Mauritius public meeting role play cards

Government of Mauritius

Your role is to argue the case for the expansion of the tourist industry, focusing especially on economic reasons. After all the presentations, you will ask the non-governmental organisation 'We Love Mauritius' a question, and they will ask you a question.

The key arguments

The tourism industry is growing in importance. The target is 2 million tourists, and an increase in the number of hotel rooms from 9000 to 20,000, by 2020.

There has been a decline in the relative importance of agriculture and textiles:

▲ Mauritius’s economy suffered at the turn of the millennium as longstanding trade preferences in textiles and sugar were phased out.

▲ Sugar cane occupies 40% of the total land area of Mauritius and accounts for 15% of exports, but is vulnerable to bad weather (droughts and cyclones).

▲ The textile industry has been hit by strong competition from production in emerging countries.

The tourism industry has the potential to contribute to GDP and to earn foreign exchange.

Information you can use as evidence for your case

Government action to support the tourist industry

▲ Investment in a new airport so that super-jumbos can land.

▲ Construction of dams to deal with the increase in demand for water.

▲ Encouragement of upmarket tourism, attracting wealthy tourists and promoting the use of the island for conferences.

Background information

‘Since independence in 1968, Mauritius has developed from a low-income, agriculturally based economy to a middle-income diversified economy with growing industrial, financial, and tourist sectors. For most of the period, annual growth has been in the order of 5% to 6%. This remarkable achievement has been reflected in more equitable income distribution, increased life expectancy, lowered infant mortality, and a much-improved infrastructure. The economy rests on sugar, tourism, textiles and apparel, and financial services, and is expanding into fish processing, information and communications technology, and hospitality and property development. Sugarcane is grown on about 90% of the cultivated land area and accounts for 15% of export earnings. The government’s development strategy centers on creating vertical and horizontal clusters of development in these sectors.’ (Source: www.africa.com/mauritius)

Selected economic facts and figures

Natural resources: none

Contributions to GDP (2011):

▲ Agriculture: 3.6% (includes sugar cane production)

▲ Manufacturing: 17.7% (includes food processing, textiles, clothing)

▲ Hotels and restaurants: 7.1%

Main countries of origin of tourists (2011):

France 31%; Reunion 12%; UK 9%; South Africa 9%; Germany 6%

Number of hotels: 116

Total employment: 559,700. Employment in hotels and restaurants: 38,000. Numbers employed in agriculture and manufacturing have declined since 2010, but the numbers employed in hotels and restaurants has seen an increase.

Source: www.mcci.org/economy_figures.aspx
Hoteliers in Mauritius

Your role is to argue the case for the expansion of the tourist industry, focusing mainly on socio-cultural reasons, but you could also include economic and environmental arguments. After all the presentations, you will ask the local residents a question, and they will ask you a question.

The key arguments

Hotels and restaurants provide employment for local people. In 2011 there were 116 hotels. The National Tourism Development Plan provided guidelines on land management, architectural design and eco-friendly practices – geared towards attracting foreign investment.

Hotels provide opportunities for small enterprises in the area and for employment related to developing the infrastructure.

The majority of tourists are from outside Mauritius, so they contribute to foreign exchange.

Under the Environmental Protection Act 2002 hotel developers are required to submit Environmental Impact Assessment reports.

Information you can use as evidence for your case

Hotels

At the end of December 2011, there were 116 registered hotels of which 109 were in operation, with a total room capacity of 11,925. The average room occupancy rate for all hotels in 2011 was 65% (same as in 2010).

Employment

The total number of Mauritians in employment in 2011 was estimated to be 559,700 (358,200 males and 201,500 females). Of these 38,000 (25,200 males and 12,800 females) were employed by hotels and restaurants, i.e. 6.8% of the workforce.

Some examples of average monthly earnings in 2011 (in Mauritian Rupees):

▲ Agriculture: 14,818
▲ Manufacturing: 11,930
▲ Hotels and restaurants: 15,875
▲ Finance: 36,353
▲ Health and social work: 24,000
▲ Average all sectors: 19,967

Compared with manufacturing and construction, which employ large numbers of people from outside Mauritius, the tourism industry employs mainly local people. It employs only 335 foreign workers, compared with 19,000 in manufacturing.

Contribution to infrastructure

Under the Tourism Fund Act, hotels contribute to a tourism fund for infrastructure development.

Source: Mauritian Government statistics
Tourism Authority

Your role, as representatives of the Tourism Authority, is to argue the case for the government’s aim to double the number of tourists. In your presentation you should emphasise what you are doing to safeguard the environment. After all the presentations, you will ask the environmental group ‘Reef Conservation’ a question, and they will ask you a question.

The key arguments
The Tourism Authority promotes the sustainable development of tourism by:

▲ inspecting hotels, restaurants, and agencies for car and windsurf rental before issuing them with a licence
▲ monitoring tourist enterprises to ensure that standards are maintained
▲ registering, licensing and regulating the use of pleasure boats
▲ conducting training sessions for skippers of boats
▲ cleaning tourist areas.

