelin-starred restaurants and gastronomic experiences that blend art and design, the country's food culture attracts tourists looking for more than just sightseeing.

France's innovation in its culinary arts, paired with cutting-edge design in the dining experience, has transformed the concept of food tourism into a multimillion-dollar industry.



Image 1: Culinary Innovation Supported by the French Government to Boost the Economy
(Source: Le Cordon Bleu Paris, 2022)

Malaysia: Cultivating creativity and cultural tourism

While France has long established its dominance in integrating art, design, and tourism, Malaysia is emerging as a key player in this space. The country's rich cultural diversity, combined with its burgeoning creative industries, is beginning to reshape its tourism landscape. Malaysia's approach to art, design, and tourism innovation fuses traditional elements with modern technology, creating a distinct niche in the global tourism market.

a. Cultural heritage and art tourism

Malaysia's diverse cultural heritage, which includes Malay, Chinese, Indian, and

indigenous traditions, is one of its most compelling tourism assets. The UNESCO World Heritage Sites of George Town and Melaka are prime examples of how the country celebrates its art and culture to attract international visitors. Art festivals, craft markets, and cultural events are becoming increasingly popular, offering platforms for local artists and designers to showcase their work while stimulating the local tourism economy.

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Image 2: Innovation in Tourism and Architecture Needed to Boost Malaysia's Economy
(Source: The Star, 2024)

b. Design and modern architecture

Malaysia is embracing modern design and architecture to enhance its tourism offerings. Kuala Lumpur's iconic Petronas Towers and the National Visual Arts Gallery are examples of how contemporary design has become a symbol of Malaysia's growth as a creative hub.

The country's growing number of boutique hotels, themed resorts, and eco-friendly designs also provide unique experiences for visitors, blending design with comfort and reinforcing Malaysia's reputation as an emerging destination for creative tourism.

c. Digital and virtual tourism

The rise of digital tourism has been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and Malaysia has embraced this shift by offering virtual art exhibitions, online cultural events, and digital tourism experiences. The growing role of technology allows Malaysia to expand its reach beyond physical borders, showcasing its creative economy to global audiences in new and innovative ways. Virtual tourism not only expands access to Malaysia's artistic and cultural heritage but also promotes the work of local artists and designers to an international market.

What can Malaysia learn from France?

While both France and Malaysia have made strides in using art, design, and tourism to enhance their economies, there are key areas where Malaysia can learn from France's established practices.

a. Investing in cultural infrastructure

France's success in combining art and tourism is largely due to its world-class cultural institutions. Malaysia can benefit from further investing in high-profile museums, galleries, and

design centers that celebrate both traditional and contemporary art. Creating dedicated cultural spaces that attract global tourists will not only showcase Malaysia's artistic heritage but also stimulate economic activity in local communities.

b. Leveraging fashion and design as economic drivers

France has successfully used fashion and design to fuel its tourism sector. Malaysia, with its rich cultural diversity and growing design industries, has the potential to develop a niche in the global fashion and design tourism market. By hosting international fashion events, design exhibitions, and creative collaborations, Malaysia can position itself as a hub for design innovation while attracting high-end tourists who are drawn to luxury and creativity.

c. Expanding digital and virtual tourism

France has integrated digital platforms to enhance its tourism offerings, offering virtual tours, online exhibitions, and interactive cultural events that broaden access to its artistic and cultural experiences.

Malaysia can follow suit by expanding its virtual tourism initiatives, offering immersive online experiences that showcase local artists, designers, and cultural landmarks.

This will allow Malaysia to attract a wider, tech-savvy global audience and encourage interest in its creative industries.

Conclusion and recommendations

France has long been a leader in integrating art, design, and tourism to drive economic growth, establishing itself as a global hub for creative industries. Its success in blending cultural heritage, fashion, and design with tourism has significantly boosted its economy.

Malaysia, with its rich cultural diversity and expanding creative sectors, has the potential to follow France's example and carve out a unique identity in the global creative tourism market. To do so, Malaysia must prioritize investments in cultural infrastructure, expand the fashion and design tourism market, and embrace digital innovations to create engaging, interactive experiences for global tourists.

In particular, Malaysia should continue to enhance its cultural institutions, including museums, galleries, and design centers, to provide world-class experiences that attract international visitors.

The country's rich history and modern design scene offer a compelling opportunity to host major art exhibitions, fashion shows, and design festivals. By strategically investing in these areas, Malaysia can strengthen its position as a leading destination for creative tourism, creating jobs and stimulating local economies in the process.

Additionally, Malaysia must embrace the power of digital technologies, such as virtual tours, augmented reality (AR), and virtual reality (VR), to expand its reach beyond traditional borders. By offering digital experiences, Malaysia can attract a wider audience, allowing tourists to experience the country's art, design, and culture remotely. This digital shift will be crucial in expanding the global visibility of Malaysia's creative industries, driving both tourism and economic growth.

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