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Access and the Spatial Interactions of Tourists

By the end of this chapter, the reader will be able to:

- Distinguish between the resource and commodity values of time and analyse how they affect travel patterns
- Describe distance decay and analyse how it influences both absolute demand and behaviour of tourists
- Define the Effective Tourism Exclusion Zone and analyse its impact on tourism flows
- Evaluate segment transformation and the impact of distance on behaviour
- Define market access and assess how it influences tourist behaviour
- Explain different itinerary models

Introduction

While attractions drive tourism, access, or the ability of visitors to get to and travel within a destination, plays a key role in its success. If tourists cannot get to a destination, then they cannot experience the attractions therein. If they cannot move around the destination easily, their actions will be constrained. Moreover, if access is limited, the ability of the destination to provide viable products is also limited. This chapter examines the role that access plays in tourism.

Time

Before we discuss access, it is important to introduce the concept of time, for tourist flows can be seen as a function of the relationship between time and space (Leiper, 1990), with time, arguably, being the most critical factor affecting movements. As Pearce (1988) notes, time availability can directly constrain or expand the number and range of potential activities available and the depth at which individual activities can be experienced. Indeed, it is about the only absolute in tourism and is also the scarcest resource (McKercher and Lew, 2003). Usually the amount of time one has is fixed either by the necessity to return to work or by flight reservations and other itinerary constraints. It is rare for people to extend their holidays, although tourists can modify plans during their holidays if, for example, they encounter inclement weather (Becken and Wilson, 2013) or other factors cause plans to change. Time is even more constrained among business travelers.

Time cannot be saved or stored for future use. It can only be spent. However, the tourist has a great deal of discretion in how he or she chooses to spend time. From the perspective of tourist movements, time expenditure usually involves some trade-off between time spent in transit versus time spent in the destination or at desired attractions. How this trade-off is made depends both on how one values the act of travelling as well as the absolute amount of time available. Interestingly, the expenditure of time was discussed in detail 30 years ago but seems to have been forgotten more recently in this era of empirically driven approach to tourism research. Authors such as Chavas, Stoll and Sellar (1989), McKean, Johnson and Walsh (1995), and Walsh, Sanders and McKean (1990) were among the first to examine it, yet, as Hall (2005) discusses, it remains an under-explored, though vital area of tourism.

Essentially, travel time can be perceived in one of two ways. On the one hand, it can have a commodity or utility value, where the act of travelling has value in itself and where the journey to the destination is as or more important than being at the destination. People are willing to trade off time spent at the destination for travel time. On the other hand, it can be seen as a cost or a resource where its expenditure is calculated based on an opportunity/cost manner (Chavas et al., 1989). If the perceived cost outweighs the opportunity, travel time will be forsaken for more time spent at the goal. Here the trade off is seen as having a negative effect on the overall trip experience. Table 5.1 compares the two concepts.

Table 5.1: Different valuations of time

	Commodity	Resource
Value of time	Opportunity	Cost
Transit time	Has value in and of itself	Little value, needs to be minimized
Type of tourist	Process oriented	Goal oriented
Perceived amount of time available	Much	Little
Trade-off	Time spent getting to the destination means less time at the destination	Time spent at the destination at the cost of time spent travelling
Typical trip	Long haul Multiple destination Touring	Short haul Single destination

In a sense, therefore, one could argue that trips where time is seen as being a commodity are process driven where the journey is as important as the destination. People who are more likely to take this type of trip tend to have more time, engage in multi-destination trips often with no main destination and are motivated as much for exploration and discovery as they are for escape and spending time with friends and family (McKercher and Zoltan, 2014). Touring, sightseeing and exploring are key features of these trips. Most of these types of trips are independent in nature, rather than part of a package tour. Most long haul travel and much long duration short haul travel fall into this category, as does much adventure tourism, such a bicycle tours, hiking and canoeing trips. Here, the actual distance travelled each day is small, while the journey to get to the night's rest stop is the key goal of the trip. The same situation applies in destinations, where sightseeing and exploring, perhaps with no deeper goal in mind, are seen as valuable and rewarding ways to spend one's time.

Conversely, the type of trips where time is seen as a scarce resource that must be spent efficiently can be described as goal driven where maximizing time in the destination or at a specific attraction is the primary objective. The person who values time accordingly tends to have a smaller time budget, a full itinerary and as such does not have the luxury of engaging in much touring. Instead, the choice is made to minimise travel time in order to maximize time elsewhere. Many families with young children engage in this type of trip, as do most short break, short haul tourists.

Of course, the time-space relationship is not absolute. Time and space can effectively be 'bought' depending on the mode of transit taken and the willingness of the individual to pay a price premium for greater distance. Time can be bought by either taking a direct route to the destination and thus avoiding sightseeing along the way or by purchasing more efficient transport links to connect the source to