Information you can use as evidence for your case

The Tourism Authority Act
The Tourism Authority Act of 2006 and its amendments in 2008 provided a framework which set out regulations for tourist services so that they could meet international standards and Mauritius could develop as a high-quality, safe tourist destination. The Tourism Authority is responsible for issuing licences and for supervising the activities of tourist enterprises.

Tourist enterprise licenses
These are required for establishments and activities providing services for tourists, including: hotels, restaurants, golf courses, ferry boats, pleasure craft, rental agencies for jet skis, kite surfing, paragliding, windsurfing, scuba diving, canoes, and people working as tourist guides.

Pleasure craft licences
These must be issued to vessels used for fishing as a sport, for water sports, or pleasure purposes and includes a recreational platform. Pedal boats, canoes, kayaks, surfboats or non-motorised rubber inflatable boats are not regarded as pleasure crafts.

Skippers’ licences
These are required by skippers of boats, and they must pass both theoretical and practical tests to obtain them.

Cleaning project
The Tourism Authority has set up a project to clean tourist areas such as beaches and bare lands.

Source: www.tourismauthority.mu
Local non-governmental organisation ‘We Love Mauritius’

Your role, as representatives of a local non-governmental organisation, is to argue the case against the government’s aim to double the number of tourists. In your presentation you will focus on the economic arguments against. After all the presentations, your group will ask the representative of the government a question, and they will ask you a question.

The key arguments

▲ The Mauritian tourist industry is dependent on long-haul flights. As the cost of flying increases there could be a decline in the number of tourists.

▲ The number of tourists varies from year to year and can be affected by terrorist attacks, financial recession or the weather (Mauritius is in the cyclone belt).

▲ The government’s airport expansion, to take super-jumbo jets, is misguided. These planes need to be full to be economic. Because of variations from year to year it is not possible to guarantee filling the planes to capacity.

Information you can use as evidence for your case

Tourist arrivals in Mauritius by country of residence

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>202,869</td>
<td>210,411</td>
<td>182,295</td>
<td>260,054</td>
<td>302,185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>53,762</td>
<td>52,277</td>
<td>57,251</td>
<td>61,484</td>
<td>52,886</td>
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<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>20,898</td>
<td>24,716</td>
<td>37,498</td>
<td>43,911</td>
<td>49,779</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>38,263</td>
<td>41,277</td>
<td>69,407</td>
<td>66,432</td>
<td>56,540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reunion</td>
<td>96,375</td>
<td>96,510</td>
<td>89,127</td>
<td>96,174</td>
<td>114,914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>42,685</td>
<td>52,609</td>
<td>70,796</td>
<td>84,448</td>
<td>81,458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>80,667</td>
<td>92,652</td>
<td>102,333</td>
<td>107,919</td>
<td>97,548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other countries</td>
<td>146,129</td>
<td>148,409</td>
<td>179,569</td>
<td>210,034</td>
<td>179,517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>681,648</td>
<td>718,861</td>
<td>788,276</td>
<td>930,456</td>
<td>934,827</td>
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Extract from Geographical

‘As the cost of flying increases (whether it’s due to increases in the cost of aviation fuel, tax rises or the imposition of emissions trading) and “carbon guilt” sets in – meaning we no longer feel entirely comfortable boasting about our overseas holidays – the “why” and “how” of travel will surely become more important … Smart destinations will no longer just pursue more tourists per se. Instead, they will focus more on the types of tourists they need and matching these to the most suitable areas and communities within their country. As a result, economic benefits will be maximised, while social and environmental costs are kept to a minimum.’

(Source: www.responsibletravel.com/resources/future-of-tourism/pdfs/FutureOfTravel.pdf)

Hotels

At the end of December 2011, there were 116 registered hotels of which 109 were in operation, with a total room capacity of 11,925. The average room occupancy rate for all hotels in 2011 was 65% (as in 2010).

Source: Questions to Minister of Tourism and Leisure: http://welovemauritius.org/node/18
Local residents

Your role, as a group of local residents, is to argue the case against the government’s aim to double the number of tourists. In your presentation you should emphasise the social case against. After all the presentations, you will ask the hoteliers a question, and they will ask you a question.

The key arguments

▲ Although the hotels provide employment, wages are low.
▲ The hotels are mostly under foreign ownership so local people do not benefit enough.
▲ Land is scarce and an increasing amount of land is being taken for tourism.
▲ Local people have less access to beaches because hotels are built along the coast.
▲ Local roads are already too congested because of tourism.
▲ Only wealthy Mauritians can afford to fly so most local people would not benefit from the money spent on the airport.
▲ An increase in tourists with different cultural practices could have a negative influence on local cultures.

Information you can use as evidence for your case

English is the official language of Mauritius but it is spoken by less than 1% of the people. About 80% of the population speak Creole. The other languages are Bhojpuri (12.1%) and French (3.4%). The population of Mauritius is multi-ethnic:
▲ 68% are Indo-Mauritian (descendants of people from India)
▲ 27% are Creole (descendants of slaves from Africa and Asia)
▲ 3% are Sino-Mauritian (descendants of people from China).

