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Heineken says tourists spend nearly €2.5bn a year on its beers across Europe

The company-backed estimate ties most tourist spending to neighborhood hospitality venues that it says influence where visitors go.

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Tourists spend nearly €2.5bn a year on Heineken beers across Europe, according to company-backed research released on Tuesday, as the brewer tries to show how closely its business is tied to the region’s travel and hospitality economy.

Heineken said the estimate covers tourist spending linked to its European beer portfolio and is equal to about 2 million beers bought by travelers each day. The company said most of that spending takes place in pubs, bars, cafés and tavernas.

The brewer presented the figure as an annual estimate rather than audited revenue. The material made public on Tuesday did not include a full methodology for the economic model, a country-by-country breakdown, sales volumes in liters, average prices or comparisons with earlier years. That means the number should be read as a corporate estimate of tourism-related demand for Heineken brands, not as a complete measure of the European beer market.

Heineken said the tourism-linked spending equals 7% of the total contribution to gross domestic product that the company says it supports. The company used the figure to argue that local hospitality venues are not only places where tourists spend money, but also part of the reason many travelers choose where to go and how long to stay.

The research released with the estimate focused on tourist behavior during European trips. According to the survey results cited by Heineken, 77% of tourists visited a local pub, bar, café or taverna several times during their most recent European vacation. The company also said 35% of those surveyed went to a neighborhood specifically because of one of those venues, and 1 in 5 said they extended a trip for that reason.

Other survey findings pointed to the social role of those businesses. Heineken said 73% of respondents felt that spending time in places where local residents socialize helped them understand a destination better. It also said 52% reported starting a conversation with someone they did not know in one of those venues.

Glenn Caton, president of Europe at The Heineken Company, said in a statement that tourism is a major part of Europe’s economy and that bars and similar venues help draw visitors into local communities. He said those businesses support jobs and give travelers a reason to go beyond the main tourist areas. He also said they provide a way

for visitors to experience local life more directly.

The release comes as parts of Europe continue to debate tourism taxes, visitor levies and the costs facing hotels, restaurants and bars. Some local governments have argued that growing visitor numbers increase pressure on housing, public space and city services. Industry groups, including parts of the drinks and hospitality trade, have pushed back against extra costs and warned that higher taxes can make destinations less competitive.

In England, the debate has centered in part on whether local authorities should be allowed to apply overnight visitor charges. That issue has been watched closely by pub and hospitality operators because tourism spending often spreads beyond hotels and major attractions into nearby food and drink businesses.

Heineken’s new figures are likely to be used in that wider policy argument. By putting a price on tourist beer spending, the company is trying to show that hospitality venues serve a broader economic role than direct alcohol sales alone. The brewer’s message is that neighborhood bars and cafés can influence travel decisions and help distribute visitor spending across local areas rather than concentrating it only in traditional tourist districts.

At the same time, the public information released with the research leaves important questions unanswered. The company did not publish details showing how much of the €2.5bn estimate came from international tourists versus domestic travelers moving within Europe. It did not disclose which countries generated the largest amount of spending, which beer brands were included, or how tourist purchases were separated from local consumer demand. It also did not explain whether the estimate reflected on-trade sales only or whether it included retail purchases made by tourists.

Without those details, it is difficult to test how sensitive the figure may be to assumptions about traveler numbers, drinking occasions, venue prices or seasonal demand. The lack of a prior-year comparison also makes it hard to know whether Heineken is reporting a rising tourism contribution, a flat one or simply a first attempt to quantify it.

Even so, the data adds to evidence that food and drink venues remain a central part of the travel experience in Europe. For cities and resort areas that depend heavily on visitors, spending in pubs, bars and cafés can support a large number of small businesses and workers. Those venues also often benefit from repeat traffic during a visitor’s stay, which may explain why Heineken highlighted the finding that 77% of surveyed tourists returned to them multiple times on the same trip.

The company released the research as part of a broader corporate campaign tied to the role of hospitality in European tourism. Because it was commissioned and promoted by Heineken, the findings should be treated with caution and seen as part of the company’s effort to influence public and policy discussions around tourism and local hospitality.

Still, the estimate points to the scale of tourist spending connected to one of the world’s largest brewing portfolios at a time when Europe’s visitor economy remains under close scrutiny. Policymakers are weighing how to manage heavy tourism flows in some destinations while businesses are trying to protect margins against labor, rent and energy costs. In that environment, large brewers, pub operators and local leaders all have a stake in how much value travelers bring to neighborhood hospitality venues.