Comments from ‘We Love Mauritius’ website

‘Mauritius’s appeal is as a quality destination, exotic, safe, beautiful and peaceful. An equally appealing feature is the harmonious coexistence of diverse cultures which make up the Mauritian nation. Over-development would destroy this appeal, threaten the ecology of the lagoons, and deprive Mauritians of a proper share of their own beaches. Accordingly it has been estimated that total capacity can be increased from the present 5,300 hotel rooms only to a maximum of 9,000 rooms. Beyond this “green ceiling”, increased earnings will have to come, not from higher numbers, but from higher spending per visitor, with still higher standards of provision and a wider range of activities, including, perhaps, inland and eco-tourism.’

‘Most jobs in hotels and servants in villas earn a pathetic salary in Mauritius. How does this sector help them to improve their standard of living?’

‘How can our island support more resource-hungry tourists and foreign élites when, for example, there is insufficient water to properly supply the local population?’

‘In 1968, when we gained independence, all the coastal land was transferred from the British Crown to the Mauritian people. Today, while wealthy foreigners enjoy the best of it, we are treated like trespassers in our own country.’

Employment

The total number of Mauritians in employment in 2011 was estimated to be 559,700 (358,200 males and 201,500 females). Of these 38,000 (25,200 males and 12,800 females), i.e. 6.8% of the workforce, were employed by hotels and restaurants.

Some examples of average monthly earnings in 2011 (in Mauritian Rupees):
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Local non-governmental organisation ‘Reef Conservation Mauritius’

Your role, as representatives of local environmental group ‘Reef Conservation Mauritius’, is to argue the case against the government’s aim to double the number of tourists. In your presentation you will emphasise the environmental arguments against. After all the presentations, you will ask the Tourism Authority a question and they will ask you a question.

The key arguments

The expansion of the tourist industry would have several negative effects:

▲ It would lead to further damage to the coral reefs.
▲ It would threaten the ecology of the lagoons behind the coral reefs and lower the quality of water in them.
▲ If coral reefs are lowered, beaches would be threatened by wave action.
▲ Laws related to protecting the environment are often ignored.

Information you can use as evidence for your case

Information and quotations from the ‘Reef Conservation Mauritius’ website www.reefconservation.mu/index.php

‘Reef Conservation Mauritius is a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation and the restoration of the marine environment of Mauritius. It promotes sustainable use of the biodiversity of our marine ecosystems through local and regional efforts in a partnership approach with all concerned stakeholders. Reef Conservation Mauritius employs professional, qualified biologists and support staff to manage and implement its projects.’

Reef Conservation Mauritius’s objectives are to promote marine conservation and management through research, education and training to encourage people to respect laws on marine environment and to protect underwater and coastal ecosystems through awareness-raising activities and campaigns.

Reef Conservation Mauritius provides:

▲ Educational resources, training on their use and field trips for schools
▲ Fixed Mooring Buoys and Reef Monitoring Project: buoys are used at popular dive and snorkel sites to protect the coral from anchor damage. Corals and fish populations are monitored to assess regeneration at these sites.

‘Tourism also has its direct and associated impacts, with snorkel and dive boats dropping anchors and breaking the coral. Collection of shells and corals for sale to visitors has depleted the number of shells and people holding, walking and sitting on coral all contribute to the demise of the lagoon habitats the visitors have come to see.’

Damage to coral reefs

Extract about coral reefs from: http://welovemauritius.org/node/5

‘Although sea levels are rising, the slow growing massive and encrusting corals that break most of the energy of waves and storms grow sufficiently fast to keep up. Branching corals grow much faster and probably provide the bulk of coral debris that replenishes the sand reservoir within the lagoon. However, physical impact caused by contact with boats, anchors, fishermen, snorkellers and divers damage even the massive and encrusting corals. Man-made environmental stressors such as pollution from boat engines and industry; siltation resulting from deforestation; and increases in competing algae due to sewage, agricultural run-off and over fishing of herbivores are reducing growth rates.’
**Websites which provide information on Mauritius**


Ministry of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications: [www.gov.mu/portal/site/tourist](http://www.gov.mu/portal/site/tourist)

Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority: [www.tourism-mauritius.mu](http://www.tourism-mauritius.mu)

Association of hoteliers and restaurants in Mauritius: [www.mauritiustourism.org](http://www.mauritiustourism.org)

Reef Conservation: [www.reefconservation.mu](http://www.reefconservation.mu)

Map of Mauritius (showing extent of coral reefs) and map showing location in relation to Africa: [www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/africa/mu.htm](http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/africa/mu.htm)

Map of Mauritius showing coral reefs: [www.travelnotes.org/Africa/mauritius.htm](http://www.travelnotes.org/Africa/mauritius.htm)

Go Africa map of Mauritius: [http://goafrica.about.com/library/bl.mapfacts.mauritius.htm](http://goafrica.about.com/library/bl.mapfacts.mauritius.htm)

[www.africa.com/mauritius](http://www.africa.com/mauritius)

Google Earth (Coral reefs and lagoons can be seen when zooming in)